

**Madhya Pradesh News Articles
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Madhya Pradesh: New fisheries policy is the making to bolster fish production, exports and for the upliftment of fishermen

<https://www.republicworld.com/india-news/general-news/new-fisheries-policy-in-making-to-boost-production-exports-in-mp-articleshow.html>

"Madhya Pradesh Minister Tulsi Silawat on Saturday said a new fisheries policy is in the making to bolster fish production, exports and for the upliftment of fishermen.

Silawat was speaking at the Madhya Pradesh Fisheries workshop 2022 held here. "The state is charting out a new fisheries policy to boost fish production and for the social and economic upliftment of fishermen," said the state minister for water resources, fishermen welfare and fisheries minister.

The state government was working to rev up fish production, and was aiming to increase it to 3 lakh metric tonnes by next year from the current 2 lakh metric tonnes, he said. The Central and the state governments were working hard for the welfare and upliftment of fishermen, Silawat said. Efforts are on to increase the standard fry fish seeds to 200 crore in 2023 from 171 crore, he added.

"PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PHDCCI) mobilised senior international diplomats from five countries and brought out a knowledge report on MP Fisheries. The diplomats shared their expression of interest to collaborate with the state government in the fisheries sector," Atul K Thakur, Joint Secretary, State Development Council, PHDCCI told PTI.

Ikko Watanabe, first secretary (food and agriculture), Embassy of Japan, Badri Prasad Tiwari, counsellor (economic), Embassy of Nepal in India, Do Duy Khanh, first secretary, Embassy of Vietnam, Donnawit Poolsawat, Consul-General, Royal Thai Consulate-General in Mumbai, Seewraj Nundlall, Counsellor (investment & Trade) Market Development (Asia Division), High Commission of the Republic of Mauritius took part in the workshop. A large number of fishermen, fish farmers and experts from different parts of the country participated in the workshop."

Madhya Pradesh: Employment, kisan credit cards for fishermen

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/bhopal/employment-kisan-credit-cards-for-fishermen-cm/articleshow/91674404.cms>

"Smart fish parlours to come up in local bodies, will help provide organised employment to fishermen as well as ensure availability of variety of clean and fresh fish to consumers, said chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Thursday. Speaking at the Budhni Kshetra Fishermen Conference,

CM said, assistance will be provided for fish seed production and shrimp-cum-ship farming through 'Mukhya Mantri Matsya Vikas Yojana'. Kisan Credit Cards will also be made available to fishermen at zero percent interest rate.

Chouhan distributed fishing kits to 400 beneficiaries and motorcycles for sale and transportation of fish to 50 beneficiaries during the conference held at the chief minister's residence on Thursday. In addition, 443 beneficiaries were also given letters of approval of the Kisan Credit Card. So far, one lakh 5 thousand fishermen have been given these cards in the state. Fishermen welfare and fisheries development minister Tulsiram Silavat, Vidisha MP Ramakant Bhargava, head of Salkanpur Temple Trust, Mahesh Upadhyay and a large number of people from Kewat community were present in the conference. Chouhan's wife Sadhana Singh Chouhan was also present in the programme.

Chouhan said that our boatmen used to travel by walking or by bus. The Kewat community also had difficulty in carrying their material. They are being given two wheelers. So far, 50 beneficiaries have been benefited under the scheme. Along with this, a kit of material for fisheries and fisheries work is also being given. An ice box has also been provided with the motorcycle. Fishing material includes nets, hooks, etc.

The chief minister said that a strategy has been worked out to get the best out of various beneficiary oriented schemes besides ensuring training and upgradation of fishermen to increase fish seed, fish and shrimp production, providing market through effective marketing and branding, providing pond hatcheries, fish feed plants, boats and nets, working capital, employment along with the arrangement of livelihood."

Madhya Pradesh: Sand mining a threat to the mahseer and other aquatic species in the Narmada

<https://india.mongabay.com/2022/04/sand-mining-a-threat-to-the-mahseer-and-other-aquatic-species-in-the-narmada/>

"Dwarki's fish basket is barely filled to half, even after a long, hard day of work. A resident of Pichodi village in Badwani district of Madhya Pradesh, she makes a living by selling the fish that she catches every day in the river Narmada. "These days, big fish are not found in the Narmada river. The overall fish population has also gone down significantly, threatening the very source of our livelihood. It has now become difficult to run a household relying on fishing income."

Dwarki's family has been fishing in the Narmada for generations. Talking about old times, she says, "Until 15 years ago, we used to get good income from fishing and live comfortably. Earnings from the river were enough to spend on marriages and also some extra expenses at times. There was so much work, specially from December to March, that we would live on the banks of the river to fish. In those days, even taking a break from fishing and visiting home was difficult." The drastic change in Dwarki's life tells the story of the exploitation of the river Narmada.

She tells Mongabay-India, that apart from catching fish, she would cultivate watermelons on the sand banks of Narmada. But now because of rampant mining, even that source of income has been destroyed. The erosion in the river ecosystem has adversely impacted the flora and fauna of the region.

Jitendra Manjhi, also a resident of Badwani district, says that the last few years have been witness to major changes in the river. A common sight in the past, the mahseer fish is now rarely found in the river. The mahseer, often referred to as the "queen of the river" because of its colour or the "tiger of the river" because of its size, is among the big fishes found in the Narmada. Mahseer are large-bodied fish, with an average weight of 20 kgs and have reached weights greater than 50 kg and lengths of over 200 centimetres.

The mahseer has been declared as endangered by the Madhya Pradesh Biodiversity Board. The big fish species has also been placed second in the list of 15 endangered fishes of the state. It was granted the status of 'State Fish' in 2011 due to conservation efforts taken by the board.

Researcher Sriparna Saxena told Mongabay India that over five decades, between 1963 and 2015, mahseer population went down by 76 percent. Saxena, who is conducting a research on conservation and artificial breeding of mahseer in collaboration with the government of Madhya Pradesh, says that at one point Narmada used to have 30% of the mahseer fish population. It has now drastically come down to less than 1%. "The mahseer is a clear water fish, which likes flowing water. Due to the dam and opaqueness of water, Narmada is no longer conducive to the breeding of mahseer, causing a rapid decline in its population."

According to the Narmada Valley Development Authority, around 40 to 60 kg fish is produced per hectare in the Narmada. As per records maintained by the Madhya Pradesh Fisheries Department, 46 fish species are found in the Narmada. However, it's not just mahseer that is facing the brunt of ecological changes caused by reckless mining; several other species are also dealing with the threat of extinction and fish species native to the Narmada such as kamankar, ghoghara and gurmuch have also become a rare sight.

Majhi, a fisherman by profession, testifies about the changing ecosystem around the river. He says that until a few years ago, flocks of cranes and herons were regularly seen on the banks of the river. Now these have become a rare sight. A bird named titahri (sandpiper) which was common here is also hardly seen these days.

However, there have been some new sightings in the region. Various types of jalmurgi, which is the common moorhen or water hen (*Gallinula chloropus*) have been seen around the river. But locals point out that this bird species signal towards the poor quality of water in the Narmada.

Bhopal-based ornithologist Mohammed Khaliq says that like every other creature, birds also need food and safe shelter to flourish and procreate. "Sand mining destroys the many aquatic animals that these birds prey upon. It also reduces the safe shelter for birds and their hatchlings, affecting their very survival," he adds.

Talking to Mongabay-India, Medha Patkar, leader of the Save Narmada Movement, underlines the fact that mining threatens the very existence of a river. "Every river has its own ecology where fish, aquatic animals and other creatures that are dependent on these waters live."

Social worker Vinayak Parihar adds, "Due to sand mining, all tributaries of the Narmada have been turned into rivers that solely depend on rainwater. Tributaries like Dudhi, Tawa and Karjan are drying up due to mining and encroachment. "The day is not far when the Narmada will also meet the same fate.

He further says that rainwater or ground water needs sand to join the flow of the river. "Sand mining has destroyed this process, adversely impacting the flow of the Narmada." Projects such as big dams, hydroelectric power plants, barrages etc. are considered major contributors in destroying the river ecology. There are as many as 281 small and big dams, and six hydroelectric projects built on the Narmada..."

Madhya Pradesh: Provision of ₹845 bn made in gender budget for 2022-23

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/bhopal/provision-of-845-bn-made-in-gender-budget-for-2022-23/articleshow/90629754.cms>

"A provision of Rs 845 billion has been made by the state government in the gender budget for the financial year 2022-23. In the financial year 2021-22, the gender budget was 27%, which has been increased to 34%.

In all, 33 departments have now been included in the gender budget statement instead of 28. In the year 2022-23, gender budgeting has been arranged for about 403 schemes. There are 47 schemes benefiting 100% women and 356 pro-women schemes. Notably, gender budgeting is a continuous process, which ensures that the benefits of development reach women at par with men. This year the state government has made a budget provision of Rs 50 crore for starting the fisheries scheme.

This will benefit the women of fisheries sector. According to the periodic labour force survey report for the year 2017-18, Madhya Pradesh was the only state in India which has registered an increase in the female workforce participation rate in the year 2017-18 as compared to the year 2011-12.

This year 35 departments in the state had presented their schemes in gender related reports. It includes home, finance, transport, sports and youth welfare, industrial policy and investment promotion, farmer-welfare and agricultural development, cooperatives, labour, public health and family welfare, urban development and housing, school education and others. The female labour force participation was 36% in the year 2020-21 as compared to 23.4% in the year 2019-20. Madhya Pradesh is the second largest state of India, in which males and females constitute 52% & 48% respectively."

Madhya Pradesh: Fishermen move out as output of fish in Bargi reservoir falls

<https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/economy/fishermen-move-out-as-output-of-fish-in-mp-s-bargi-reservoir-falls-80766>

"The continuous decrease in the output of fish in Madhya Pradesh's Bargi reservoir for the last seven years has created a livelihood crisis for around 2,500 families. More than 30 per cent of fishers have already moved out since November. The reservoir produced 432 tonnes of fish in 1994-95; in 2020-21, it produced only 28 tonnes. Munna Burman, president of Bargi Dam Displaced Fisheries Production and Marketing Cooperative Federation, said "10-15 local fishermen have been migrating from every committee since November". There 54 cooperative

societies of fishers in Bargi dam. Each has 50-55 members. Raju Kumar Sinha, a member of a fishermen union, said: “Till the time the rights of power of fish production was with the union, the production of fish increased. As soon as the state government intervened and transferred the powers to the contract management parties, the production suffered.” The fishermen’s committee was trusted with production from 1994-95 to 1998-99; from 2000-2001 to 2020-21, the work was handed over to private players.

Fish seeds were reportedly put in Bargi reservoir from June 15-August 15 every year under the leadership of the unions. No fishing was allowed during the period. After the fishing rights were transferred to private players, fishing came to be allowed even in the breeding season and fish seeds weren’t supplied regularly. Local fishermen alleged that the contractors illegally fished in the night. The union has written a letter to the state government in the past and demanded a comprehensive scientific study so that fish production can be increased and the migration of fishermen can be halted. There are about 2,500 fishermen in the Mandla-Bargi reservoir area. In Mandla district, 27 of 54 primary fishermen cooperative societies have a membership. Fish farming is carried out in 16,400 hectares in the Bargi reservoir. All 54 primary fishermen cooperatives are fed by the Bargi Fisheries Production and Marketing Cooperative Federation. The reservoir produced 530 tonnes of fish 1995-96; it produced 460 tonnes in 1996-97; 426 tonnes in 1997-98 and 492 tonnes in 1998-99.

The fishing rights and management stayed with the unions even after the construction of the Bargi dam in 1992. As people from 54 villages were displaced during the construction of dam, the exact number of cooperative societies was formed later. About 3,000 fishermen were provided membership initially. Construction of the dam displaced more than 100,000 million from three districts. Fishing started over here in October 1994, which was carried out for the next seven years. Till 2001, the committees collectively produced 430-530 tonnes of fish every year. The union increased the rate of fish to Rs 14.50 per kg from Rs 6 per kg. But the production saw a decline after it was handed over to the private players. Sinha said the private players did not put a fish seed in the reservoir on regular basis. “We demand scientific study to increase the fish production,” he said.

Madhya Pradesh: They lost their land and homes to Sardar Sarovar Dam, and now illegal fishing adds to their woes

<https://en.gaonconnection.com/sardar-sarovar-dam-narmada-bachao-andolan-barwani-district-madhya-pradesh-fishermen-compensation-villagers-rehabilitation/>

"Jitendra Majhi is a fisher who daily walks up almost two kilometres from his makeshift house to fish in the backwaters of the Sardar Sarovar Dam on the Narmada river. A resident of

Bijasan village in Barwani district of Madhya Pradesh, he blames the dam project for uprooting him from his homeland, stalling his education and destroying the traditional occupation of his fishing community. “We saw our village getting submerged in the backwaters of the dam in 2008. Instead of fishing in the Narmada river, we are now forced to fish in the reservoir of the dam with very deep water levels. Worse still, outsiders illegally come to the reservoir to catch fish that affects our earnings,” 30-year-old Jitendra, who was forced to drop out of school in class 10th, told Gaon Connection. When Jitendra was in school, his father used to go fishing in the river all by himself. But after the river was dammed and the reservoir built, the depth of the water level increased manifold and it became unfeasible for Jitendra’s father to alone row the boat in the reservoir and catch fishes.

As many as 1,500 families are dependent on the fishers who catch fishes in the backwaters of the dam in the Barwani district. “My father couldn’t do it alone. It was risky as well. I had to quit my education and help my father in fishing,” narrated Jitendra. “Ever since then life has been a big struggle and the latest trouble is outsiders sneaking into our area and illegally fishing in the reservoir,” he added. This has led to a situation of conflict between the local traditional fishing community and the outside fishers. Traditional fishers vs outsiders “Earlier this month, on August 5 to be precise, local villagers spotted boats of an outside trader fishing in the reservoir near the Meghnath ghat,” Rehmat, an activist working for the Narmada Bachao Andolan, told Gaon Connection. “When we enquired from the workers on the boats, they told us that they hailed from Uttar Pradesh and were working for a trader based in Madhya Pradesh,” he added. Jitendra, the fisher, was also present at the site when the villagers confronted the workers on the boat. According to them, despite the annual monsoon fishing ban, these boats of outsiders were illegally fishing in the reservoir and continued to do so for a couple of days. The fishing in the reservoir is regulated by the state fisheries department and the fishers are affiliated to local samitis or groups. These fishers’ groups have portions of the river divided amongst them and are approved by the state fisheries department. “Despite the ban, these outsiders were found fishing in the water on the night of August 7 at the Pichodi village (15 kilometres from Meghnath ghat),” informed Jitendra. “We informed the fisheries department about it and the officials registered our complaint and also sent a letter to the local police station to register an FIR (first information report),” he said. When Gaon Connection talked to Sapna Mandloi, the Assistant Director of Madhya Pradesh’s Fisheries Department, she confirmed that there is a fishing ban in the state (as it is the fish breeding season) from June 16 to August 15, and that 10 workers were found to be fishing in the reservoir during the prohibited period.

“These people were catching fishes at night despite the ban. It is punishable by law,” Mandloi told Gaon Connection. “The villagers and the Narmada Bachao Andolan activists are worried about this new development as they fear that if outsiders come and fish in the reservoir, then what would happen to the livelihoods of the local fishing community,” she added. The additional

director also informed that her department has written a letter to the Barwani police station to book the accused under the relevant sections of the law. ‘Livelihood declined ever since the dam came up’ Ever since the Sardar Sarovar Dam project began to unroll, the fishing community at Madhya Pradesh’s Barwani district asserts it has been experiencing a decline in its livelihood then be it fishing or farming. The fishers first lost their villages to submergence, had to give up their fields which were a source of extra income and now have to face the fishing challenge from outsiders. “Earlier we had the option of cultivating our lands, growing watermelons and muskmelons in the sandy land on the Narmada river bank but now all that is gone,” 44-year-old Bachcha Ram, a fisher from the Pichodi village in the Barwani, told Gaon Connection. “The fishes don’t move much during the winters hence it’s difficult to catch them. In winters we relied on melon farming which used to get us an extra income of a lakh rupees per year. But now there’s no income to aid us.

All we earn barely keeps us and our families alive,” said Ram who has a wife and three sons and they are all dependent on his earnings. Still awaiting proper rehabilitation Loss of land and livelihood aside, Rehmat, the social activist, told Gaon Connection that the fishing community, along with the other villagers living on the Narmada bank, are yet to be fully compensated and rehabilitated. “They are living in temporary accommodation under tin shades and some of them have been relocated to the community centres and other government buildings in the village,” he alleged. For instance, for the last three years now, Jitendra Majhi has been living in an anganwadi centre which is temporary accommodation for his family till they get new houses as part of the promised rehabilitation. “We were told that we would receive a sum of five lakh eighty thousand rupees for the construction of a new house and a plot had to be assigned as well. But we are yet to receive it,” Jitendra told Gaon Connection. “I am living with my family in an anganwadi kendra (health worker centre),” he informed. “The engineers assessed it wrongly in 2017. They stated that our village doesn’t fall in the doob area (area to be submerged by backwaters). But in 2019 when water started filling up our lands, the authorities rushed to shift us to safe areas.

We were then accommodated here but a permanent settlement is still not done,” the fisher said. Wrongly accused, says the outsider trader Gaon Connection contacted Anil Arya, a Nalchha-based (a town in Madhya Pradesh) fish trader who sent these workers from Uttar Pradesh to the backwaters of the dam in Barwani for fishing earlier this month. He claimed he was merely transporting his boats to Gujarat through Narmada river and was being wrongly accused by the local fishers. “I get my boats built at Bhopal. It costs almost a lakh (Rs 100,000) rupees to get them transported to Gujarat by getting them loaded on a truck. It costs half the amount to transport them by river,” Arya told Gaon Connection. “To save the transportation cost, I asked my workers to take the river route. They were not fishing,” he said. The trader went on to allege that two local fishers were demanding twenty thousand rupees from him for allowing the boats to

pass through their area. "When I refused, they mobilised villagers against my business. I will fight the case in the court," said Arya. According to Rehmat, for now the outsiders have stopped all fishing activities in the reservoir but there is tension in the air and the villagers have adopted a wait and watch policy.

Madhya Pradesh: Bhopal fishermen say facing losses due to Covid-19 lockdown

<https://www.aninews.in/news/national/general-news/bhopal-fishermen-say-facing-losses-due-to-covid-19-lockdown20210525104251/>

"Fishermen in Bhopal say they are facing losses due to the closure of markets during the lockdown put in place to curb the surge in Covid-19 cases in the state." "We want the markets to reopen so that we can earn a living again. This lockdown has severely affected us. I urge the government to ease restrictions now," a local fisherman told ANI. Another fisherman, Gopal Raikwar said that he was earning meagerly as low as Rs 100 to 150 per day, with which he is barely managing to meet the expenses of his family. "There are seven members in my family and I am earning only 100 to 150 daily. All our work has stopped. If we will not work, then what we will eat? The government has to do something for us so that we can run our family," said Gopal. He further urged the government to ease the ongoing lockdown so that poor people can earn their livelihood. "Government should at least allow poor people to work. Everyday when we come from home they do our Covid-19 test and then only they let us go for work. Police officers also unnecessarily bother us throughout the day," added Gopal. Mahesh, a fisherman said that due to the rise in water level they were unable to find enough fish these days. Sometimes we don't get any fish for seven to eight days. "I have a big family of 7 members and somehow I am managing to run the household.

