

Thal Flood Canal Project Some Facts

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- The project is sponsored by Ministry of Water and Power of the Federal Government of Pakistan at cost of Rs.30.5 billions.
- The execution agency is WAPDA having over 90% of its officers from the Punjab.
- The beneficiary is Government of Punjab and no other province. The sponsorship by the Federal Government means use of common funds of the Federation for one province only.
- Completion date is 30.06.2008.
- It cannot be completed by that date as thus far only 2 to 3% work has been done so far up to 30.06.2003.
- Annual recurring expenditure is Rs.142 millions. It is not known whether this amount will come from Federal or Punjab Governments funds, as responsibility of operation and maintenance of this canal will be that of the Government of the Punjab.
- The districts covered by the project are, Bhakker, Layyah, Khusbab and Jhung all in the Punjab.
- This project is not different from Greater Thal Canal already rejected by ECNEC in 1975 only the point of water intake has been changed.
- The canal will take off from head regulator at Addhikot of Chashma Jehlum Link Canal where regulator has been constructed.
- Cashma-Jehlum link is to flow only during flood season, but they run it year around. It inter-provincial canals but Punjab is monopolising it and using it to its own advantages without regards for lower riparian.
- Gross command area of the Project is 1.9 million acres and Cultural Command area is 1.53 million acres.

- Project feasibility has not been worked out under PC-II and in PC-I it has been assumed without studies and details.
- There is no provision for Greater Thal Canal in the 1991 Accord and it has been metamorphosed in the new name "Thal Flood Water Canal".
- Water has to come from share of the Punjab and also from the floods in June to September.
- It is assumed that 2,600 to 3,800 cusecs of water would come from the floods between June and September and 4,700 to 5,800 cusecs from the share of the Punjab, as per share settled in the 1991 Accord and withdrawals will vary every 10 days from June to September.
- Flood season is assumed as June to September, which is not correct. The past eight years data will show that there is no flood water in the river Indus flowing down stream of Kotri in June or September? In some years flood water flows down stream of Kotri Barrage in July and August but not even in all 31 days of these two months.
- The Punjab had been pressing for Greater Thal Canal since beginning of last century but in 1923 and again in 1934. Governor General of India rejected on the ground that:
 - * It was wasteland and will not produce economic crops.
 - * It will also hit economic interests of the lower riparian i.e., Sindh.

Actually it is a desert having more than 90% sand in most of its area.

- The project of Greater Thal Canal was again put up to ECNEC in 1975 and ECNEC rejected it on 19.08.1975. It formed part of Kala Bagh Dam and allied irrigation schemes, namely Kala Bagh Right Bank Canal, Kala Bagh Left Bank Canal, CRVC, C.J. Link Canal. All were to be executed after Kala Bagh Dam. The ECNEC rejected the project once for all and then attempts have continued to construct Kala Bagh Dam, which all small provinces have opposed and have been shelved.
- Since Kala Bagh Dam has been rejected any new projects for same area in other names are being floated but will have the same purpose as Kala Bagh Dam and Greater Thal Canal from it.

- The Indus River System Authority (IRSA) has given no objection certificate and by use of majority passed it but Sindh member gave note of dissent. In IRSA decisions have to be taken by consensus rather than majority.
- The Baluchistan voted for the proposal on the plea that Kachhi Canal will be built to irrigate Sibi-Kachhi area but canal will have its long distance run in the Punjab, which will utilise its waters first. How much will reach Baluchistan is anybody's guess work looking to the past history.
- The Punjab Government is continuously violating 1991 Accord in the past 11 years and it is not only breach of Accord, but breach of the constitution.
- The 1991 Accord envisages availability of 117 MAF million acre feet of water which figure was prepared before signing the Accord and all papers from Sindh Secretariat, Ministry of Water and Power have been destroyed as the actual figures for early 80s was 105 MAF. They have distributed 12 MAF which do not exist. The Punjab has all along said that they are taking water from their share, which does not exist.
- In brief this means annual short fall of water by about 8.97% or say 9% by assuming wrong figures of water availability.
- 2000/01 data showed that shortfall for Kharif were 57% and for Rabi 29%. These include exaggerated figures of 9%.
- The Punjab insists on the above shares and wants Sindh to share, while taking 9% extra water from the total pool.
- The PC-I for the Project does not provide data on floods for four months from which Punjab intends to get. Actually no water flows to the sea in June or September, except once in 10 years when it may flow in the last week of June or first week of September.
- The 1991 Accord includes requirement of water to be allowed to flow to the sea and Sindh's stand to get 10 MAF for flow to the sea. Accord in principle accepts the water flow to the sea but quantum needs to be worked out by further studies. The study has not been undertaken for 12 years. It is a binding on all Provincial and Federal Governments to carry out the study and reserve that water rather than to carry out works based on flood. UNDP provided funds for this study; it was not undertaken as IRSA considered it not necessary over-ruling member from Sindh.