As soon as our life and business returned to track after last year's lockdown, another lockdown hit our livelihood. Last year, at least we could find fish but this time due to the increase in water levels we are unable to fish," said Mahesh. He further said that with roads closed due to lockdown, they did not have enough customers to buy their fish. "Previously, the fish market was open but now that is also shut, so we cannot even go to the market to sell fish. We used to get about Rs 1000-1200 per day but now we can not even manage to get Rs 200 for the fish. There are a lot of problems, never thought the situation will come to this," he added. Mahesh further said that if lockdown is eased and the market is opened fishermen will be able to sell fishes in the market at a good price.

Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh: Times face-off: Will the proposed Ken-Betwa project solve the region's water woes or destroy livelihoods and ecosystems? Experts are sharply divided

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/panel-likely-to-meet-next-week-to-pick-next-cbi-chief/articleshow/82441255.cms>

"AB Pandya (FOR) With uneven rain, river linking only way to ensure equitable distribution of water Interlinking of rivers will help the country fulfill its dream of ensuring equitable distribution of water and, thereby, prosperity for all. There have been several such steps in this direction, and in 1980 a National Perspective Plan was formalised. This involved transfer of water from water-surplus basins to water-deficit basins/regions in which 30 links were identified. Somehow, the term 'river interlinking' stuck in the public imagination though its real name could have been the National Inter- Basin Water Transfer Project. So why do we need to link rivers? Though India receives about 4,000 BCM (billion cubic meters) of precipitation annually, utilisable resources are only 1,123 BCM. Even these are not distributed evenly in space or time. Most of the precipitation occurs in about 90 days in a year and the distribution of annual average availability ranges from 510 BCM for Ganga, 527 BCM from Brahmaputra and 11.02 BCM for Pennar and 12.06 BCM for Sabarmati. This shows the skew between potential demands and availability.

It has, therefore, been recognised that the inter-basin transfer of water is the only recourse for making an equitable distribution of water across the country and thereby ensuring equal opportunities of development. Inter-basin water transfer is not a new concept and there have been many such successful examples in the country. It has been practised in our country since 1887 when the Mulla Periyar dam was built and waters of the west-flowing river basin were transferred to east flowing Vaigai basin transforming agricultural development in and around Madurai for about 68,000 hectares. Just ask any one in Madurai about the role this water plays in their lives. Similarly, we have already made trans- basin transfers in case of the Beas Satluj link, Sardar Sahayak pariyojana, Sardar Sarovar project, Kurnool Cuddapah canal etc which are functioning well. In the US, the Colorado-Big Thompson project has been functioning since the 1930s and has contributed greatly to the economy of Colorado state. Critics of this concept propound myths like massive rehabilitation requirements, environmental damage etc but these are all based on conjecture rather than reality. One of the crucial features of the project is location of reservoirs in areas with very low population density with only the canals running in agricultural areas.

More than connecting multiple rivers like an electricity grid, the project aims at serving irrigation to the lower commands and transferring the corresponding surplus waters from upper commands to the neighbouring basin. We do not have an extreme disparity in terms of flora and fauna between neighbouring basins in peninsular India. Hence, this talk of mixing of waters and invasion of foreign species etc are not founded in any reality. Existing water transfers have also not indicated any such effects. There is a clamour about the disruption of climate due to such

transfers. Once again, the same is purely conjectural as the impacts required to be created for such a climate change versus the actual transfers envisaged are tiny. As an example, the total yield of Ganga and Brahmaputra combined in Bay of Bengal is more than 1,000 BCM whereas the diversion is likely to be no more than 40 BCM annually and that too will ultimately result in reaching Bay of Bengal due to land topography.

In any case, the linkage between any of the basins and their outlets into the seas are not being modified. On the other hand, the proposals can provide 172 lakh hectares of annual irrigation which, considering an average farm size of one hectare, can benefit 17.2 million farmer families and possibly 86 million people. In addition, 780 million can get assured drinking water supply. Surface water in water scarce areas will stop unsustainable groundwater utilisation as well. Thus, the benefits far outweigh costs. The question as to why such beneficial schemes are not yet getting implemented is due to our internal wrangling. Ken Betwa happens to be the first link which was identified for implementation. It will benefit the perennially water-short Bundelkhand region and other associated regions of Bina and upper Betwa basins. Besides irrigation and drinking water, it will generate 103 MW of hydropower and 27 MW solar power. Like any other infrastructure project, KBLP will also have some environmental and resettlement and rehabilitation (R&R) issues. Daudhan reservoir will cause submergence of about 9,000 ha land of which 5,800 ha is forest land. However, with a comprehensive environment management plan (EMP), compensatory afforestation and liberal R&R policy, these impacts will be taken care of. A comprehensive landscape management plan is also being prepared for the conservation of Panna Tiger Reserve. Even wildlife will get sustenance in hot summers with assured water supply from the reservoir.

The reservoir remaining at relatively low level will expose large tracts of land allowing fodder to be grown, benefitting the lower rung of wildlife which, in turn, can support the whole pyramid. The project will provide year-round employment in Bundelkhand region, controlling forced migration to far flung areas for livelihood. The assured drinking water supply will also uplift health standards of the local populace. D'Souza (AGAINST) Our quest to control rivers doesn't account for the stiff ecological cost. At first glance, the Interlinking Rivers Programme (ILRP) offers great appeal. India is generously endowed with a sprawling river system but though bounteous and generous, these rivers are whimsical: prone to recurring floods, bone-dry droughts and with vast volumes winding circuitously before wastefully emptying into the sea. Enter the engineer with a grand vision. Why not link India's river network through dams, diversions and barrages, while impounding much of their flows within giant reservoirs that are connected? Then wire this mix of concrete and steel infrastructure with software involving a couple of equations, data sets, sensors and the ingenuity of some hard hat engineers and, soon enough, all the rivers can be put on tap. That is, capture the surplus flows of a river and transfer it to a water deficit or stressed region.

This, in fact, is the best argument put forward for the Ken-Betwa link. On closer scrutiny, however, this fantastical and elegant ILRP notion falls flat. The disconnect between idea and reality, in fact, plays out at three levels. First, the entire project rests on a wrong assumption. There is no such thing as a river with a ‘surplus flow’. Since the 1980s, studies under the broad field of ‘river ecology’ have convincingly established that a river cannot be defined as ‘lots of water’ in a channel. Rather, every river is a fluvial highway that connects flora and fauna across and between floodplains, wetlands, deltas and estuaries. In sum, it delivers innumerable environmental services such as creating fish habitats, replenishing soil, sustaining biodiversity and sculpting land through erosion and deposition. Seasonal variability floods or low flows are vital to enabling the river to constantly evolve its rich diversity of ecological relations. The Brahmaputra or the Ganga, for example, should therefore be understood not as massive flows but as a collection of ecological relations and environmental services. If a river is thus a biological regime, then it cannot have a surplus flow.

If the principal assumption is clearly wrong, it should also come as no surprise when a second order of complications follows from the first. Notably, the flawed reasoning that often goes with making economic calculations for the project. It is now fairly well known that many if not every big dam or large-scale irrigation project in India has a tendency to get their cost and benefit ratios mostly muddled. To a great extent, this is because economics as a discipline continues to have a hard time developing methodologies that can meaningfully capture ecological costs. This gets even messier when grappling with plotting future scenarios. Consequently, for all the assumed benefits of irrigation and electricity from large dams, the long-term impacts from water logging, salinity or the loss of fisheries have yet to be meaningfully added up. That is, no reliable assessment has thus far been carried out that can meaningfully tell us whether over 70 years of large-scale water infrastructure development were worth the ecological costs. But the wrong assumption and flawed reasoning that haunts the ILRP is actually indicative of a far more profound and fatal limitation. Recent scholarship, mostly by historians, has ably described how water infrastructure and management in post Independent India has tended to retain a strong colonial engineering mindset.

The earliest version of the ILRP was, in fact, first championed in the 1850s by the famed colonial engineer and irrigator General Sir Arthur Cotton. Titled the Peninsular Scheme, Cotton’s plan was to build navigation canals that would link Karachi (now in Pakistan) to Madras (Chennai) via Kanpur, Kolkata and Cuttack with additional lines crawling upwards to Pune. In terms of rivers, this meant connecting the Indus to the Ganga with canals before dropping the latter steeply to the South to link up with the Mahanadi, Krishna, Godavari and finally the Cauvery. And if such a vast navigation network could be built, the General then confidently concluded, there would be no need for the railways in British India. Though Cotton’s Peninsular Scheme came to grief, the colonial quest for river control remains. Notably in the

poorly understood claim that rivers are mere flows that need to be regulated and can be put to work by dams, barrages, weirs, embankments and canal systems. Starkly missing in the picture is how we make sense of the river as a complex biological pulse.

Does this mean that rivers should never be engineered? No. The argument is for ‘smart engineering’, which is a rapidly evolving approach in Europe. Smart engineers build projects that are in active dialogue with social scientists, ecologists and specially those who specialise in design. Cement and contractor engineering can no longer address ecological complexity and the ILRP is the last surviving dinosaur in that tradition. If the coming challenges of water shortages and extreme flood events are to be meaningfully dealt with, then Indian engineering has to embrace new knowledge and be inventive enough to enable a productive conversation between science, ecology, history, sociology and art. A river, after all, is more than just water.

Madhya Pradesh: Rs.195 cr Budget passed for Fisheries Welfare Dept

<https://www.dailypioneer.com/2021/state-editions/rs-195-cr-budget-passed-for-fisheries-welfare-dept.html>

"Fisheries Welfare, Fisheries Development Minister Tulsiram Silawat said that fisheries welfare is only dedicated towards welfare of fishermen and plans are being made to make working capital available at zero percent interest. After the reply of the Minister, a total budget of Rs 195,6237,000 was passed with a voice vote on Tuesday in the State Assembly. This year, a target has been set to provide Fisherman Credit Card to 15,000 fishermen. Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana of the Central Government has also been implemented in the state, in which Rs 120 crores is proposed to be sanctioned. Under Aatsam-Nirbhaar Madhya Pradesh, the target is to produce 3 lakh MT in the next 3 years. In the year 2021-22, it is proposed to produce 180 crores of fresh fish seeds. In the next 3 years under Aatsam-Nirbhaar Madhya Pradesh target is to increase fish seed production from 145 crore to 200 million. On May 25, 2020, under the aegis of the Aatsam-Bhabara Bharat Campaign, by the Government of India, in the field of fisheries and proper management only Pradhan Mantri Matsya Samida Scheme has been launched, whose main objective is to increase fisheries production. Under this scheme, the target is to provide 40 per cent grant-in-aid to 60 per cent and general groups to the scheduled caste, scheduled tribe and female beneficiaries. The scheme of providing personal care assistance is organized by the department of welfare programs for fishermen. Of this scheme the fishermen, their families are provided with the necessary support in case of death and disability. In the year 2020-2021, around 174681 fishermen have been linked to this scheme.

Madhya Pradesh: Traditional Fisherfolk turn to farming to survive lockdown, monsoon

<https://thewire.in/labour/traditional-fisherfolk-in-madhya-pradesh-turn-to-farming-to-survive-lockdown-monsoon>

"For the past couple of months, the people of the Nishad community of fisherfolk who live and work on the banks of the river Narmada in Madhya Pradesh have been growing and selling vegetables to survive. The nearly 2.2 lakh fisherfolk have had to turn to small-scale farming because the lockdown on movement imposed in the country to help combat the spread of the COVID-19 virus put them out of work. Though the state government permitted them to catch fish and the fisheries department had even written to other departments on March 31, asking them to allow the transportation of fish within the state and beyond its borders, the fisherfolk found no buyers for their catch. "The state government issued an order on March 31 that allowed us to catch fish, but the Rajya Matsya Mahasangh (state federation of fisheries) and fish contractors did not begin their activities, says Munna Barman, a resident of village Pipariya, gram panchayat Khamariya, in Mandla district.

On March 31, the Madhya Pradesh department of fishermen welfare and fisheries development, which is responsible for the development and conservation of fisheries in the state, wrote to the state chief secretary, the commissioner of agriculture production, the home department, the transport department, the cooperative department, the divisional commissioner, the directorate of Matsya Udyog (fisheries), the managing director of the Madhya Pradesh Matsya Mahasangh Limited, the chief executive officers of district panchayats, the superintendent of police and a few others, asking them to allow fish produce and its transportation within the state and beyond its borders. The March 31 order issued by the Department of Fishermen Welfare and Fisheries Development. However, none of these departments appeared to have paid attention to the letter. Nor did the federations responsible for the welfare of fisherfolk follow up the matter.

"The vast majority of fisherfolk and fish farmers are usually engaged by fish contractors across the state, says Raj Kumar Sinha of the Bargi Baandh Visthapit Evam Prabhavit Sangh, a federation that represents fisherfolk along the banks of the river Narmada. "This year, the fisherfolk have not been hired by the contractors and samitis, which is totally unprecedented. This is the biggest crisis to hit our fishing industry ever. Madhya Pradesh has nearly 2.2 lakh fisherfolk whose livelihoods depend on the 18 big reservoirs spread over 2,000 hectares of the waters of the rivers Narmada, Betwa, Tapti and others. The vast catch from Bargi reservoir and other reservoirs in the state is usually meant for the markets of Kolkata, Mumbai and Delhi. Without access to these markets, the fisherfolk of Madhya Pradesh are lost, says Barman, who fishes in the Bargi reservoir, one of the first major reservoirs built on the Narmada in the early 1990s.

"The lockdown has threatened our survival, Barman continues. "We fisherfolk do not have many alternatives in terms of local employment and food availability. For Ramesh Nanda of village

Kilawad in Mandla district, this has been the worst year in all his years of fishing. Nanda, a fisherman and office-bearer of the Rajeshwari Matsya Sehkari Samiti, a co-operative, says this is because of the uncaring attitude of fish contractors and the Rajya Matsya Mahasangh. “The lockdown has threatened the future of the community, Nanda says. “The marriage season is over and the local fish market is yet to open. We have already faced challenges in recent years due to globalisation and industry over-regulation. Now we can't even fish during the coronavirus crisis. Like most fisherfolk in the state now, Nanda has been cultivating crops such as melon, tomato, pumpkin and bitter gourds on a small piece of land. “Because the crops were not sown in December when they were actually supposed to have been planted, we have no ready crops to sell. Our families are struggling to survive, says Barman.

Even when the lockdown eases completely, the community will be unable to return to work, because fishing is not permitted for two months during the monsoon. This fishing ban, under the Madhya Pradesh River Pisciculture Rule, begins on June 16 every year and ends on August 15, to protect the fish stock in the reservoirs during their breeding season. In these two months, the purchase, sale and transport of fish is strictly prohibited. Violation of this rule attracts a fine of Rs 5,000 or one year's imprisonment according to a provision of the Madhya Pradesh Fisheries Act, 1948. Though the Rajya Matsya Mahasangh and fish contractors have begun to work with members of the fishing community, opening the Indirasagar and Onkareshwar reservoirs for fishing from June 1 and the Bargi reservoir from June 5, the community feels robbed, says Sinha. He told The Wire: “Even if they work every day till June 16, it is going to be really hard for them to survive. They are very insecure. The Nishad community hopes it will be permitted to fish in the Bargi dam and other reservoirs even during the monsoon. They also demand MNREGA cards so they can apply for paid work with their local gram panchayats.

Stop fleecing of small scale reservoir fishers of Madhya Pradesh

"The Federation of Fisheries Cooperatives of Madhya Pradesh Compels Poor Reservoir Fishers to Deliver Their Catch to Contractors at a Paltry Sum Fishing Communities to Rise in Protest. Can it be imagined that today a fisher in Bargi Dam Reservoir in Madhya Pradesh has to give away a Katla fish weighing more than 5 kg at only Rs.28 per Kg.? And that too at Government approved rate to a Government approved contractor?? Flouting all norms of economic justice and equity the Federation of Fisheries Cooperatives of Madhya Pradesh makes the poor reservoir based fishers of Madhya Pradesh deliver the fish caught by them to contractors appointed by them at a throw away price. A comparison of the rates officially offered by the Fisheries Departments of Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan reveals the gross cheating. The small and traditional fishing communities living on the fish resources of Narmada river have been doubly hit. First, they were displaced due to the submergence of large tracts of land on the banks of Narmada. There has been a total devastation of fishers' and farmers' homes. The homestead

lands offered were 6 to 7 kilometers away from the river. Accessing the river and doing the land based works for fishing became very difficult. More severe difficulty has been the reduction of fish stock due to damming of the river. The nature of water changed from that of a flowing river to stagnant reservoir water. The change from lotic (flowing water) to lentic (still water) ecosystem has wrecked havoc to the species composition of fish in the Narmada river system. There has been an overall drastic reduction in the stock of fish. Many species that were in plenty became rare.

The famous Mahasir, State Fish of Madhya Pradesh, is almost extinct from Narmada. On top of this the Federation of Fisheries Cooperatives of Madhya Pradesh has come out with a policy that has further endangered the livelihood of poor reservoir based fishers. The Fishermen's Primary Cooperative Societies are given lease of the reservoirs, but the lease only gives them the right to only catch fish from the reservoirs, not the right to sell the fish. The Federation of Fisheries Cooperatives appoints Contractors, who have the sole right to collect the fish caught by the fishers at rates fixed by the Federation. The fishers or their cooperatives have no right to sell the fish. Rajasthan, a neighbouring state to Madhya Pradesh, offers a rate to the fishers which is more than even five times of that offered in Madhya Pradesh. Moreover, the Federation of Fisheries Cooperatives, supposed to be a body elected by primary cooperatives had its last election in 1999. It is now run by Government appointed Administrator. Suffice it to mention that the voice of Primary Cooperatives, let alone that of thousands of small and traditional fishers, are never heard. The Federation of Fisheries Cooperatives, which was formed to protect and promote the livelihood of the fishing communities has been turned into a device to exploit them. The fishing communities are fighting back.

At Barwani under the leadership of Medha Patkar and Narmada Bachao Andolan the fishing communities have successfully dissuaded the Government from notifying contractors for collection of fish caught by them from the reservoir waters. Recently Pradip Chatterjee and Soumen Ray, Convener and Coordinator of NPSSFW(I) visited fishing villages of Barwani with Medha Patkar and attended several meetings of fishers. Pradip Chatterjee and Soumen Ray also attended a meeting of Bargi dam displaced fishing communities at Mandla. The traditional fishing communities decided to organise themselves in union of fish workers and reclaim their right to water and fish resources, they have formed an organising committee for the purpose and submitted their claim to the District Council. Pradip Chatterjee and Soumen Ray alongwith NAPM leader Rajkumar Sinha and several fishing community leaders including Munna Barman visited Dr. Ashok Marskole, MLA and discussed with him the problems of the community. Dr. Ashok Marskole vowed to eradicate the unjust contractor system unilaterally imposed by Federation of Fisheries Cooperatives. He assured full support for the cause of small and traditional fishers. The fishing community representatives from different parts of Madhya

Pradesh are going to meet at a State Conference of fish workers to be convened by NPSSFW(I) with NAPM and Narmada Bachao Andolan.

Madhya Pradesh: Fisherfolk have not been provided fishing rights beyond their submerged village area

<https://www.counterview.net/2020/02/narmada-valley-where-power-that-be-are.html>

"I must admit that I have not worked on the Narmada issue. After my visit to the Narmada valley in December 2019, I have gone through a large number of policy papers where I found how Narmada rehabilitation policies have been violated and are not being implemented on the ground. During my visit to the valley, I met a large number of men women and children -- displaced, deprived of land, home and livelihood, but not dejected. It was amazing to see and meet Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA) teams in action in every village, settlements and displaced colonies with the will to carry on the struggle for dignity. What I saw and heard left a deep impact on me, and for the first time I discovered the magic of Medha Patkar and hundreds of her fellow travelers. Chikhaldia is a striking example of how those in power, to whose whims and fancies the administration works, are totally oblivious of the destruction that they cause, not only in physical terms, but to their cultural and social roots.

Long-term repercussions of dislocating people and making them refugees in their own land are disastrous and history will not forgive various governments responsible for these manmade disasters. According to archeological research, Chikhaldia was home to Asia's first farmer, land being highly fertile. There were 36 religious places in Chikhaldia, some of them of the 10th or 12th century – Neelkantheshwar, Narasimha and Shri Ram temples. There were mosques, dargahs and a jamat khana, and also a Jain temple. The village had primary and secondary schools. The village supplied milk to nearby villages. Poor Bhil Adivasis and Dalits earned a living working on the fields of cultivators. I visited the village on December 26. It looked like a ghost town, with hundreds of crumbled homes, empty streets and strong smell. There was total devastation. Water had still not receded completely. I saw a large number of houses which had totally collapsed. I spoke to the local residents. Waheed Mansoori narrated the whole incident. This is what he told me: "The schedule for filling the water which was agreed upon was to fill the Sardar Sarovar dam to the full capacity of 138.68 metres by October 2019, but this was done before September 17, the Prime Minister's birthday, on September 15-16.

People were terrified. "When Narmada waters started entering, especially in the houses on the lower side, there was no way even to come out and escape. It was raining heavily. It was like National Register of Citizens (NRC) being implemented. "We were not leaving our homes but it was like leaving our country, our traditions, our culture, the inter-woven relationships, our Muslim-Hindu unity, everything. This village saw no riots, not even in 1947. According to the

Archeological Survey of India, the first Asian farmer was born here. "Leaving all this behind, the villagers are very disturbed and broken. The government doesn't see all this. To fill water like this in the dam, if the Prime Minister has his birthday on September 17, for praising him, the schedule was postponed by a month.

"Large number of villages have been submerged, livestock has died and environment has suffered in the valley. People couldn't take out anything from their homes, not even food items. They could just grab their children, documents, and one set of clothes, which they were wearing, livestock, and waded out of the threatening water that steadily seeped into their homes. "It is highly condemnable. In the name of development they are doing destruction. They have spent Rs 63,000 crore on the dam but rehabilitation has not been done. The agreed upon amount of Rs 5.80 lakh has not been given to all the displaced persons. There are many people who have got the money but not the plot, and there are those who have got the plot but not money. "There were 800 houses. There are still 250-300 cases pending. They have been put some of them in non-eligible slots. In many cases adult children have not got compensation. When a policy has been made then it should be adhered to. "People are staying in tin sheds with their papers, waiting for their turn to get rehabilitation package so that they can leave from their tin sheds." Another resident, Kalu, said, while his father got compensation, he was living separately, but he hasn't received it. He said he had submitted the papers, his name had come but he was made non-eligible later.

People told me, the model of the dam has been changed, and as a result the assessment of backwater levels was reduced, so 15,946 families were removed from submergence. There was no survey here of the rivers and nalas. About 7,000 hectares land became islands, the roads to the land have vanished. Because of the water in rivers and nallas farmers are unable to access those lands, they couldn't harvest their crops from such places. Many areas were declared out of submergence area. When water was filled to the full reservoir level, 138.68 metres, in the dam, many places which were not included in the submergence area got submerged. It's a big tragedy for farmers and labourers alike. After the farmlands got submerged, along with the farmers, the conditions of labourers became pathetic, as their livelihood was totally dependent on other people's farms. A large number of labourers had to migrate to other states. As far as farmers are concerned, according to the tribunal's decision, those whose 25% land was coming in submergence they were to get up to 5 acres land.

And according to the February 8, 2017 Supreme Court judgment, in lieu of 2 hectares of land as compensation, they were to be given Rs 60 lakh. There are thousands of farmers who have not got this package, despite the fact that their lands have been submerged, I was told. There was a big agitation here in Chikhaldia on July 27, 2017, and due to the agitation, the Madhya Pradesh government had to announce on July 29, 2017 that every displaced person who is eligible and

has been allotted a plot of land would be given Rs 5.80 lakh to build their houses in the rehabilitation areas. ""Yet, over 15,000 people today have not got the package. We have struggled, we have achieved a lot but the struggle is on and a lot has to be achieved"", said a villager. While we were still there, we saw a few people come in to the village to retrieve some household goods if they were in any condition to be retrieved.

It had already turned into a ghost town. There were two families who were taking the bricks from their old homes to rebuild their houses elsewhere. Says Chikhaldia panchayat secretary Waheed Mansoori, the administration had wanted to remove the Gandhi statue and take it outside. He told them not to touch the statue, insisting, ""We will first talk to our people, to Medha Patkar, before we take a decision."" He told me: ""Consultations took place quickly and Medha Patkar said even if the village submerges we will not let Mahatma Gandhi's statue submerge, and that while they can submerge the village, they cannot submerge Gandhi's thought. The statue is very heavy, it weighs 2 quintals, it is made of marble and was donated to the village by Raka Charitable Trust of Rajasthan. ""Medha Patkar planned with other members of the NBA, and a farmers' team placed the Gandhi statue in a boat in order to put it on a higher level, as they sang Gandhiji's favourite bhajans.""

Meanwhile, Rahulbhai from NBA reached the village. We were discussing Gandhi's statue, raised questions about the rehabilitation of religious spaces. He said there are about 40 religious spaces, including mosques, dargahs, a Ram Mandir, a Narsinh Mandir, a Mahadev temple etc., some of whom are more than 400 year old. There is Tribunal Award directing the governments to rebuild the religious places and structures. While the government shows that rehabilitation has been done, they are yet to rebuild any of the 40 religious place. On the one hand, the government is doing politics in the name of Ram, but, on the other, in 178 villages facing submergence, thousands of temples have been submerged, why no one talks about it? There is so much noise about the Ayodhya temple, but they are not bothered about thousands of historical temples being submerged. Rahulbhai told us, ""We lived together as Hindus and Muslims and celebrated our festivals, but after the submergence, the villagers have been sent to 5 different locations, dividing communities.""

According to the latest available information, Chikhaldia had 1,086 eligible families. Of these, while 500 of them and 100 new adults have got Rs 5.80 lakh compensation, 150 families are still living in tin sheds in different places. They are still to get Rs 5.80 lakh, and some haven't even received plots for the construction of houses. Further, 300 families are living in rented houses, they are yet to receive Rs 5.80 lakh. Then, there are approximately 26 shopkeepers who have not got land to rebuild their shops. Farmers, 100 of them, whose farming lands have turned into islands and their harvest has been destroyed, they have not got compensation. The Dhangar community from Chikhaldia has not been provided fodder for livestock and the grazing lands

have also not provided. Narmada pipelines are closed. Electric instruments have been submerged, new connections have not been provided, it is not possible to sow anything as yet. Fisherfolk have not been provided fishing rights beyond their submerged village area. They were unable to earn a livelihood for many years due to fluctuating water levels.

They are struggling to get passes to access the reservoir. Their demand is for ten years' lease, as was done in Bergi dam, also in the Narmada Valley. Then, there are 10 displaced families are still to get land or Rs 60 lakh as compensation. In the colonies where the displaced persons have been kept, basic amenities have not been provided. There are no street lights, water, electricity, drainage or internal roads. After farmlands got submerged, along with farmers, the conditions of labourers became pathetic, as their livelihood was totally dependent on them. We reached Nisarapur village late evening. Nisarapur was one of the richest and biggest villages of Dhar district with about 3,000 families residing in it. It had 400 shops and 100 hawkers. It served as a market for at least 30 villages. There were 46 religious places here. Best of agriculture and horticulture was supported by godowns and some houses on the higher side were taken out of the submergence level, so while it has been come a village, has become a ghost town on the lower side, some homes are still intact, where About 300 families live. These are yet to get one or more rehabilitation benefits.

There are hundreds of applications from Nisarapur itself, pending with the Narmada Valley Development Authority or the Grievance Redressal Authority. Urgent settlement issues await 200 families compelled to stay in tin sheds. After their houses got submerged, they did get any plot or grant. When we walked down the lanes, we found that they were still muddy and it was quite difficult not to slip on them. About 25 people had gathered to meet us. Women, some of whom had fasted for 17 days in 2017, reported about snakes and rats coming into the lanes and the houses which people have left. A large number of houses have collapsed. The stench is unbearable. People whose homes have been declared to be 'out of submergence' area are living in the middle of these crumbled houses and stench. With majority of the people having moved out, how do they sustain their life?, I asked myself.

A village is not merely houses, it has a whole survival system, with shops, livestock, neighbours, relationships, celebrating festivals together. Lower parts get filled up with water. How does one expect people living on the higher plane to access the roads which were in the lower portion? Some of the lanes were still filled with water. No doubt, a big resettlement site is reserved and hundreds of houses, small and big, have come up at the site has many amenities, including a hospital, schools – government and private – yet there are a number of complaints, e.g. there is no lady doctor in the hospital. Drains for prevention of waterlogging have not completed. These need to be urgently looked into. In Dharampuri the only township affected by Sardar Sarovar, I was told by many families that though they have been declared out of the submergence area,

their properties and lands have been acquired and not returned. Those remain in the name of the executive engineer of the Narmada Valley Development Authority, Madhya Pradesh. Their number is above 1,380. In Dharampuri, 88 houses shelter 211 families, there is Sheetla Mata temple, four other religious places, and 2 mosques. These were considered as part of the submergence area, but even they have not been fully rehabilitated. The fisherfolk of Dharampuri have been given plots on the banks of Khuj river, which were submerged during the flood. They have to be replaced with hundreds of new plots. So far only 32 plots have been changed. When there is flood in Narmada, there will be water in Dharampuri city.

I will remember visiting village Pichhodi by the long green chilies that I carried back home to Delhi. I don't eat chilies, but they looked so beautiful that I couldn't resist asking for a few to carry with me. In Pichhodi during the 2019 floods, 55 houses were submerged, all of them have got Rs 5.8 lakh, but 17 families have not got plots so far. Earlier claims are pending from 845 families, out of whom 525 families have still not got the plots. Seventeen families which are eligible to get Rs 60 lakh compensation have still not got it. Also, 29 families live in tin sheds, they have got only the first installment of Rs 2.80 lakh. I was informed, 75 acres of agricultural land belonging to 19 families has been marooned, apart from 90 hectare of grazing land. At the R&R site 62 plots have been given, but there are no basic facilities there. About 710 families still live in the village.

Madhya Pradesh: Fishermen Welfare and Fisheries Development Cabinet Sub-Committee formed

<https://www.dailypioneer.com/2020/state-editions/fishermen-welfare-and-fisheries-development-cabinet-sub-committee-formed.html>

"The State Government has constituted a Fishermen Welfare and Fisheries Development Cabinet Sub-Committee to prepare a thorough plan and to take decisions on subjects related to fisheries development policy. The Minister for Fishermen Welfare and Fisheries Development Lakhan Singh Yadav will be the Chairman of the sub-committee. The Sub-Committee comprising 5 members includes Minister for Culture and Medical Education Vijayalaxmi Sadho, Minister for Urban Development and Housing Jaivardhan Singh, Minister for Panchayat and Rural Development Kamleshwar Patel and Minister for Farmers Welfare and Agriculture Development Sachin Yadav. The Principal Secretary Fishermen Welfare and Fisheries Development has been appointed as secretary of the sub-committee. The Director of Fisheries will be the co-secretary of the sub-committee. The Sub-Committee will consider validating the

rights of fisheries and fishermen along with other important works relating to fisherman welfare and granting fisheries rights only to fishermen and tribal cooperative societies.

Madhya Pradesh: State Govt serious about fishermen's welfare

<https://www.dailypioneer.com/2019/state-editions/state-govt-serious-about-fishermen---s-welfare.html>

"In the last one year, important decisions were taken and implemented for fisheries development and fishermen's welfare in the State. As a result, the fish farmers were able to produce 2 lakh tons of fish. It was the result of systematic schemes of the Government that a record production of 163.25 crore fish-seeds (standard fry) was also produced during this period. Sandeep Pardeshi, a fish farmer of Dewas, was also honoured by the Government of India on World Fisheries Day with second prize for excellent fish production. To empower the fish farmers financially, 6,293 Fishermen Credit Cards were issued at zero percent interest rate for short term loans. The Government has secured the lives of fishermen and every person associated with fisheries sector by insuring them. 338 cages have been established in the state under the Neel Kranti Yojana and National Agriculture Development Scheme.

Now 4 to 5 tons of Pangasius fish are being produced from each cage. To increase fish productivity, four fishfeed mills have been set up for fish-feed production on private sector grant. Necessary funds have been provided for the establishment of 5 hatcheries for fish seed production and promotion in the private sector. Along with this, 105 retail fish markets have also been constructed in the Nagar Panchayats / Gram Panchayats to provide fair price to the fishermen for their produce and fresh and hygienic fish to the consumers under the National Agriculture Development Scheme. The fishermen working in the reservoir were paid Rs 20 crores by the Fisheries Federation for hunted fish. In the closed season, fishermen and their family members were paid more than Rs 3 crore under Livelihood Support Scheme. A payment of Rs 343 lakhs was made to 5,031 fishermen under the Naav-Jaal Anudan Yojana. Under the Mukhya Mantri Meenakshi Kanya Vivah Yojana, the State Government spent Rs 28.60 lakh for the marriage of 143 daughters of fishermen. Under the Incentive Award Scheme, 28 Fisheries Cooperative Societies and 247 fishermen were given a total amount of Rs 21.22 lakh by the State Government in the Federation's reservoir. Under the Nishadraj Scholarship Scheme, Education Incentive Scheme, Critical Illness Grant Scheme, Anugrah Yojana, Fishermen Training Scheme conducted by the State Cooperative Fisheries Federation, the state government provided Rs 22.44 lakh as incentive to fishermen. In this way, in the last one year, total attention was paid to the welfare of fishermen.

Madhya Pradesh: Sarovar dam-hit fishermen grapple with altering breeding patterns

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/sarovar-dam-hit-fishermen-grapple-with-altering-breeding-patterns/article29994056.ece>

"Hundreds of farmers, potters and fishermen from 178 villages that were submerged by the backwaters of the Narmada, marched to the office of the Narmada Valley Development Authority in Bhopal demanding rehabilitation and alternative employment on Saturday. Ever since the Sardar Sarovar dam downstream was filled to the brim, the Narmada has developed an erratic current and an unstable course, posing a challenge to fishermen in Madhya Pradesh. "When the backwaters swelled, the catch dwindled dramatically. And now, several species have become extinct in the river, says Mansarovar Verma, 53, a fisherman of Chikhaldia village in Barwani district. "We don't want contractors from outside to take over water bodies. Local fishermen have a traditional right to them, said Medha Patkar, of the Narmada Bachao Andolan, who led the rally and then staged a dharna with the protesters.

Fall in catch "Water has entered forests, and dead leaves are detrimental to fish. Furthermore, garbage from submerged villages has caused a large-scale pollution of the river, said Mr. Verma. He now catches 2-4 kg of fish a day, earning only up to ₹400 a day. Three months ago, he netted 8-10 kg, bringing home ₹1,000 a day. "We want compensation or land for the loss incurred. We don't want to work for a fishing contractor, who'll set terms for us, he said. Earlier, a drop in the water level after the monsoon gave them an opportunity to cultivate muskmelon and watermelon on the river banks around the month of January. After the water level rose, this too became impossible. The government has opened 32 societies for fishermen in Dhar, Barwani and Khargone districts, which share the river's banks, to dispel the fears about contractors taking over fishing. Several species, including 'mahseer', has gone extinct.

Madhya Pradesh: Villagers displaced by Sardar Sarovar Dam wait in tin sheds for new life

<https://www.thehindu.com/society/madhya-pradesh-villagers-displaced-by-sardar-sarovar-dam-wait-in-tin-sheds-for-new-life/article29596657.ece>

"Chikalda disappeared last week. And with it, the houses of at least 1,366 families. As the water crept in, the village in Dhar district of Madhya Pradesh emptied out in mid-September. What would you take with you with the water lapping at your waist? Chikalda's men and women grabbed children, documents, sacks of dal, school bags, buffaloes and cows, and waded out. In three days, their homes had crumbled, then dissolved single-storied, multi-storied, swanky with marble floors, 100-year-old inheritances, shops stacked with tractor engines or reams of woven cotton, now all sediment. A week later, you could only enter Chikalda by boat. The Narmada river water was at door's height, sometimes higher, touching the underside of first-floor balconies. Only five cats remained, hungry and wet. Nature was taking over kingfishers and egrets perched on the panchayat's neem tree, fish and frogs swam in bedrooms. The temple's

dome and the mosque's minaret still poked out, but most worshippers are joining their hands together in government offices now.

Chikalda is one of the 178 villages that the Narmada has flowed into since late August, when the Sardar Sarovar dam blocked its path downstream in Gujarat. The river originates and largely flows in Madhya Pradesh, and when it could not move forward, it expanded sideways into villages, fields and markets. Some villages have entirely gone under, many are partially submerged and rapidly collapsing, others have become islands. Bharat, 40, a fisherman, rowed his boat above Chikalda's cemetery, looking for fish hiding in watery tombs. He left a roti on a tin roof for a starving cat. "We didn't think the government would actually fill the dam and drown us, because they haven't yet resettled tens of thousands of us, he said. Most people were still waiting for money, farmland, and alternate housing legal rights for the over 32,000 families the dam displaces. If a plot was given, the money to build it was often not. If compensatory farmland was due, sometimes only half was given, and it was sometimes infertile. "We were fighting for all this, as we continued to farm, fish, go to school, have weddings.

This submergence came overnight, as if we didn't exist. Show of strength In June this year, the Gujarat government closed the dam gates to fill the reservoir to its full height of 138.68 metres, in order to "test its capacity. The Narmada Control Authority (NCA), the central body in charge of monitoring the rehabilitation, permitted this because it has long insisted that everyone in the 230 affected villages across Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Madhya Pradesh is already fully resettled. Its website and all its reports still say the balance remaining to be rehabilitated is "nil. Since, on paper, no one lived in these villages, they could be flooded to test the dam's strength. Test or not, it was a show of strength. The Gujarat government invited the Prime Minister to celebrate his birthday at the dam's reservoir, full to its brim for the first time. The water was as high as a 50-storey building. In a live television broadcast on September 17, Narendra Modi offered flowers to River Narmada for her holy magnificence.

That same week, 38-year-old farmer Golu Ambaram waded in chest-deep water in Bhavati village in Madhya Pradesh to rescue his cattle from drowning. Ranjana Hiralal from Khapar Kheda kicked and screamed as her husband and son dragged her out of their inundated house "I don't want to leave, she cried. Around them, thriving villages and standing harvests worth crores of rupees folded like sheets of paper in high water. Few cameras caught this. When it came The people of the Narmada valley have feared the doob or submergence since 1961 when the then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru laid the Sardar Sarovar Dam's foundation, and through the 90s, as they realised that it would flood their fertile farms, dense forests and sources of livelihood. The dam proposes to irrigate 1.8 million hectares, produce 1,450 MW hydroelectricity, and quench dry villages in Kutch and Saurashtra. It's an engineering marvel and an institution of national pride, but it took three decades of court battles, rallies and hunger fasts to get three State

governments, the Centre and the Supreme Court to start delivering a fair rehabilitation package for the 230 villages and the 2.5 lakh-odd people the dam would displace.

Construction of the dam has been stalled by Supreme Court hearings and inter-State battles for decades. But the pace picked up a month after Modi became Prime Minister in 2014. A three-time Chief Minister from a State that has always called the dam its lifeline, he approved the construction of the dam to its full height within a month of taking office. In 2017, on his birthday, he inaugurated the dam and unveiled a gigantic statue of Vallabhbhai Patel, who is believed to have proposed the large dam. Since then, a total submergence was in the works, as long as rehabilitation was completed and there was enough rain to fill the dam. The flood, then, was a long time coming. “But we didn't expect it today, we didn't think the government would flush us out like ants, said Ambaram, whose house and three acres of farmland in Bhavati went underwater in mid-September. He now lives in a tin shed shelter with dozens from his village, “eating roti and trying to find work.

The Madhya Pradesh government built these temporary shelters in 2017 to house those awaiting resettlement. Like many others, Ambaram was both grateful for the dry roof and humiliated about having to live under it like a refugee. “In a week, I've gone from farmer to construction labourer, he said. Hearing him shout, dozens came running, hoping I was a government official. “Give us our plot, madam. How many years has it been? Take down our names, numbers, they said. Spectres of loss The Narmada valley is an unbearable spectre of displacement today, the losses largely hidden from the rest of the country. To witness the process of forced displacement is like watching the beginnings of a terminal illness. It's ugly, and you know it's going to get worse. Worst of all, the devastation was entirely avoidable. The Supreme Court has repeatedly maintained that full rehabilitation must be completed six months before submergence. Broadly, affected families are owed a plot in a rehabilitation village with schools, road, water, electricity and panchayat office; Rs.5.8 lakh to construct a new house; and farmland, or Rs.60 lakh in exchange for lost farmland. Landless families must get livelihood compensation, and fisherfolk must receive licences to fish in the reservoir.

These packages were framed on the principle that a development project meant for the future must not impoverish thousands today. Over the years, Gujarat and Maharashtra have resettled nearly all their displaced from 19 and 33 villages, respectively. Madhya Pradesh, where the largest number of people are affected, severely lags behind. Some payments have been made, some villagers resettled. Several families are disputing partial transfers, while others have taken what they've got. It is apparent to anyone who visits the valley that the rehabilitation sites are largely roadless, school-less and people-less. As of July 2019, before the submergence, the Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA) estimated that 31,593 families remained in their original villages, awaiting full compensation. And yet, the dam was filled to the brim, and villages

submerged. The NBA has now filed a petition in the Supreme Court, calling the submergence illegal. Madhya Pradesh rehabilitation officials and Rajiv Gupta, Managing Director of Sardar Sarovar Narmada Nigam Ltd., Gujarat, refused to comment, saying the matter was sub judice. NCA's executive member did not respond to emails and calls.

There may be differing opinions on whether the dam should have been built or not, but few can justify people being flooded out of their homes without being given what they were promised. Today, what's visible are submerged homes and unmoored people. Acres of farmland have gone under, or have been rendered inaccessible by roads and bridges washed away. In a few months, when even fewer of us will be watching, the cracks in the agricultural economy are bound to show up. "In one day, I've lost ₹1.5 lakh, said Natthu Sitaram Mukati, 65, from Khapar Kheda, who lost 2.5 acres of his standing chilli harvest. From the two acres left outside the water, he hurriedly picked the green chillies before they could turn red, in case that was flooded too. "The usual price is ₹38 for a kilo, but I'm forced to sell for ₹8 a kilo because the roads are inundated and traders have to make a longer journey. The Mukatis are five brothers, all farmers. Three have received plots, and one of them has built a house. "That's where we are all staying now after our houses were submerged, said Mukati.

They have wheat and dal to last them six months, and the ₹60 lakh compensation he got for his inundated farmland. "Nearly 30 of us have to live off that; so in a year, I don't know where we'll be. With farms flooded, crops lost, and big farmers cash-strapped, labourers are struggling to find work. Most of them, especially the women, are becoming desperate. Rukhdi Radhu from Nandgaon village said, "It's good the government is giving us food three times a day, but without work, how will I afford medicines, cattle fodder, school fees, and transport? The 55-year-old single mother lost three of her five buffaloes in the deluge. Over 200 Adivasi families living in mud houses around Borkhedi village said a nodal officer had asked them to evacuate last year after promising them alternative plots and money. Nearly all of them moved to their farmlands higher up on the hill. Last week, their village sank. They are now afraid their names haven't been recorded as displaced in any government record.

When one of the more literate residents, Bhuwan Singh Rawat, 35, went to the Collector's office some days ago to submit Borkhedi's petitions demanding rehabilitation, he said the officials mocked him. "They said, 'Oh, you people keep coming and asking for things. First, the father demands land, then the son', said Rawat, as he clenched his jaw in rage at the memory. "We are just caring for our children and their future, just like you would. Ghost town In a painful way, the deluge has given the lie to many of the calculations of the dam authorities. Every few years, the number of dam-affected has would vastly change with technical tweaks, dam authorities would make thousands ineligible for rehabilitation. Villages like Katnera, which the officials marked on maps as being outside the submergence zone, are half under water today. Even some

rehabilitation sites are touching water. Nisarapur, the biggest and richest village to be submerged, is now a ghost town. Three-storied buildings float like icebergs. Nearly all the houses are locked up. A few residents were lugging refrigerators, motorbikes and steel utensils across the dry patches. Tourists from a neighbouring Shani temple festival stopped their cars to gape at the disappearing of an era....

Madhya Pradesh: Hundreds of villages drown as Narmada dam water level rises

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/09/hundreds-india-villages-drown-narmada-dam-water-level-rises-190923120451239.html>

"Last week, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi celebrated his 69th birthday at the controversial Sardar Sarovar Dam (SSD) in his home state of Gujarat. But 186km upstream in Barwani town on the banks of the Narmada River in neighbouring Madhya Pradesh state, the mood was anything but celebratory. Nearly 2,000 men, women and children, riding bikes and packed in tractors and trucks, rallied in Barwani, a town of about 55,000 people, against submersion of their homes, property and businesses due to the dam. The country's biggest dam has led to mass submergence after the authorities recently raised the water level to its maximum height of 138.68 metres. Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA), a grassroots movement agitating for the rights of the indigenous people displaced by the dam, said at least 178 villages in Madhya Pradesh have partially or fully submerged after the dam's water level was raised. However, the state government has yet to put out a specific number of villages submerged so far, which it says is fewer than the number cited by the NBA.

Protesters gathered at Kasrawad bridge on Narmada River alleged the dam's water level was raised before the schedule to mark the birthday of Prime Minister Modi, who had pushed for it when he was the chief minister of the Gujarat state. They waved blue NBA flags and posters featuring the prime minister that said: "'Mera janam din, tumhara maran din'", meaning "'my birthday is your day of death'". Mired in controversy Slogans such as "'Modiji ek kaam karo, Sardar Sarovar mei doob maro'" (Mr Modi, do one thing, drown in the Sardar Sarovar) were raised as people dumped Modi's effigy into the Narmada waters. Jagannath Rukhudaji Patidar from Kundiya village in Khargone district lost 9.7 hectares (24 acres) of his farmland. "'We voted for Modi but he stabbed us in the back,'" Patidar, a veteran activist and one of the founding members of the NBA, told Al Jazeera.

The submergence has already killed three people. On August 22, Laxman Gopal, a 62-year-old farmer from Jangharva village in Barwani, died of a heart attack after a tiff with policemen who were evicting his niece from the submergence site. On August 7, two men were electrocuted

while travelling in a boat. Since its foundation stone was laid by India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru in 1961, the Sardar Sarovar Dam has been mired in controversy over the delay in compensation to thousands of people displaced by the project. The 1,300km-long Narmada River, which originates in Madhya Pradesh state and passes through Maharashtra and Gujarat, is considered a lifeline for Gujarat state. The dam is expected to provide irrigation and power to Gujarat but it has displaced thousands of people in Madhya Pradesh. Compensation package The Supreme Court has ruled that compensation package - that includes land, housing plot with amenities, and financial assistance - had to be provided at least six months before submergence. But activists say about 28,000 project affected families (PAFs) have yet to receive the promised compensation. The government and the activists, however, have differed on the total number of PAFs. NBA puts it at 48,000, while the government figure stands at 32,000.

Medha Patkar, the leader of the NBA, accused the government of violating the Supreme Court order on raising the water level. ""They claim it is to test the dam safety mechanism, but couldn't they have waited till the last person was rehabilitated?"" she asked. But Narmada Control Authority (NCA) - a joint government agency of the three states and the federal government - says all 32,542 PAFs have been rehabilitated. SR Yadav, the NCA director of resettlement and rehabilitation, claimed the authority had compensated 1,624 families in line with a Supreme Court order of February 8, 2017. The remaining PAFs, he said, had been compensated in 2017 itself. ""Some of the PAFs had filed bogus papers to claim additional compensation,"" he told Al Jazeera. However, a letter from the chief secretary of Madhya Pradesh, sent on May 27, 2019, to the NCA chairman, tells a different story. The letter - a copy which Al Jazeera has seen - asked ""the NCA to review the proposal of raising the water level as more PAFs eligible for a compensation of Rs 60 lakh (approximately \$85,000) were still under various stages of adjudication."" In spite of knowing this, Patkar claimed, the NCA went ahead with raising the water level.

'Unprecedented flooding' People on the ground said they did not get adequate warnings to prepare for the deluge. Water entered the ancestral house of Vinod Yadav, a doctor from Chota Barda village in Barwani district, a week back. ""We had been warned by the local authorities, but nobody knew when the water would come,"" Yadav said. Even though his family had applied for rehabilitation in 2017, they have received neither land nor financial compensation, he claimed. ""This flooding is unprecedented. I have to take a boat to reach my clinic in Anjar,"" Yadav told Al Jazeera. He grieved the loss of a house that had been the family's homestead for generations. Dinesh Bhago from Bajri Kheda in Dhar district lost his home and four bighas of land - approximately 0.64 hectares (1.6 acres) - on which he had sown cotton. He claims he too has not received any compensation despite having applied for it multiple times. Bhago, 27, along with his wife and three children, has been living in one of several tin-shed transit camps built by

the Narmada Valley Development Authority, set up by the state government in Barwani town. "My children can't go to school as it is flooded. The tin shed leaks during the rain," he said.

But it is not just the loss of home and land, the locals also fear a loss of culture and identity. Savitri Kevat from the fishing community in Rajghat village lost her house and belongings. She is worried about the kind of life she and her family would lead in the transit camps. "Here we feel like prisoners. The food makes me sick," she stated. The government ration in the camp is proving to be hard to stomach for the residents. "They serve burned roti (chapati or bread) and watery dal with insects that even our dogs won't eat," Kevat said. She rues that her husband cannot fish in the reservoir. "We use small boats that are meant for shallow water. The reservoir is too deep for fishing," she said. "You steal our only source of income, and then you dump us here. For whose sins?" she asked. Her transit neighbour, Seonta Sisodia, claimed that even those who got compensation had to sell off their livestock in the absence of grazing pastures. "They don't care for us. They just want to get rid of us," she told Al Jazeera.

Madhya Pradesh: Dammed and mined, Narmada River can no longer support her people

<https://india.mongabay.com/2019/09/dammed-and-mined-narmada-river-can-no-longer-support-her-people/>

"For sexagenarian Madoo Bhai, the world has changed beyond recognition since he was a child. He has spent his life in Chikhaldia, a small village along the banks of Narmada River in Dhar district of Madhya Pradesh in central India. "There was a time when both sides of the river was full of muskmelon plants, and I would go with my father to sell the fruit in the market, he remembered. "Nature gave us enough. Those days, he regrets, are long past. Now the people of Chikhaldia struggle to make ends meet. The story is repeated in village after village along the Narmada, the longest west flowing river in India that has been in the national and global limelight due to the building of the massive Sardar Sarovar Dam project despite sustained protests by residents of the river basin. The travails of villagers in Chikhaldia started long before the Sardar Sarovar Dam was built. In 1974, construction of the Bargi Dam started on the Narmada River, some 650 km upstream of Chikhaldia. The dam was commissioned, after many delays, in 1990, and spelt trouble for communities living downstream in the Narmada valley. "First, the Bargi Dam was constructed, and that caused a lot of flooding. Bargi's water would submerge our (muskmelon) crop again and again, and we were not compensated (by the government) for the losses, said Madoo Bhai.

"We kept on suffering. By 2008-09, most of the fruit growers in Chikhaldia had taken to fishing in the river for a livelihood. But pollution and damage to the riverine ecology did not spare their new livelihood either. Farmers, who had turned fishermen, now find it difficult to catch fish in the river. "When the water was flowing, the river had a life and it abounded in fish. Now,

because of stagnant water, (fish) breeding is low, said 65-year-old Saba, who quit farming 15 years ago to take up fishing. “For us, it is nearly impossible to survive on fishing. Successive loss of employment Stagnation of the free flowing river and rampant sand mining has deteriorated the riverine ecology, aquatic life and prospects of agriculture in the stretch of the Narmada valley in Dhar and Barwani districts of Madhya Pradesh. Many fishermen have become daily labourers in the Barwani town to stay afloat financially. In Pichodi village, a few kilometers away from Barwani town, 63-year-old farmer Salagram shows large patches of dug up land on the Narmada's foreshore.

A landscape once rich with the crops of cotton, wheat, banana and papaya now has a devastated torn look, due to relentless and illegal sand mining. “This was our land where our homes were situated and our culture thrived, but when they ruined Narmada, everything fell apart, said Salagram, whose family still lives in this area, which has been declared a submergence zone of Sardar Sarovar Dam. Today, his life is dependent on smallholder farming and fishing. The Sardar Sarovar Dam, some 150 km downstream of Barwani, is among the 30 large dams proposed in Narmada Valley. With a total installed power generation capacity of 1450 MW, it is the third-highest concrete dam in India after Bhakhra Nangal in Himachal Pradesh and Lakhwar hydropower project in Uttar Pradesh. Originating at Amarkantak in Madhya Pradesh, Narmada River flows through Maharashtra and Gujarat before it meets Arabian Sea on the west coast. The river basin is spread over 97,410 sq. km, comprising 85,858 sq. km in Madhya Pradesh, 1658 sq. km in Maharashtra and 9894 sq. km in Gujarat. The drainage area up to Sardar Sarovar dam site is 88,000 sq. km, official data show.

The river basin is massively dammed with 30 major projects, some of which are already operational. The Sardar Sarovar project is now functional, but 30,000 families are still living in its submergence zone in the four districts of Khargaon, Badwani, Dhar and Alirajpur. For many of these families, fishing is a means of survival, but silting, industrial pollution and sand mining has become a curse for them. When a dam is built, a large area becomes a lake to hold the impounded water. Besides this, long stretches of the foreshore of the river are declared as submergence zones as the river floods these areas for a few months every year during and after the rainy season, when the flow of water is high. Effects of sand mining Energy expert and environmentalist Soumya Dutta, a member of the Advisory Board of United Nations Climate Technology Center, explained how mining sand from the riverbed affects the life of aquatic species and can snatch away the livelihoods of fishermen. “Sand, stones and boulders are required to slow down the rate of flow of any stream, so that the riverbed is recharged. Otherwise, all the water will flush away and, as a result, the aquifer won't get time for recharging, said Dutta.

“So even if you see a lot of water in the river in the rainy season, as soon as the rain stops, there is no water in the ground and that will affect the life of fish in the river. This is what is killing the river upstream of the Sardar Sarovar Dam, where the small fisherman like Madoo and Saba go fishing. Interestingly, the government gives fishing contracts to big contractors in the reservoirs of these dams, but does not care about the life of the river upstream or downstream of any dam, where the riverine fishers eke out a living. About 50% of the fisher population in the Narmada basin depend on the river and estuary of the basin, according to experts. Whereas the reservoirs are leased to contractors, the flowing river is free for the fishers. But, continuous mining and holding of water by dams are big problems, which the locals allege is killing many fish species. “The estuary of Narmada is extremely productive, particularly for Hilsa, but right now the hilsa fisheries has taken a hit, as nearly 60% of its production is down because there is no water is available there, said river expert Parineeta Dandekar, Associate Coordinator, South Asia Network on Dams, Rivers and People (SANDRP), who has been researching on the Narmada valley for many years.

“Hilsa needs a mix of saline and fresh water for breeding. Because we are holding all the water of river, no fresh water is coming down and fish can't go up. The estuary is downstream of the Sardar Sarovar Dam. Likewise, the famous Mahseer is also disappearing from many parts of Narmada. At Rajghat Kukra village, at the district border between Dhar and Badwani in Madhya Pradesh, 50-year-old Rajaram said that now he drives an auto-rickshaw to earn his living instead of fishing. “Hundreds of families were dependent on fishing here, but we hardly get any fish in the river now. It's not more than one or two kg in a day. That isn't sufficient to support a family, said Rajaram. “So everyone is looking for other means of livelihood. India is ranked second in inland fish production. More than 10 million people depend on sources like rivers, wetlands and ponds, and for the rural poor, a free flowing river is a lifeline. Experts say if small fishermen quit fishing, it also threatens the life of the river. “River fisherfolk are the best mascots of the health of the river because their livelihood is actually is related to how healthy is river is, said Dandekar.

No catchment area treatment Sand mining brings with it another problem. While extracting the sand, miners throw all thorny bushes and shrubs that grow on the banks of the river, along with an enormous amount of mud, in the water of Narmada. This causes heavy siltation and damages the nets of fishermen. “We face a lot of problems due to the mud and shrubs thrown in Narmada. Our nets get stuck in it and we suffer huge losses, said 40-year-old Madhu. “This is unbearable for us. However, this claim of fishers is refuted by government officials. “I don't see a direct impact of mining on fishing because whatever little mining is being done, though it is illegal, that is done at the banks of river, said Barwani's district collector Amit Tomar. “When the water (of the river) recedes, it leaves sand at its banks and they dig that area. “We do not have many

complaints about this. If someone comes to us (with complaints), we will have a look at it, Tomar said.

“We have very good experts in the fisheries department and we will take their help. Sand mining in the Narmada River valley was banned by Madhya Pradesh High Court in May 2015, after a petition was filed by the Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA), the non-profit that was at the forefront of the agitation against the Sardar Sarovar project. Later, in a separate order, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) banned illegal mining in Narmada in 2017. Nevertheless, illegal mining is rampant across the state, particularly in the Narmada valley. Tomar admits that in Barwani district alone, 119 cases of illegal mining were registered between April 2018 and March 2019, and 90 cases have been registered since April this year. Medha Patkar, eminent environmentalist and leader of the NBA, said the government has consistently ignored the destruction of river. “As all rivers are getting polluted in the country, we see an attack on riverine fishery. They are dumping mountains of mud in the Narmada, said Patkar.

“The government had promised a catchment area treatment program with Rs 2 crore (USD 287,000) for it, but nothing happened till now. Cooperative hope Amid the destruction of river by mining and damming, cooperative movements in the Narmada valley have kept hope alive for the beleaguered fishers. In 2017, 32 cooperative societies, comprising more than 1,000 fishers, were registered in four districts affected by the Sardar Sarovar Dam. These cooperatives have proposed to form a federation. They hope to get fishing and management rights in the river and reservoirs of the Narmada, as fellow fishers around the Tawa and Bargi dams got nearly two decades ago after a spirited struggle. “We are with the tribals and other communities. As they have rights over forests, they should also get rights of fishing, said Sajjan Singh Varma, environment minister of Madhya Pradesh. “Anyone who fights for this, I will stand with him.

Madhya Pradesh: Dammed and mined, Narmada River can no longer support her people

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The dam was commissioned, after many delays, in 1990, and spelt trouble for communities living downstream in the Narmada valley. “First, the Bargi Dam was constructed, and that caused a lot of flooding. Bargi’s water would submerge our (muskmelon) crop again and again, and we were not compensated (by the government) for the losses,” said Madoo Bhai. “We kept on suffering.” By 2008-09, most of the fruit growers in Chikhalda had taken to fishing in the river for a livelihood. But pollution and damage to the riverine ecology did not spare their new livelihood either. Farmers, who had turned fishermen, now find it difficult to catch fish in the river. “When the water was flowing, the river had a life and it abounded in fish. Now, because of stagnant water, (fish) breeding is low,” said 65-year-old Saba, who quit farming 15 years ago to take up fishing. “For us, it is nearly impossible to survive on fishing.”

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This is what is killing the river upstream of the Sardar Sarovar Dam, where the small fisherman like Madoo and Saba go fishing. Interestingly, the government gives fishing contracts to big contractors in the reservoirs of these dams, but does not care about the life of the river upstream or downstream of any dam, where the riverine fishers eke out a living. About 50% of the fisher population in the Narmada basin depend on the river and estuary of the basin, according to experts. Whereas the reservoirs are leased to contractors, the flowing river is free for the fishers. But, continuous mining and holding of water by dams are big problems, which the locals allege is killing many fish species. “The estuary of Narmada is extremely productive, particularly for Hilsa, but right now the hilsa fisheries has taken a hit, as nearly 60% of its production is down because there is no water is available there,” said river expert Parineeta Dandekar, Associate Coordinator, South Asia Network on Dams, Rivers and People (SANDRP), who has been researching on the Narmada valley for many years.

“Hilsa needs a mix of saline and fresh water for breeding. Because we are holding all the water of river, no fresh water is coming down and fish can’t go up.” The estuary is downstream of the Sardar Sarovar Dam. Likewise, the famous Mahseer is also disappearing from many parts of Narmada. At Rajghat Kukra village, at the district border between Dhar and Badwani in Madhya

Pradesh, 50-year-old Rajaram said that now he drives an auto-rickshaw to earn his living instead of fishing. “Hundreds of families were dependent on fishing here, but we hardly get any fish in the river now. It’s not more than one or two kg in a day. That isn’t sufficient to support a family,” said Rajaram. “So everyone is looking for other means of livelihood.” India is ranked second in inland fish production. More than 10 million people depend on sources like rivers, wetlands and ponds, and for the rural poor, a free flowing river is a lifeline. Experts say if small fishermen quit fishing, it also threatens the life of the river. “River fisherfolk are the best mascots of the health of the river because their livelihood is actually is related to how healthy is river is,” said Dandekar. No catchment area treatment Sand mining brings with it another problem. While extracting the sand, miners throw all thorny bushes and shrubs that grow on the banks of the river, along with an enormous amount of mud, in the water of Narmada. This causes heavy siltation and damages the nets of fishermen. “We face a lot of problems due to the mud and shrubs thrown in Narmada. Our nets get stuck in it and we suffer huge losses,” said 40-year-old Madhu.

“This is unbearable for us.” However, this claim of fishers is refuted by government officials. “I don’t see a direct impact of mining on fishing because whatever little mining is being done, though it is illegal, that is done at the banks of river,” said Barwani’s district collector Amit Tomar. “When the water (of the river) recedes, it leaves sand at its banks and they dig that area.” “We do not have many complaints about this. If someone comes to us (with complaints), we will have a look at it,” Tomar said. “We have very good experts in the fisheries department and we will take their help.” Sand mining in the Narmada River valley was banned by Madhya Pradesh High Court in May 2015, after a petition was filed by the Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA), the non-profit that was at the forefront of the agitation against the Sardar Sarovar project. Later, in a separate order, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) banned illegal mining in Narmada in 2017. Nevertheless, illegal mining is rampant across the state, particularly in the Narmada valley.

Tomar admits that in Barwani district alone, 119 cases of illegal mining were registered between April 2018 and March 2019, and 90 cases have been registered since April this year. Medha Patkar, eminent environmentalist and leader of the NBA, said the government has consistently ignored the destruction of river. “As all rivers are getting polluted in the country, we see an attack on riverine fishery. They are dumping mountains of mud in the Narmada,” said Patkar. “The government had promised a catchment area treatment program with Rs 2 crore (USD 287,000) for it, but nothing happened till now.” Cooperative hope Amid the destruction of river by mining and damming, cooperative movements in the Narmada valley have kept hope alive for the beleaguered fishers.

In 2017, 32 cooperative societies, comprising more than 1,000 fishers, were registered in four districts affected by the Sardar Sarovar Dam. These cooperatives have proposed to form a federation. They hope to get fishing and management rights in the river and reservoirs of the Narmada, as fellow fishers around the Tawa and Bargi dams got nearly two decades ago after a

spirited struggle. “We are with the tribals and other communities. As they have rights over forests, they should also get rights of fishing,” said Sajjan Singh Varma, environment minister of Madhya Pradesh. “Anyone who fights for this, I will stand with him.”

Madhya Pradesh: Amid growing crisis, Madhya Pradesh may become first state to introduce Right to Water Act

<https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/55-litres-of-water-per-person-per-day-madhya-pradesh-to-enact-right-to-water-act-1554399-2019-06-23>

Madhya Pradesh is planning to implement the water rights law in the state very soon. According to the guidelines in the Right to Water Act, 55 litres of water per day for will be given for usage to each person. The Right to Water act will also have stringent provisions for preventing wastage of water. For the implementation of the act, a seminar is being organised in Bhopal's Minto Hall on June 24. People from across the country including Water Minister Rajender Singh and law expert Sanjay Upadhyaya are being called to attend the seminar. According to the state's Public Health Minister Sukhdev Pensay, "Madhya Pradesh will be the first state in the country where Right to Water will be enacted." In India, Right to Water is a part of the Right to Life ensured under Article 21 of the Indian constitution. Earlier this month, Chief Minister of the state Kamal Nath had asked the authorities to draft a legislation on Right to Water aiming at ensuring adequate water for every person in the urban areas.

The Chief Minister had also contended that the Right to Water Act will be instrumental in ensuring requisite quantity of water to urban citizen. He said this while reviewing the future plans of Urban Development Department. The water crisis is not just in Madhya Pradesh but is prevalent in southern part of the country too. Tamil Nadu is reeling under the worst water crisis. Recently, the Tamil Nadu government has accepted Kerala's offer of 20 lakh litres drinking water amid an ongoing severe water crisis in Tamil Nadu. The ruling AIADMK decided to appease the rain god by performing special yagnas in temples across the state. Senior AIADMK leader and Fisheries Minister D Jayakumar took part in a 'yagna' at a Shiva temple here and planted saplings in the premises of the shrine.

Madhya Pradesh: Narmada has been killed in Gujarat, say activists

<https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/water/narmada-has-been-killed-in-gujarat-say-activists-63972>

The Narmada river, central India's mightiest, has been deliberately killed in its last stretch, with grave consequences for farmers, village residents and especially fisher folk, allege members of Paryavaran Suraksha Samiti, a Vadodara-based non-profit. The Narmada originates in the Amarkantak hill in Anuppur district of Madhya Pradesh. It flows for 1,077 kilometres (kms) within Madhya Pradesh. The next 35-kms stretch of the river forms the boundary between

Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. The next 39 kms form the boundary between Maharashtra and Gujarat, and the last stretch of 161 kms is in Gujarat before the river empties into the Gulf of Khambhat just downstream of Bharuch.

"In its last 161 kms, the Narmada, instead of being a perennial river has been converted into a seasonal one, is dry and carries seawater with some industrial pollutants and untreated sewerage, has high chemical oxygen demand (COD), total dissolved solids (TDS) and low dissolved oxygen (DO) and the groundwater near it has deteriorated," reads a letter the Samiti wrote to a number of nodal agencies including the Narmada Control Authority (NCA), the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) and the Union Ministry of Water Resources (MoWR). "The Narmada has been killed. An irreversible situation had been reached, despite repeated complaints, despite assurances. It is a deliberate failure by the state. We will fight with legal means and take this matter to its logical conclusion," Rohit Prajapati, activist and member of the Samiti told Down To Earth.

The non-profit also mentioned that it had carried out an investigation April 6, 2019, testing the water of the river between Nand village, upstream of Bharuch and Bhadbhut village downstream, just before the river estuary in the Gulf of Khambhat. The study found TDS in the river between Nand and Bhadbhut to be in the range of 647—5,000—20,000—25,500 milligram per litre (mg/l). The normal level, according to river norms is 500 mg/l. COD in the same stretch was in the range 40—100—150 mg/l, whereas it should be nil. DO was between 4.49 and 7 mg/l, whereas it should be greater than or equal to 5 mg/l. "Our present investigation reveals that the Government of Gujarat and the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change have grossly abdicated their responsibilities," the letter read. The non-profit attributed a number of actions on part of the agencies to be behind the sorry state of affairs.

The non-profit blamed various completed and upcoming projects on the river including the Sardar Sarovar Project, Garudeshwar Weir, Statue of Unity and tourism projects near the statue for diminishing the flow of the river downstream. "The concerned authorities assumed, without any credible study, that 600 cusecs (Cubic Feet per Second) of water released would be enough for the downstream river. NCA, MoEF&CC and MoWR strangely agreed to this assumption and allowed water release, that too from the Godbole Gate and NOT the dam, as it should be," noted the Samiti's letter. It continued, "Moreover, the authorities agreed that this quantum would not be from Gujarat's share for Narmada waters. Which means the Gujarat Government today is releasing no water for the downstream river and goes through the motions of writing letters to MoEF&CC asking for more water, rather deciding to release water from its own share, as it should have been."

The lack of water has had a number of effects. The Narmada in Gujarat is known for its fish stocks including the famous Palla fish (known as Hilsa in eastern India). The lack of water threatens sea water ingress which could cause the fisheries to be destroyed. It could affect as

many as 10,000 fishing families, the letter noted. The sea water ingress also threatens the water supply and irrigation use of over 210 villages and towns and Bharuch city. The members of the study group also took a ground water sample near Nikora village, just 100 metres from the river bank. The sample was taken at 110 feet below the ground surface. It had a TDS of 1,610 mg/l.

“This indicates sea ingress in the Narmada that does not have any fresh water in the river,” the letter noted. The letter enumerated a number of demands including immediate discharge of 4,000 cusecs of water from the SSP to the river downstream, an immediate stop on the discharge of effluents into the river, monetary compensation to farmers and fisher folk, stopping of work on projects like the Garudeshwar Weir and the Bhadbhut Weir and implementing the February 22, 2017 order of the Supreme Court as well as National Green Tribunal order dated August 3, 2018 in letter and spirit.

Madhya Pradesh: Distressing endangered Gharials, illegal sand mining continues in Chambal sanctuary

<https://thelogicalindian.com/news/illegal-sand-mining-chambal-sanctuary/>

Summers are almost here, and people who enjoy exploring new places have already started writing down and scrapping off various tourists spots in the country. While Goa remains favourite among the millennials, Chambal sanctuary usually finds itself in the “scrapped off” lists. And mind you, it is not because people are not interested in witnessing the wildlife, but they fear that their trip will come to waste as they won’t be able to see ‘gharials’ – the fish-eating crocodile in the region. Gharials are critically endangered and unique crocodilian species of extraordinary conservation value. Moreover, it is the rarest large animal on the Indian subcontinent. And why are they not showing up more often? Yes, they are endangered, but the decimation of their natural habitat in the process of illegal sand mining on the banks of Chambal river is the primary source of their distress.

Apart from Gharials, other wildlife in the region are turtles, crocodiles, and several species of birds such as Flamingos. Apex Court banned illegal mining 13 years back. Illegal sand mining in the area is not new perhaps. The illegal sand mining in the area dates back to 2003. However, understanding the threat caused by illegal sand mining to the sensitive gharials and other flora and fauna in the region, the Supreme Court banned illegal sand mining. However, it has been almost 13 years after the ban, illegal mining continues to be more rampant in the Gwalior-Chambal area. Over the years, cases of cops failing to bar these activities have surfaced. People operating these illegal mining are called “Sand Mafia”, and over years, they have feared less to the authority. The mafias have not resisted themselves from attacking the forest officials and cops. Many have lost lives in this process. In 2012, an IPS officer was killed while several officials were assaulted.

Madhya Pradesh: Meet of fisheries federation held

<https://www.dailypioneer.com/2019/state-editions/meet-of-fisheries-federation-held.html>

A meeting of the Working Committee of Fisheries Federation was organised under the chairmanship of Animal Husbandry, Fisheries Welfare and Fisheries Development Minister Lakhan Singh Yadav on Monday. Decision was taken at the meeting to increase the honorarium of fishermen working in the reservoirs of the Fish Federation from Rs 150 to Rs 300 per day during training. Similarly, it was also decided to increase the expenditure on food, accommodation and other arrangements from Rs 100 to Rs 200 per day per trainee during training. Minister Yadav said that the Fisheries Federation has performed better this year compared to last year in the field of fisheries development.

He said that there is a scope for more improvement. Yadav directed to demarcate the reservoir and ensure how much area of the reservoir is in the Forest Department and how much is in the Fisheries Department in connection with the complaints of illegal fishing in Tighra reservoir of Gwalior district. Detailed reports should be prepared in this regard. Yadav said that regular review of activities conducted by Fisheries Federation should be ensured.

Madhya Pradesh: Experts flag decision to breed Taiwanese fish in Upper Lake

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/bhopal/experts-flag-decision-to-breed-taiwanese-fish-in-upper-lake/articleshow/67315660.cms>

The decision to breed Taiwanese fish ‘pangasius pangasius’ in the millennia-old Upper Lake has stirred a hornet’s nest with experts claiming that breeding of the foreign fish will cause irreparable damage to the water body. Till now, only Rohu and Samal fish were being fished out from Upper Lake– the only man-made lake in the country linked to drinking water supply. Experts say that breeding of fish, which is not from the same native environment, can cause long-term damage to the lake, which is a protected site under the UNESCO Ramsar treaty on wetlands. Large fishing cages are being assembled near the Upper Lake at Boat Club for the purpose. The project is being funded under Rashtriya Krishi Bima Yojana) and is also linked with Union government’s ambitious ‘Blue Revolution’ scheme aimed at developing fisheries and aquaculture.

“Upper Lake has been identified as the premier exhibit site for breeding of pangasius pangasius. Fish production and fish productivity from aquaculture and fishery resources of the inland would be demonstrated,” said department of fisheries director OP Saxena. The cage about 200-meters in length is being placed near the Van Vihar national park. Once the summer season arrives, the location would be shifted to right under the glow sign of ‘Welcome to City of Lakes’, he added.

Lake conservation expert Mukesh Dixit said, “In natural succession of species, there are both good and bad species which have a positive as well as adverse impact on the quality of water. Breeding of fish which are not native to the ecology can cause damage to the water body.”

A study on risk analysis and sustainability of ‘pangasius hypthalmus’ culture in India has highlighted that ‘catfish culture is fraught with severe disease problems’. As for the Upper Lake, experts suggest zooplankton species richness is reduced under chemical stresses which is central trophic link between primary producers and fish. The impact can be understood by an example that the water in the Upper Lake around the medical college had recorded a total 69 different phytoplankton species in 2005.

Madhya Pradesh: Pond revival project suffers as funding dries up

https://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ians/madhya-pradesh-s-pond-revival-project-suffers-as-funding-dries-up-118120500560_1.html

Basanta Vasunya a 35-year-old farmer from Bheel tribe of Dudhikheda village points towards a flourishing pond on which three villages rely. A recently established fish hatchery that nourishes, employs and empowers about 250 households stood next to the pond. Coming from one of the poorest tribes, that did fishing for self-consumption, for Basanta and his village chief Ralia Medha, revival and upgradation of traditional fishing into a profit-making business, was a dream they never foresaw. The sparkling pond that now runs over three hectare and 20 feet deep, was parched merely four years back as an effect of years of disproportionate rainfall and rise in temperature. Since 2015, in all 60 ponds across tribal villages in Madhya Pradesh's three districts - Jhabua, Dhar and Alirajpur -- have been revived for fishery and farmers have been trained, under a climate adaptation project financed by the UN Adaptation Fund (UNAF). However, is that enough?

About 1,528 ponds in this Nimar-Jhabua region are in dire need of a similar makeover. But the financial flow for the project has stopped, despite the fact that the amount it received through NABARD is less than half of what UNAF had released and less than five times what was originally approved. "The project had to stop as NABARD stopped sending our funds. So far we had received Rs 2.73 crore in five installments -- last in August, 2018," Amod Khanna, Director, NGO Towards Action and Learning (TAAL) told this visiting correspondent. Building Adaptive Capacities of Small Inland Fishermen Community for Climate Resilience and Livelihood Security, Madhya Pradesh, is one of the six major Indian projects receiving climate grants from UNAF. According to the UNAF, total sanctioned amount for the project was \$1.79 million (Rs 10.74 crore at exchange rate of Rs 60) of which \$895,260 (roughly Rs 5.37 crore), was released.

The NABARD being the national accredited entity, however, releases funds as per rules that project executors cannot understand. "We have been raising issues with NABARD, told them that task is not done but there had been no response... We had to stop the project but the local

field staff continues visiting the villages," Khanna said. Local tribals believe that fisheries would have ceased to exist and they would have had to migrate, had the project not worked out. Though limited to 60 ponds in separate village, people from three to five different villages depend on one revived pond. "Earlier the water was only five feet deep and the pond was 20 feet in length, mostly dried even during the peak season... We never imagined of seeing them full of water and to sell fishes at this scale," said Basanta, who sold fish eggs worth Rs 30,000 in July, along with five quintal small size fish worth Rs 50,000. Earlier raising only local varieties that survived in muddy water, villagers now raise commercial fishes like Rohu, Catla and Carp.

"Entire region has seen disproportionate rainfall and rise in heat. Four years back there was drought, and this year there was low rainfall," Ramesh Swedha, a farmer from Vaghlawat village in Dhar, who has received several government awards for his progressive work told IANS. According to India Meteorological Department (IMD), between 1951 and 2010 rainfall in the region has decreased by 1.81 mm per year, with 1.74mm drop in monsoon season. The mean temperature also increased by one degree Celsius, leading to excessive use of local water sources, thereby leaving no water for the fishes -- the major source of protein for the region. Swedha, one of the beneficiary, says that he do not need IMD records to assess climate change. "The gauge that I have installed here has been showing "errant rainfall" since past few years," he adds. At the ongoing Katowice Climate Talks (COP-24), the developing countries seek mobilizations of finance from rich countries -- \$100 billion per year.

"Without real money for real action, the urgent transition world needs to make will be impossible... Its next to impossible to quantify total amount received, under international climate finance. With countries and agencies having their own definitions as some even count development and infra project under climate action," Harjeet Singh, Global Lead on Climate Change, Action Aid International told IANS. There are over 30 sources of climate finance in India, with the World Bank, Green Climate Fund, UNAF, International Monetary Fund being major sources. Other sources includes bilateral ties with countries like Germany, UK, and earlier, the US. The UNAF, since 2015 has approved over \$9.8 Million for six adaptation projects, including the one covered in MP. The total funds released (through NABARD) were \$4.2 million. "India's NDC is hardly ambitious, funds are limited but Indian plans don't have vision for grassroot level, there are thousands of international aided projects running, but there is hardly any synergy," said Soumya Dutta, Convener of Climate & Energy Group at the Beyond Copenhagen Collective.

Manipur, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Bihar and Odisha: Training on fish feed underway at CIFA

<https://www.dailypioneer.com/state-editions/bhubaneswar/training-on-fish-feed-underway-at-cifa.html>

A NFDB-sponsored five-day national training on “Recent Trend on Feed and Feeding Strategy for Various Life Stages of Commercially Important Freshwater Fish” from August 21 to 25 at the ICAR-CIFA here is underway. Inaugurating the programme, ICAR-CIFA Director Dr BR Pillai emphasised the production of cost-effective diet for different life stages of fish by using locally available feed ingredients. She also expressed that in order to increase the present fish production of 3.0 tons/ha to 6.0 tons/ha, supplementary feed is essentially required.

She had advocated for the sustainable and eco-friendly aquaculture. Course Director Dr KN Mohanta opined that for doubling the income of fish farmer, the input optimisation is the need of hour. He also spoke about the different feeding strategies to be followed to reduce production cost and increase the profit margin. Programme Coordinator Dr KC Das gave the outline of the training program and ICAR-CIFA Principal Scientist Dr SC Rath offered a vote of thanks. Fisheries Department officials from the Government of Manipur, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Bihar and Odisha and Officers from the other Central Governments, entrepreneurs, progressive fish farmers and the trainers from the Aqua Field School (AFS) participated.

India: Heat wave will continue in Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Delhi: IMD

<http://zeenews.india.com/india/heat-wave-to-continue-in-rajasthan-punjab-haryana-madhya-pradesh-delhi-imd-2111643.html>

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has warned of heat wave conditions in North India, including Rajasthan, Haryana, Punjab and Delhi in the coming days. On Saturday, the maximum temperature in Narnaul town in Haryana was 46 degrees, while Patiala city in neighbouring Punjab was hot at 45 degrees. Hisar (45.7), Bhiwani (45.6) and Karnal and Ambala (both 44 degrees) had also seen an intensified heat wave and Chandigarh had recorded a high of 43.6 degrees on Saturday. Amritsar city in Punjab had recorded a high of 43.6 degrees, while Ludhiana was hotter at 44.6 degrees. In Delhi, on Saturday, the mercury had risen to 45 degrees celsius, which was five notches above normal for the season. IMD warning for 27 May (issued 2 pm): - Heat wave conditions are very likely to occur at most parts of west Rajasthan, some parts of east Rajasthan, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, Vidarbha, west Madhya Pradesh and at one or two pockets over Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, west Madhya Pradesh, Saurashtra and Kutch. - Heavy to very heavy rain at a few places over Lakshadweep and at isolated places over Kerala, sub-Himalayan West Bengal and Sikkim, Assam and Meghalaya and Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

Heavy rain very likely at isolated places over coastal Karnataka, south interior Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Arunachal Pradesh. - Thunderstorm accompanied with gusty winds very likely at isolated places over GWB, Odisha, Jharkhand, Bihar, east MP, south Konkan and Goa, Vidarbha, Chhattisgarh, Telangana, Tamilnadu and interior Karnataka. Duststorm/thunderstorm very likely at isolated places over Punjab, Haryana, Delhi and UP. - High wave in the range of

3.0-3.6 meters are likely along the coast of Lakshadweep Islands and Kerala. Squally wind speed reaching 40-50 Kmph gusting to 60 kmph very likely along and off Kerala and Karnataka coasts, over and around Lakshadweep area and Andaman and Nicobar Islands. - Fishermen are advised not to venture into the sea along and off Kerala and Karnataka coasts and over and around Lakshadweep and Andaman and Nicobar Islands. IMD warning for May 28: - Heat wave conditions are very likely to occur at many parts of west Rajasthan, some parts of east Rajasthan and at one or two pockets over Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, Madhya Pradesh, Saurashtra, Kutch and Vidarbha. - Heavy to very heavy rain at a few places over Lakshadweep and at isolated places over Kerala, heavy rain very likely at isolated places over coastal Karnataka, south interior Karnataka, sub--Himalayan West Bengal, Sikkim, Assam, Meghalaya and Andaman and Nicobar Islands. - Thunderstorm accompanied with gusty winds very likely at isolated places over UP, UK, gangetic West Bengal, Odisha, Jharkhand, Bihar, south Konkan, Goa, Chhattisgarh, Tamil Nadu and interior Karnataka.

Duststorm very likely at isolated places over east Rajasthan. - Squally wind speed reaching 40-50 kmph gusting to 60 kmph very likely along and off Kerala and Karnataka coasts, over and around Lakshadweep area and Andaman and Nicobar Islands. - Fishermen are advised not to venture into the sea along and off Kerala and Karnataka coasts and over and around Lakshadweep and Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

Madhya Pradesh: Dying Narmada will rob fishermen of their livelihoods'

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/dying-narmada-will-rob-fishermen-off-their-livelihoods/story-A2z6gfEcpo1lmxPsQ79n3I.html>

Fishermen fear the Bhadbuth Weir-cum-Causeway will rob them of their livelihood. It will cut off a unique ecosystem and after that, Narmada's hilsa is expected to die out in three years. The approach towards dam-building on rivers is to save every drop of sweet water from "running waste" into the sea. That dammed water is then redirected to those the government decides need it the most. These are typically urban centres, industrial zones, and farmers. But those who love the river say the one who needs the water first is the Narmada herself. It is an ideological chasm between those who live off the river, and those who would harness it. What happens when there is no water left for the river? It begins to die. That death begins with the death of the organisms that live in it, and spreads to the death of organisms that live off it. At the office of the Narmada Grievance Redressal Authority, Medha Patkar is pleading the case of Hazariabhai, a Bhilali adivasi from Barwani district. A community that survives on fishing, it has been allocated compensatory land 100km away from the river.

The story repeats itself along the route of the river as fishermen seek access to former breeding grounds that are now submerged and restricted. As mangroves vanish, flow turns to dead water, and the river runs dry. While the GDP of India from agriculture always includes fisheries — it

contributes 1.1% of the GDP, 5.15 % of the agricultural GDP; India ranks second globally in fisheries, and the sector engages 14 million people with an output of 10.07 metric tonnes — the protests of fishermen are almost always suppressed. In Bharuch, Kamlesh Madhivala, 38, Praveen Madhivala, 43, Heral Dheemar, 38 and Praveen Machi, 31 — members of the Samast Bharuch Machimar Samiti and under the banner of the Narmada Bachao Andolan — led a 4,000-member march to the district collector's office on April 17.

They protested on behalf of 35,000 fishermen who would be affected. It was not their first protest against the construction of the Bhadbuth Weir-cumCauseway at Kalparasar. The fishermen waved black flags at the Prime Minister Narendra Modi on his visit last year. The tendering process is on and construction is expected to begin in six months, raising the barrage at Ambetha near Dahej, 5.15km downstream. The project received Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) clearance in August 2017. The protestors say they were not consulted or informed, and were only able to file objections in November 2017, a month after the objection period lapsed. The NGT accepted the application nevertheless after all, livelihoods were at stake. The barrage will “save” the flow of sweet water out of the Gulf of Khambat, form a final wall between river and sea, and divert water to the Kalparasar reservoir, envisaged as a sweet water lake, to also draw tourism. Except, the fishermen fear, nothing about it will be sweet.

Already, they say, their hilsa fishing boats lie on sewage coming from the towns downstream, carried in with sea water as it encroaches on the absent river's territory. Once dammed, nothing will move the filthy water out from the stilled river. It will accumulate sewage and industrial effluents, they predict. At the river bank, the Narmada barely exists. Without consistent flow from the Sardar Sarovar dam throughout the year, the ingress of the sea is unstoppable, says Mahesh Pandya, environmentalist and director of NGO Paryavaran Mitra. The banks on both sides of the river have already turned saline, salt surfaces on the baking river bed. Nothing will grow here soon enough — another Kutch in the making. Protection walls line the west bank, as the river has begun to veer left. But they've been futile. When she flowed, the Narmada dug the soil out from behind the protection wall and went on her way. Most importantly for the fishermen, they fear their livelihood will be over.

The Narmada's hilsa is expected to die out in three years. The Narmada's most famous catch, the hilsa is female. The Nar Hilsa, or male hilsa, spawns in other estuaries, but the female tends to return to the mouth of the Narmada. The fish uniquely spawns in the brackish waters caused by the back and forth of the sangam - the mixing of river and sea during June, July and August. During the other nine months, the fishermen survive on other fish. But what they make in those three months is much larger than what they make off the rest of the year put together and is what allows them to perform marriages, build homes, and replace nets and boats. The weir will cut off this unique ecosystem. Officials from the Kalparasar project last year explained how they planned to build a fish lock for the hilsa to climb. The fishermen say they wanted to laugh in their faces. The hilsa, unlike the Atlantic salmon, for whom the lock systems work, cannot climb or fly.

Once the female hilsa dies out, it is only a matter of time for the male. Of the remaining river species, 80% have already disappeared.

Varieties they used to fish don't exist anymore: the Masheer, the unique Narmada prawn, disappeared in 2003. Local varieties called magyan, diggar, modda, gojira, and jeeptha too are also not to be found. Now, they get crocker fish and gotya instead. As of 2014, Praveen Dheemar used to carry off five tempos full of hilsa, he says. The fish would reach Kolkata the next day by train, where it would retail for Rs 800-1200 a kilogram. Now, he barely fills a tempo. The fishermen also helpfully pointed out a flaw in the design of the dam to its technical team. "Every year, the sea deposits silt in the river. All it takes is one monsoon day, and the river in full spate tosses the silt back to the river. This has been the natural pattern of the river for centuries," says Kamlesh Madhivala. With the dam and restriction of water flow in dry summers, this exchange no longer persists. So silt builds up. The fishermen say the salinity of the river was 4.5 EC (electrical conductivity) six months ago — that equals 16 feet of silt deposits. With repeated ingress of sea water, this increases.

The weir's height is designed at 86 feet. With Bharuch lying 36 feet upstream, and salinity expected to be 6.5 EC —an additional 20 feet of silt —the usefulness of the dam is reduced by half. VP Kapadia, chief engineer of the Kalpasar project, says the fishermen's fears are natural, but believes the project will actually save them. He said the government does not have official salinity figures but will release some in the first week of May, after taking samples only after the full moon, so as to measure it at its worst and doing an EC test as well as a chloride test. "There is no water now in the river but once the weir is built, it will retain what water is there. The impression that hilsa and other migratory fish will lose breeding grounds is false, as the weir is designed to include a fish path. This small channel will allow the intermingling of fresh water with the sea water to simulate breeding grounds. In fact, now when there is no water, the situation is worse," he says. The size of the channel and the amount of water it will release is a dynamic consideration.

As for the silt, Kapadia says there will be no change to the dam's height, which will cause other engineering issues such as more submergence of villages, but will require them to undertake a desilting of the riverbed. The indigenous knowledge of those who know the river first-hand is slowly being backed by research. A January 2017 study by Utpal Bhaumik et al, researchers of the Central Inland Fisheries Institute (CIFRI) showed that temperature changes along the river when it was not dammed were once naturally variegated. In its upper ranges, it was milder (15.0-30.5 Celsius), the central highlands and lower plains held at 19 to 33 degrees. These fluctuated by 7-9 degrees depending on the season. Post damming, the river got divided into some stagnant parts and some that flowed. "This creates two different environments," Bhaumik says. It made the temperature change erratic. The process began to kill off plankton, microphytae, floating and aquatic fauna. In the middle and lower zones, the level of dissolved oxygen fluctuated. The

ambient chloride values increased in the lower Narmada because of less freshwater discharge and incoming tidal salinity.

Experts say the dying of fish species has been two decades in the making. In 1996, K Sankaran Unni of CIFRI had found 174 species of river plankton and 111 kinds of zoo plankton covering nearly 550km of the river between Amarkantak and Sethanighat. By 2009, SN Singh, also from CIFRI Barrackpore, was reporting only 72 macrobenthic organisms in the estuary. The diversity and density of organisms are indicative of environmental conditions. “The Narmada river, with existing, ongoing, and proposed river valley projects, faces the pressure of severe shortages of river flow and a resultant acute shrinkage of habitat areas for the benthic organisms. The riverbed with mostly gravel, pebbles, and boulders has been gradually replaced by a coarse sand bed, which does not support the growth of macrobenthic fauna,” Bhaumik notes. In the building of the Indira Sagar dam, the nesting habitats of the shastradhara turtle, alongside that of crocodiles and monitor lizards, were submerged. The destruction of river turtle habitats greatly upset the ecological balance .

In 1941, Hora and Nair (authors of *Fishes of the Satpura Range*, Central Provinces, Records in Indian Museum, Calcutta), recorded 40 species of fish from the Satpura range alone. In 1967, Karamchandani et al (CIFRI) recorded 77 species in just the upper and middle zones. In 1990, Doria found 76 species within the river in Madhya Pradesh. In 1991, Rao et al (Inland Fisheries Society) studied the whole river and found only 84 species. Arjun Shulka and Sunita Sharma (Model Science College, Jabalpur) in 2017 found 25 species in the post monsoon season. Annual fish production in the Narmada was estimated at 269.8 metric tonnes (Dubey, 1984) between 1958–1959 and 1965–1966, i.e. prior to the development of dams. Figures through the years and recent figures for fisheries from the Narmada alone are not available. The fish-loving Bengalis are having the worst of it. In the estuary, the carp, mainly the Mahseer, rohu, kuhi or gunia, declined as have gegra and reta. Large catfish have been replaced by medium and small species.

After the construction of the Sardar Sarovar dam, giant freshwater prawns, unique to the river, declined. The brood stock of Hilsa moved to only breed within 100km of the Gulf of Cambay. “Annual catch of 16,000 tons of the species (hilsa) during 1990-1991 reduced to 4,000 tons in 2007-2008 and indicated a 75% decline in production over a period of one-and-a-half decades” Bhoumik notes. The river bank of the Narmada has now receded 3km away from the oncebustling Bharuch bunder. Locals in the old fishing villages recall having to move to higher ground for the roaring monsoon floods, collecting driftwood that would last them as firewood stocks for the whole year. “If they dam her up like this she will cease to flow. If she dies, our livelihood may go. No one will miss her more than us,” says Hiralbhai Dheemar.

Madhya Pradesh: Fishing Communities in Madhya Pradesh Assert Their Rights

Inland fishworkers of Madhya Pradesh are on the way to assert their rights. Led by Medha Patkar and community leaders around 350 fishworkers from different regions of Narmada river as well the Pench river and Pench forest areas demonstrated before the State Cooperative Federation Office at Bhopal on 5th April 2018. Later in the day a deputation on behalf of fish workers met the the Deputy Director of the Fisheries Federation. Medha Patekar and Rajkumar Singh from Narmada Banchao Andolan, Advocate Aradhana Bhargava from Kishan Sangharsh Samity, Chhindwara, Soumen Ray from National Platform for Small Scale Fishworkers(Inland) along with the leaders of fishworkers from different places like Sardar Sarovar, Indira Sagar, Bargi, Pench, and other places of the State were present in the deputation.

A group of the fishworkers cum activists from the downstream of the river Narmada in Baruch, Gujarat also joined. Several fishworkers cum activists explained their problems of fishing for livelihood protection as there are the shortage of Fishes mainly in the larger dams of the State. They claimed that the State policy on the marketing of Fishes from the larger water bodies (more than 100 acres) is the principal cause of the fish deficiency. Government through State Cooperative Federation invited the outsiders (business persons or companies) to bid for the fishing rights in the water bodies.. The bidder got access to the water bodies and caught the whole stock, even the juveniles., which the traditional fishers never used to catch. Fish resources development programmes were not properly executed. The contractors, appointed by the fisheries department or the State Federation never allowed the fish workers to look after the matters.

The other basic problem was the lack of maintenance of the reservoirs. Severe silting became a problem to the water bodies. It has also raised that the election of State Cooperative Federation was not held since the year 2000. Replying to the deputation, Mr Majhi, the Deputy Director of the Federation admitted that the election was not held due to several reasons but by appointing the Minister in Charge as Chairman of the Federation it is working perfectly. The appointment of the selling agents is not out of the rule. State Federation is just following the policy adopted by the State authority. Fishworkers demanded to abolish the appointment of contractors in fish selling and to reintroduce the previous system of selling through Cooperative Societies. They also demanded immediate election of the State Federation. Fishworkers from different places like, Indira Sagar, Bargi, of the State asked Soumen Ray to come to their respective places where they are eager to form Trade Unions.

On 6th April 2018 a meeting was held with the fishing community leaders under Chhindwara Kishan Sangharsh Samiti. were held. Machhagora dam and Totladoh dam are on Pench river that flows mostly inside the Pench forest. Fishworkers in Chhindwara used to catch the fish in these water bodies. But fishers are not allowed to catch fish in Totladoh and in Pench river as the area has been declared a protected area under the Wildlife Protection Act . The fishers resolved to

move against the oppression of forest department. They planned to form their Union to fight for the Rights of the fishworkers. On 8th April a group discussion was held at Khandwa with local activists working with fish workers in Khandwa and Burhanpur districts. It was planned that the activists in each district will go ahead to organize the fish workers to form a Union.

Madhya Pradesh: Ken, Betwa river linking will hurt fishing economy in the region: Dr Anish Andheria, president of the Wildlife Conservation Trust

<http://indianexpress.com/article/cities/mumbai/ken-betwa-river-linking-will-hurt-fishing-economy-in-the-region-dr-anish-andheria-president-of-the-wildlife-conservation-trust-4944119/>

The linking of Ken and Betwa rivers in Madhya Pradesh will affect the fishing economy in the region, according to Dr Anish Andheria, president of the Wildlife Conservation Trust. Addressing the annual conference of the Indian National Association for the Club of Rome, he said: “The government’s river-linking proposal is a no-go project. They are only considering the benefit it will have on agriculture, not realising the impact on the fishing economy. More than 30 per cent of the country gets its livelihood from it. This is applicable to all river-linking projects.” He was speaking on the topic, “Towards a Resource Resilient India — Security of Natural Resources for All: The Critical Need for Coherence in Policies and Actions.” According to Dr Andheria, the diversion of surplus water from the Ken basin to the dry Betwa basin will have several repercussions. “There is no such thing as surplus water. It is important for fresh water to flow into the sea as it reduces salinity at the mouth of the river.

Fishes are found abundantly in this region where the fresh water merges with brackish water. If the water is diverted to other rivers, there will be no fish there,” said the city-based conservationist. He added that the government has not accounted for the large number of trees that will be lost in the project. “It will also increase power consumption as they will have to use electricity to pump water in the direction away from its natural flow,” he said. Speaking in the backdrop of the conference, professor Kirit Parikh, a former member of the Planning Commission, said farmers should get incentives to save solar power. “Farmers using solar power should be able to sell surplus solar power. That will make the use of solar power more energy efficient as they will want to save as much power as possible to sell the rest. This model was implemented in Dhundi village in Gujarat and was found to be highly successful,” said Parikh, who is currently the chairman of the Integrated Research for Action and Development, a research institute that focuses on energy, climate change and environment. The Maharashtra government has started a solar project under which solar panels powering agricultural pumps are connected to feeders and the supply is at subsidised rates. However, Parikh believes this alone will not motivate farmers to save power.

Madhya Pradesh: Artificial breeding – a ray of hope to conserve Mahseer fish

<http://www.india.com/news/agencies/artificial-breeding-a-ray-of-hope-to-serve-mahseer-fish-2588346/>

The Madhya Pradesh forest department is hopeful that artificial breeding of ‘Mahseer’ fish in the Narmada river will help in conserving the endangered species, an official said today. Due to continuous fishing, the Mahseer, popularly known as the ‘tiger of fresh water’ and having the distinction of being the state fish of MP, is facing the threat of extinction, he said. The conservation of Mahseer is important as its presence is considered a benchmark for the cleanliness of water in the Narmada river, the official said. The forest department, in collaboration with the state biodiversity board, has achieved a breakthrough in artificial breeding of Narmada Mahseer (also popular as ‘tor-tor’ among locals) following efforts over the past couple of years, an official of the public relations department said.

“Repeated attempts in this direction failed for last two-three years. This year, the experiment was carried out by scientists in the flowing water of Narmada’s tributary – the Choral river,” he said. “For the first time, about 20 per cent of the eggs (of Mahseer fish) have fertilised. This project would be beneficial to the fishermen in a big way,” the official said. The breeding of around 150 baby fish of Mahseer has been done. The forest department will further try to increase the number of the species with the help of these baby fish,” he added.

Madhya Pradesh: Narmada dam-affected fisherfolk don't yet have fishing rights in Madhya Pradesh, admits top Central official

<http://www.counterview.net/2017/09/narmada-dam-affected-fisherfolk-dont.html>

A senior Government of India official has admitted that the Madhya Pradesh government has not provided fishing rights to the fisherfolk-oustees of the Sardar Sarovar dam, living on the banks of Narmada. Narmada Control Authority's (NCA's) Afroz Ahmed was in Maharashtra's Bhusha village for an interaction with the state’s fisherfolk ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's birthday bash at the dam on September 17. Even as conceding to a similar longstanding demand of Maharashtra oustees, living next to the Narmada river, Ahmed, who is learnt to have been sent to mellow down their anger, on the rise following "failure" to provide any facilities to them as part of the rehabilitation packages to offered to the Narmada dam oustees, said, he takes "full responsibility" for providing fishing rights to 17 fishing cooperatives operating along Narmada.

The NCA official’s meeting with Maharashtra's fisherfolk followed the state government agreeing to form fisherfolk's cooperatives to the struggling oustees of Manibeli, Shelgada, Chichkhedi and Khardi villages, even as distributing them fishing nets to them. On hearing of the NCA official's visit, fisherfolk representatives from Madhya Pradesh villages joined in to raise their demands. Ahmed, who was seen to answer all questions related to the fisherfolks'

problems following the Government of India nod to close down of the dam's gates, leading to the reservoir level reaching 138.68 metres, the full height, however, avoided any reply to queries on why 15,000 oustees have been kept out of the rehabilitation package. These oustees have been kept outside of the package because of "recalculation" of the backwater levels. A senior Narmada official, talking to Counterview on condition of anonymity, said, the backwater levels have been recalculated at a "much lower level" than the earlier level because "a previous Madhya Pradesh government, hyped the backward levels to extract as huge Central funds in the name of oustees." However, he insisted, the recalculation showed the Narmada's backwater waters wouldn't rise as much as earlier contemplated at the full reservoir level." Meanwhile, a memorandum submitted to Ahmed, the anti-dam Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA), under whose auspices most of the fisherfolk had gathered, appreciated the NCA official for holding direct dialogue with them, even as objecting to Modi's birthday bash on September 17 in order to "dedicate" the dam to the nation.

The memorandum said, "Even basic environmental preconditions in Maharashtra, a prerequisite for completing the dam, have not been fulfilled till date". The facts enumerated in the memorandum included the failure to treat the 20,000 hectares (ha) dam's catchment area out of 67,000 ha, failure to plant trees in lieu of 40-50,000 destroyed because of submergence, and failure to develop 33 villages, whose land went into submergence. Providing specific problems of villages, the memorandum said, there are no health facilities in Akkakua and Akrani villages; there is a failure to look into the complaints of rehabilitation of 950 families, which have not received either land or irrigation facilities; failure to survey 226 families of the Tapu village; forest rights to forest dwellers have not been provided; and there is incomplete construction of several rehabilitation colonies, including Kathardedigar, Mod and Kukalav.

Madhya Pradesh: Fishes found dead at Pipliyapala

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/indore/fishes-found-dead-at-pipliyapala/articleshow/60164806.cms>

Citizens living around Pipliyapala pond woke up to the sight of hundreds of floating dead fish on Monday morning. Nearly a thousand fish were killed on Monday morning at the water body located at the city's outskirts. Locals of the area claimed the fish either died due to some contamination or lack of oxygen in the water but officials blamed the heat. "Fish are sensitive and high temperature make it difficult for them to survive as the level of dissolved oxygen goes down," said Balram Verma, in-charge of Indore Municipal Corporation's water works department. He said the rainfall was low and as a result, the water in the pond could not be recycled, creating an environment in which the fish couldn't survive. "We have already sent our staff to remove the dead fish from the pond to avoid any contamination," he said, adding that the surviving fish might be dangerous for consumption. Experts accused the authorities of not taking

care of the pond. "Due to improper maintenance, water level in most water bodies in and around the city have receded.

Besides, the construction of concrete floors around the bodies also stops rain water from getting in from catchment," said Bhalu Mondhe, an environmental expert. He said that due to this the level of dissolved oxygen in the water has reduced making it impossible for fish to survive. "The alarming level of pollution in urban water bodies around the city could be another reason for this disaster," added Mondhe. This is not the first time that fish have died at a water body in city. Earlier, lakhs of fish had died in Bilawali water tank after IMC released water from the body last month. The fish died allegedly after IMC miscalculated the monsoon and drained the water out of the tank by opening three valves.

Madhya Pradesh: Feel ashamed to tell our relatives that we survive on fishing

<https://scroll.in/article/845911/damned-if-you-do-as-history-repeats-itself-on-narmada-those-displaced-27-years-ago-issue-a-warning>

Sitting on the bank of Madhya Pradesh's Bargi reservoir one cloudy evening in July, 47-year-old Punaram Yadav had some words of advice for the residents of the 192 villages, approximately 700 km away, which face submergence as the height of the Sardar Sarovar Dam on the Narmada river is raised. "Do not trust the promises of the authorities," said Yadav. In 1990, Yadav's village of Kathotiya was one of 162 villages in Jabalpur, Mandla and Seoni districts of Madhya Pradesh that were submerged by the Bargi Dam, also on the Narmada. About 114,000 people were displaced. According to records, the government informed only 70,000 people from 101 villages that they would be displaced. However, when the reservoir filled up, even sites identified to relocate displaced families were submerged. The residents of Kathotiya took refuge on a nearby hill and constructed houses on forest land.

Twenty-seven years later, the new village, also named Kathotiya, still does not have a road of its own. "The nearest road on the other side [of the reservoir] is eight kilometers away," said Yadav. "We have to walk through the slopes and the forests to catch a vehicle." Yadav and a few more residents of the village had come to the weekly market centre at Bargi Nagar, near the dam, by rowing a boat across the reservoir. The water levels were high because of the good early monsoon. Yadav and two women, already in the boat, were waiting for their fellow villagers to finish shopping so that they could return home. The women were getting restless. The journey to their village takes two hours, and it is not safe to row the boat late in the evening during the monsoon. "There have been accidents in the past," said Yadav. "But this is the most convenient way to travel to and from our village." It is not just roads.

Kathotiya village is also not supplied with electricity. Neither do the neighbouring villages of Milki and Badhaiya Khera, whose residents were also displaced by the dam. "Poles were erected in our village in the previous tenure of the Shivraj Singh Chouhan government," said Yadav.

“But there has been no supply even for testing the wires on the poles.” In fact, Kathotiya, Milki and Badhaiya Khera, and eight more villages where those displaced by the dam settled, were included in the revenue records of the Madhya Pradesh government only in December, when Chouhan visited the dam as part of his much-advertised Narmada Yatra. This means, that for nearly three decades, these villages were not included in many government welfare schemes, such as agriculture subsidies or crop compensation, that are routed through the state revenue department. Forgotten villages Completed in 1990, the Bargi Dam, also known as the Rani Avanti Bai Sagar Irrigation Project was the first major reservoir to be built on the Narmada river in Madhya Pradesh.

It was expected to irrigate 4.37 lakh hectares of land and produce 105 megawatt of hydropower. Unlike the Sardar Sarovar Dam, which is finally being raised to the maximum height after decades of legal battles, the construction of the Bargi Dam was quick. Government records and testimonies of the residents of the relocated villages, however, show that the government not only ignored the rehabilitation of people at the time of their displacement, but also virtually forgot about them for 27 years. “India did not have a policy of rehabilitation then,” said Rajesh Tiwari, a resident of Chaurai village, one of those affected by the dam, who has been working with the displaced families. “Shoddy compensation was paid to people after which they were left to fend themselves. The rehabilitation policies have evolved over the years but families displaced by the Bargi Dam are still living forsaken lives.” Shoddy rehabilitation A total of 26,797 hectares of land were submerged by the dam.

Government files have contradictory records of whether authorities considered resettling and rehabilitating the people who had been displaced by the dam. A 1987 report by Jabalpur commissioner KC Dubey on the displacement caused by the project said, “the state had a clear-cut policy for the rehabilitation and resettlement of persons whose lands come under submergence in irrigation projects”. It said that the policy included the provision of a job for one person from each displaced family. It said a draft legislation to implement it was also prepared. However, the Narmada Valley Development Authority, which executed the project, said in a 1994 report that, “No specific resettlement and rehabilitation policy regarding the project affected people was existing when the [Bargi Dam] project was taken up for construction in 1971. There was, at that period of time, only provision for payment of compensation for land and property coming under submergence”.

In reality, what most displaced families got was a meagre compensation of Rs 500 to Rs 9,940 per acre, as fixed by the government. For many displaced families whose only source of income was land, the paltry compensation was of little help as they struggled to rebuild their lives after displacement. Prosperity to poverty The family of Narayan Gond, an Adivasi from Magardha village, about 50 km south of Jabalpur, was one of them. Before the dam submerged their village, Gond’s family was well-off by local standards. His father owned 10 acres of land. “The

soil in the Narmada valley was very rich,” said Gond, clad in a short white dhoti, a cream kurta and an orange gamchha.

“We used to take three crops in a year. We had a four-room house and a separate shelter for cattle. Our four buffaloes and four cows gave 20 litres milk every day. I used to sell it in the nearby market.” But their land was acquired as it fell in the area of the Bargi reservoir. The family got Rs 33,000 as compensation for their land and the house. “We went to buy new land in nearby areas with the compensation money but land prices in the region had suddenly shot up,” said Gond. “While we got Rs 2,500 per acre as compensation, land in the region was being sold at Rs 10,000 per acre.” So, like many others from his village, Gond built a house for his family by clearing the forest in a nearby hilly area. The family’s cattle died after they got trapped in the mud of the dam’s water. To make ends meet, Gond worked as a labourer in construction work related to the dam. “I worked really hard,” he said. “I used to lift huge boulders on my head. It was a question of survival.”

In the first few years of their displacement, the family spent most of the compensation money they had received to support themselves. “After the dam construction work was completed, my father was left with Rs 10,000 from the compensation money,” said Gond. “He gave Rs 5,000 each to me and my brother. I bought a boat for Rs 2,500 and a fishing net for Rs 2,500. I survived on fishing for three years till the boat and the net were in good shape. Then I did not have money to repair the boat or buy a new net.” Gond sent his two sons to work as daily-wage labourers in Jabalpur. He and his wife survived by cultivating small patches of forestland for which they faced the wrath of the forest department. “Forest officials would call us encroachers and demolish our houses every now and then,” recalled Gond. “I had to build five houses in the past 25 years.” Gond got some relief in 2015 when he got a title over 4.5 acres of forestland under the Forest Rights Act, which recognises the traditional rights of tribals over forestland they traditionally used. However, the provisions of this Act are not applicable to non-tribal families.

Gond regrets that the displacement not only upturned his family’s fortunes, it also ruined the lives of the younger generation. His younger son is illiterate. “We had a primary school at our original village,” he said. “After the village got submerged, we did not have a school or a panchayat building for 10 years. The kids who grew at that time are illiterate now.” Gond is not alone. Before their village of Magaradha was submerged, 80-year-old Rukmani Devi Patel’s late husband was elected sarpanch unopposed for 20 years, and her family possessed 50 acres of land. Now, her son fishes for a living. Patel’s family was given Rs 1,30,000 as compensation for their land and house. “We used to have at least six permanent workers to take care of our farms,” she recalled. “We bought a couple of acres of land from the compensation money but it was not fertile enough to sustain the family.

Now we feel ashamed to tell our relatives that we survive on fishing.” Jamman Patel, one of the elderly men in Magaradha village, recalled how the lives of everyone in the village took a turn

for the worse after they were displaced. “Magardha used to sustain people from the nearby four to five villages by providing them employment in its farms,” he said. “We were all self-sufficient. [But] for the past 35 years, the only way for our children to earn money is to migrate to nearby towns and work as labourers.” In a report submitted to the state government in 1990, BK Minz, who was the Regional Additional Commissioner of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in Jabalpur at that time, pointed out that the authorities had promised five acres of agricultural land to every family before their displacement. The report said: “But forget the agriculture land, they were not even provided with the alternative livelihoods. This was sheer injustice with the tribals. They have been duped. For their survival, they have now been cultivating on forestland which has also been stopped by the forest department. This will lead to deaths from hunger.”

Bureaucratic apathy The callous attitude of authorities towards families displaced by the Bargi Dam led to several protests in the region in the 1990s. Fisherfolk in the area organised boat rallies, carried out mass fishing in defiance of the law, and stopped government auctions of fishing rights to contractors in order to assert the rights of the displaced families on fishing. Narmada Bachao Andolan leader Medha Patkar and bureaucrat-turned-tribal-rights-activist late BD Sharma led the protests. The youth in many villages boycotted the 1991 Lok Sabha elections. Under pressure, the government allocated funds to rehabilitate the displaced families. However, the money was shoddily spent and brought only cosmetic changes on the ground. Said a report by the erstwhile Planning Commission on the displacement caused by irrigation dams: “In Bargi, five ‘model villages’ were established at considerable cost, but because no cultivable land was made available and there were no livelihood prospects in the vicinity, people migrated in droves, reducing the model villages almost to ghost towns.

Starvation deaths were alleged in the ‘model’ village of Gorakhpur.” Several other independent evaluations of the rehabilitation work showed that the government spent a chunk of the allocated funds on constructing buildings and creating infrastructure at places where there were no displaced families, including at the district headquarters. A major outcome of the mass protests was that in 1994, the state government gave the federation of cooperative fishing societies – which comprised displaced families – exclusive rights over fishing in the Bargi Dam, as well as over the sale of fish. However, in 1998, the Madhya Pradesh Fisheries Federation, which auctions fishing rights in lakes or reservoirs to contractors for the state government, got a stay from the Madhya Pradesh High Court on the fishing rights of the displaced families’ cooperatives on the Bargi Dam.

It levelled charges of financial irregularities against the cooperatives’ federation. “It was a conspiracy by the bureaucracy that wanted contractors to take over fishing,” said Munna Bhai Burman, a fisherman whose family was displaced by the dam and who headed the federation. “They did not want the resources of the Bargi Dam to be decentralised in people’s hands.”

Callous government Another scheme that the state government initiated but subsequently

abandoned was to provide, on lease, displaced families with patches of land that came out of submergence in the dry season. Between 1997 and 2007, many families earned a livelihood by growing rabi crops on such land. However, the Bharatiya Janata Party government, after coming into power in 2001, cancelled the leases, arguing that the cultivation would cause siltation in the dam. Rajkumar Sinha, president of the Bargi Bandh Visthapit Avam Prabhavit Sangh, an organisation of the Bargi Dam displaced families, recalled that the government formed rehabilitation committees at the state, division and district levels to evaluate the status of displaced families and suggest rehabilitation measures.

“We were also among the members of these committees,” he said. “We worked hard to conduct a survey in the region and recommend actions. But the committees just kept meeting for years and no actions were taken.” He added: “All governments have shown a callous attitude towards the displaced families. While the previous Congress government kept making schemes only on paper, the current BJP government discontinued most of the schemes.” The government apathy is striking. Bargi Nagar, where the dam is constructed, was declared an adarsh village (model village) by the state government in 1989. The plan was to develop it from the rehabilitation money. It also has a settlement of fisherfolk families that were displaced by the dam, called Zero Tanki, adjacent to the dam wall. When Scroll.in visited Zero Tanki in July, its residents complained of the lack of basic amenities, including drinking water.

Chief Minister Chouhan had visited the village in December during his Narmada Yatra. “That was the only day that the water was supplied into the pipeline in our village,” said Deepchand Burman, a resident of the village. “[Otherwise] every day our women walk 2 km to fetch water from Bargi Nagar.” Apart from the dry pipeline, the model village also has two half-dug wells and an incomplete aanganwadi building. Back at the dam site, Yadav was emphatic. “Do not vacate the land till you are given same facilities outside,” he said. “You don’t want your families to suffer like us.”

Madhya Pradesh: Narmada Valley, Stop drowning 40,000 farmers, fisherfolk and indigenous families without rehabilitation, save the river Narmada from destructive development!

http://www.habitants.org/zero_evictions_campaign/zero_evictions_narmada_valley/narmada_valley_stop_drowning_40_000_farmers_fisherfolk_and_indigenous_families_without_rehabilitation_save_the_river_narmada_from_destructive_development

The situation today around River Narmada – one of the largest rivers in India is grim on all fronts. Internationally acclaimed environmentalist, social activist and member of the World Commission on Dams - Medha Patkar along with 12 other project affected women is on her 4th day of an indefinite hunger strike against the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s authoritarian decision to raise the height of Sardar Sarovar Dam and close its gates without

ensuring rehabilitation of 40,000 of people who have been living in the areas that will be submerged due to this decision. The central government along with the State government of Madhya Pradesh (both ruled by the unabashedly majoritarianian Bhartiya Janta Party) is busy trying to distort facts and figures instead of ensuring a dignified rehabilitation of the homes and occupations of agrarian and indigenou forest communities whose villages and towns will drown due to this ecologically devastating project. Enjoying an electoral majority, the ruling party has stifled all voices of dissent through brutal police crackdowns on the peaceful, non-violent protest.

Parliamentary democracy in India is hitting an all-time low as dialogue and debate about the issue in Council of States of India and Legislative Assembly of the State of Madhya Pradesh was simply not allowed and Opposition leaders were later arrested. On an environmental front, a heavy rain this monsoon has caused devastating floods even in the State of Gujarat (beneficiary State of the Sardar Sarovar Dam project). Warnings from environmentalists are ignored and common masses of the country are being misled into worshipping the river by invoking its spirituality whereas the dams, inter-linking river projects, sand mining, dumping of industrial waste and urban sewage are killing whatever is left of the river. Waters from the river are diverted to corporate projects (like Coca Cola) while farmers in India are committing suicide due to lack of government support to agriculture.

The 32 years old valiant struggle of Narmada Bachao Andolan has shook the development discourse world-wide and even forced giants like World Bank to withdraw funding from environmentally destructive and human rights violative projects like Sardar Sarovar Dam and institute the Inspection Panel Mechanism. As the lives of 40,000 families, including the life of one of the most loved people's leader are at stake. We call upon the Government of India, Prime Minister of India, Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh, Supreme Court of India to stop forcible eviction and unjust submergence, ensure complete rehabilitation as per law and initiate dialogue with oustees and Narmada Bachao Andolan. In Solidarity with the Narmada Bachao Andolan

Madhya Pradesh: Sewage and filth leaves Upper Lake gasping

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/bhopal/sewage-and-filth-leaves-upper-lake-gasping/articleshow/59242470.cms>

Upper Lake considered to be the lifeline of the state capital is dying a slow death. A large part of the city's sewage, chemical and toxic waste finds its way into the millennia old water body, degrading its quality. Each day, the Upper Lake which is source of drinking water for 40% of the city is filled with some 7,500 cubic metric million litre of sewage. Treatment plants that handle the task of sewage filtration do exist, but environmentalists question the effectiveness. "The sewage treatment plants are not in line with the capacity requirement. These can only filter water not the chemicals," says environment activist, Subhas C Pandey.

A senior government scientist, during a discussion on air pollution in the city, warned that the unchecked sewage that is flowing in the Upper Lake is causing drastic water quality degradation. The only man-made lake mentioned in the list of Ramsar sites under the Ramsar Convention on Wetland, Upper Lake, is also the only one on the list that doubles as a source of drinking water. The degeneration of water quality is enhanced by unabated flow of sewage mixed with storm water run-off into the lake. "As the lake fills up, the mean depth and detention time of the water body decreases. Excessive plant growth like green colour, decreased transparency, excessive weeds are all signs of degradation," added the scientist. The Bhoj Wetland Project — a large area of around 33.78 square km — has had severe weed infestation in the entire fringe area.

Madhya Pradesh: Madhya Pradesh widens net to ramp up fish output

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/bhopal/state-widens-net-to-ramp-up-fish-output/articleshow/57351100.cms>

Realising that switching to hybrid makes sense for both growers and consumers in the state, fishermen welfare and fisheries development department has gone ahead with fish farming of popular varieties. The department intends to ramp up production of fish like rohu and katla and pangasius in the state, which will benefit those into fish culture for livelihood. Cage culture fish farming technique is being used for the purpose. To start with, around 1,000 cages are being placed in Indira Sagar dam and Dahod dam of the state. The technique will be gradually introduced in other reservoirs of the state. A sum of Rs 50,000 is required per cage. In a normal reservoir, 50 kg to 70 kg of fish is produced per hectare while in cage culture fish farming, the production goes up to over 2,000 ton per hectare, officials said. Department's principal secretary Vinod Kumar said 6 by 4 metre net is used for cage culture. A target to place 1,000 cages has been set for this year, which will be increased.

Apart from meeting local demand, fish supply goes up to Andhra Pradesh, New Delhi and West Bengal, he says. For 2016-17, fish production in the state was set at 10,6,000 tonnes. For next financial year, the target is set at 1.22 lakh ton. Officials said while natural seeds grow to a weight of around 700 grams in a year, the improved hybrid seeds grow to around 1.5 kg in the same time. For promoting cage culture to increase fish production, the department provides a subsidy of 40%. In reservoirs, fish survive on natural feed. In cage culture, the feeding is done manually from the top. States like Andhra Pradesh and Chhattisgarh are already using cage culture to promote production in their state, officials said. Officials said emphasis is to cut role of middleman and direct benefits to fishermen. Fish production is expected to double in next five years with fresh initiatives. As per norm, the fishing contract for a lake of the size of 1,000 hectare is given by village panchayat while open auction is conducted by fishing federation of the lakes above 1,000 hectares. In both cases, involvement of local fishermen is ensured so that those into in fishing business can earn profit and continue to do work in the field, officials say.

Madhya Pradesh: Narmada dam oustees: Madhya Pradesh govt suffers setback, as High Court insists on land compensation

<http://www.counterview.net/2017/01/madhya-pradesh-govt-suffers-setback-as.html>

In a major setback to the Madhya Pradesh (MP) government, which had been offering cash compensation against the land lost by the oustees of Gujarat's Narmada dam, the High Court's Indore bench has ruled that those who had received the first cash installment would be entitled to land compensation. Termed special rehabilitation package or SRP, the cash-for-land formula was worked by Gujarat government bureaucrats more than a decade ago in order to speed up completion of the Narmada dam. Gujarat officials worked out SRP because, say sources, there wasn't enough land available in MP to be offered to the dam's oustees. Ousteas' rehabilitation, under the law, is a prerequisite for completing the Narmada dam. Failure to rehabilitate the dam's oustees in Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra currently remains the main hurdle in putting the dam into full operation by closing its 30-odd gates, installed on it. The MP High Court's interim ruling is likely to benefit as many as 1,505 oustee families, who were offered first installment of the cash compensation.

Operating through the grievances redressal authority (GRA), formed to listen to the oustees' complaints, the state government had decided against giving land, saying they must get cash compensation alone. A large number oustees, mostly tribals, say activists of the Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA), had found that amount offered to them – just about Rs 2.79 lakh – as compensation is ridiculously insufficient to buy up 5 acres of land. The interim order has come in a case filed by tribal farmer Mohan Mehtab, who had pleaded with the court that, as he had refused the second cash installment, he should be offered land. The High Court upheld Mehtab's plea, keeping the next hearing for February 14, insisting, all those who did not get the second installment should be entitled to get land. The High Court's interim order comes just about two months after the MP government issued a controversial notice to hundreds of oustees belonging to tens of villages of Badwani and Dhar districts of MP, stating that, since they had not accepted the land allocated to them by the state's Land Bank, their "eligibility for alternative agricultural land has exhausted."

Issues by MP's rehabilitation officer of the Narmada Valley Development Authority (NVDA), the notice stated that if the oustees did not collect cash compensation "within 2-4 days" (i.e. by December 30, 2016), which is up to Rs 3 lakh, they would be deemed as rehabilitated, and the amount would be deposited with the Revenue Department. Questioning the compensation amount, NBA wonders, "The cost of 5 acres irrigated land at present is estimated to be between Rs 50 lakh-2 crore. If land can be bought for Rs 2.50-3 lakh, then why doesn't the authority buy it itself and then allocate it?" An honorary member of GRA, which has been hearing the plea against such little compensation, has been quoted as saying, "Where will we provide the land

from? It has become so expensive. If you can't buy the land, then buy a tractor with that money. You won't get land even in ten years."

Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh: Ken-Betwa linking project receives environment and forest clearances

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/bhopal/ken-betwa-linking-project-receives-environment-and-forest-clearances/story-ObCxWY3Csyl1BWLAKFzKzM.html>

The Centre's ambitious Ken-Betwa river linking project, which aims at addressing water needs of dry swathes in Madhya Pradesh and poll-bound Uttar Pradesh inter alia, has received environment, forest and tribal clearances, sources in Union Water Ministry said. However, there was no official confirmation in this regard. On the other hand, a booklet the Ministry released on Tuesday stated that the forest advisory committee of the ministry of environment and forest and climate change has considered the proposal for forest clearance during its meeting held on November 8 and "decided to have some additional information before giving clearance". The environmental appraisal committee has "duly considered" and "agreed" for the project in its meeting held on December 30. The ministry of tribal affairs has also agreed for the clearance of the project during a meeting held on Monday, the booklet reads. The booklet, circulated at a briefing called by Union water resources minister Uma Bharti, also states that the clearances for the project are in a "very advanced stage" of completion and that the government will start implementing the national project as "model link" of inter-linking of river (ILR) programme.

"The phase I of the project, first ILR project, had received clearance from the Standing Committee of National Board of Wild Life in August last year... The remaining clearances, environment, forest and tribal clearances, too have been obtained, official communication regarding which though is awaited," sources said. "Obtaining the wildlife clearance was the most difficult clearance to get in connection with the project. I am thankful to the board for giving us the clearance...now we are pursuing NITI Ayog to change its funding pattern to 90:10 (Centre : state share) from 60:40 for the project given it is a special project," Bharti said. Work on the project cannot be launched until the funding pattern is finalised. Phase I of the project, of linking Ken river in Madhya Pradesh and Betwa in Uttar Pradesh, at a cost of ₹9500 crore is envisaged to help irrigate an area of 6.35 lakh hectares annually. Of this, 3.69 lakh hectares will be covered in Madhya Pradesh's Chattarpur, Tikamgarh and Panna districts.

The remaining 2.65 lakh hectares of area falls in Uttar Pradesh's Mahoba, Banda and Jhansi districts. The project is estimated to provide 49 million cubic metres of drinking water to a population of 13.42 lakh of people in Bundelkhand region in the two states. Besides, the project will also generate 78 mega watt of power. Envisaged first in 1980 to transfer surplus river water Envisaged first in 1980 to transfer surplus river water to dry/arid areas, the river-linking the national perspective plan, under which Ken-Betwa river-linking project is taking shape, aims at

creating additional irrigation potential of 35 million hectare and generation of 34000 mega watt of power.

Controlling flood, navigation, water supply, fisheries, salinity, drought mitigation and combating pollution are among the other stated objectives of the NPP, which gained momentum during the previous NDA regime led by Atal Bihari Vajpayee. Apart from the Ken-Betwa linking project, Par-Tapi-Narmada Link (to transfer water from surplus regions of Western Ghats to the dry areas of Kutch and Saurashtra and Damanganga-Pinjal link, which will provide water for the Greater Mumbai, are among the 30 such river links planned.

Madhya Pradesh: Madhya Pradesh plans to develop 1,100 'climate-smart' villages

http://www.moneycontrol.com/news/economy/madhya-pradesh-plans-to-develop-1100-climate-smart-villages_8183661.html?utm_source=ref_article

Madhya Pradesh has embarked on an ambitious plan to develop 1,100 'climate-smart' villages with an aim to prepare farmers to manage the climate change risks timely and ensure good productivity. "The government has been planning to develop 1,100 villages as climate-smart villages in a period of next six years," state Farmer Welfare & Agriculture Development Department Principal Secretary Dr Rajesh Rajora told PTI. He said 100 villages in each of the 11 agro-climatic zones of the state would be taken up under the plan, which would incur a cost about Rs 150 crore every year. "The work is being taken up under the National Agriculture Development Programme (NADP) and Indian National Mission on Sustainable Agriculture," he said. In these villages, the farmers would be encouraged to go for short duration variety of crops, in addition to using drought-resistance seeds. "The focus would be on integrated agriculture, which comprises animal husbandry, fisheries, in addition to traditional farming. Agro-forestry would also be adopted in these villages," Rajora said.

Agro-forestry conserves and protects the natural resources as it helps water retention and stops soil erosion. He said integrated nutrients management would also be implemented to help in soil fertility and plant nutrients supply through optimisation of all possible sources of organic, inorganic and biological components. "In addition, the integrated pest management, zero tillage, raised bed gardening techniques and micro-irrigation would also be introduced in the climate smart villages. This would help farmers to increase the productivity amid all challenges of climate change," he said. Zero tillage technique is a way of growing crops time and again without disturbing the soil through ploughing, another agriculture expert said. "The micro-irrigation systems like drip and sprinklers would not only reduce the water use but also lessen the use of fertilisers and energy," he said.

Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh: Reviving the Farakka debate

<http://www.thestatesman.com/news/opinion/reviving-the-farakka-debate/164057.html>

The recent floods in Bihar and to a lesser extent in places such as eastern Uttar Pradesh and parts of West Bengal and Madhya Pradesh have again raised serious questions about the role of dams and barrages in flood protection. The massive discharges of the Sone river water from Bansagar dam have contributed to the fury of Ganga floods in an unexpected way. While this has led to a debate on dam management, what has attracted even more attention is the statement by the Chief Minister of Bihar regarding the adverse impact of the Farakka barrage on making Bihar more prone to floods. While this is not the first time the adverse impact of the Farakka project has been highlighted, the issue being raised by a Chief Minister in rather strong terms has its own importance. Apart from voicing the apprehension that the project by increasing the silt load in the Ganga has made it difficult for flood waters to be cleared quickly, Nitish Kumar has called for a review of the Farakka project and if such a review supports the frequent allegations of its disruptive and harmful role, the possibility of decommissioning it should be kept open.

While some dam projects have been decommissioned in other countries in recent times, this is the first time that a senior leader in India has raised this possibility. There are many implications, as some of the projects now under consideration, including those which are part of the massive river link project, may have similar impacts of worsening the flood situation instead of providing protection from floods. Hence it is important to examine the old Farakka controversy in some detail. Apart from Nitish Kumar, several other senior leaders and social activists in Bihar have spoken about the adverse impact of the Farakka project on floods and on the livelihood of fisherfolk caused by a big reduction in fish. A former West Bengal Irrigation minister Debabrata Bandyopadhyaya had said some years back that the people of Malda and Murshidabad are doomed by this project. He had said this in the context of increasing erosion of land as the river bed was clogged by too much silt. Bangladesh has all along been opposed to the Farakka project due to the adverse impacts on water availability.

If our people are so unhappy with the project and the neighbours are also so unhappy, then why did we spend so much money to build the barrage in the first place? This is actually a classic case of trying to correct earlier mistakes by making bigger ones. This very expensive (in economic as well as ecological terms) story starts with the dams of the Damodar Valley Corporation (DVC). A lot of silt and sand accumulates in the lower reach of Hooghly river which was earlier flushed into the sea by the normal floods of Damodar and Rupnarayan rivers. But this natural process was disrupted by the DVC dams. Silt deposits accumulated, reducing the water carrying capacity of the river and causing destructive floods. The navigability of the river was threatened, endangering the future of Calcutta Port. It was at this stage that Farakka Barrage was taken up on the plea that this would divert more water to the Bhagirathi above the Hooghly. But the real story turned out to be quite different and this became a case of more costly mistakes

being committed in the name of correcting previous mistakes without bothering to learn. Bangladesh was soon complaining that after the diversion, the lesser flow to the Padma river led to sand accumulation in its lower reach which could even change the river flow and hence bring floods in new areas, while also causing water shortages in other areas in the lean season.

There were also reports of salt water intrusion in coastal areas and adverse impact on fisheries. It was only a matter of time before reports of adverse impacts also started appearing from several parts of India, namely Bihar and West Bengal. In fact well-articulated advance warnings had been voiced by a high-placed official and engineer who was well informed about the region. When his warnings about the ill impacts of DVC dams started to actually appear true, he suggested that instead of building the Farakka barrage the government should consider the alternative of giving up the irrigation component of DVC and instead using this water to flush the lower Hooghly. But like his previous advice of not building the DVC dams this second caution too was not approved by government officials and big construction lobbies which decided to go ahead with the Farakka project. One can only hope that with the recent opening up of this old debate the question will be examined impartially and decisions that are most in conformity with the protection of environment and sustainable livelihoods of people of India and Bangladesh will be taken.

Madhya Pradesh: Chouhan bats for promoting animal husbandry, fisheries

<http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/chouhan-bats-for-promoting-animal-husbandry-fisheries/1/626750.html>

Animal husbandry, fisheries and sericulture should be promoted to increase farmers income in the state, Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said. "Farmers should be provided technical guidance and all other necessary assistance in this regard. Worlds best techniques and technologies should be introduced in these sectors," an official release quoting Chouhan said today. Milk production is also a good way to increase income. the Chief Minister said and suggested, "Two model dairies should be developed in private sector in every district". Holding discussions with senior officers at Mantralaya (state secretariat) recently in this regard, he said extensive brainstorming should be held to double farmers income in the next five years. Better arrangements should be made for improvement of animal breeds, availability of fodder and sale of milk, he said. Chief Secretary Anthony DeSa, Principal Secretary Animal Husbandry, Prabhanshu Kamal and Principal Secretary Agriculture Rajesh Rajora among others attended the meeting, the release stated.