- In 1959 in the negotiations with by the World Bank between India and Pakistan, the latter's team had argued that at least 3,000 cusecs will flow to the sea in all months of years in addition to flood waters in the inundation season. This is a commitment and this quantity of water is not been discharged into the sea through out the year. In the World Bank negotiations, Sindh's case for 3,000 cusecs below Kotri was minimum in any month.
- Riverain area in Sindh consists of 2.112 million acres. It is entitled to Rabi crop on preserved moisture as 4,000 years historical right. Since no floods take place now the area is to be irrigated by means of tube-wells from ground water storage. To irrigate the whole area of about 1.5 million acres (including 0.5 million acres of forest land) 4.5 million acres feet of water must be allowed to recharge ground water annually. This area has now been converted into desert and most of forests have either disappeared or dwindled. This 4.5 MAF is not part of system losses but has to be out-side this and is to be provided extra.
- The legal position is that Ministry of Water and Power should have got feasibility prepared first before preparation of PC-I for the Scheme. This was not done and Central Development Working Party (CDWP) took the project to ECNEC. The whole procedure of presenting to the case to CDWP or ECNEC is illegal and violation of constitution.
- The project was started one year before approval of ECNEC, which also is totally illegal.
- Sindh Government received the letter on Saturday the 24th February 2002 during late hours to attend meeting of ECNEC on Monday February the 26th. The agenda was circulated before the start of meeting and Sindh just representatives had no time to study the papers.
- The Sindh Government sent their objection on 7th March 2002 i.e., 9 days after the meeting, the minutes of which were received on 01.03.2002 i.e., took only 6 days to file their objections and lodge a protest.
- Sindh also protested that if this canal was built, no water will flow to the sea causing socio-economic, environment problems, destruction of mangroves and losses of prawns, lobster and other crustaceans.

- The canal will take off from Chasma-Jehlum (C-J) Link canal which was built only to divert flood waters, but the Punjab is running it all year around in most years.
- Sindh feels that since this link canal has been running year around Thal Canal will also be made to run year around.
- Construction was started a year before even preparation of PC-I and approval of ECNEC which in it-self is illegal and unconstitutional.
- Supposing flood water becomes available, by miracle, all provinces have to share the benefits, especially Sindh's demand of 10 MAF below Kotri barrage and the Punjab alone cannot ask for its monopoly on waters, which pass through its territory.
- With regards to Kala Bagh, the Punjab like the present project wanted full benefit of water for it self, ignoring 4.5 MAF needed for the riverain area of Sindh and 10 MAF out flow the sea for protecting environments along the coast. This quantity of 10 MAF has provisionally been agreed and is subject to further studies and is also recorded in the 1991 Accord. UNDP provided funds for this study but Indus River System Authority did not allow it be taken up, in spite of protests from Sindh.
- There is disagreement over two canals the Chashma-Jehlum link (21,000 cusecs) and Taunsa Punjnad link (12,000 cusecs), which are kept open through out the year for the many past years, a flagrant violation of Inter Provincial Agreement by the Punjab. The two have to flow only after all water requirements of Sindh are met.
- WAPDA which has 90% of its officers from the Punjab and is biased in favour of the Punjab and has always exaggerated the availability of water in the system and has shown reduced losses en-route and omitted and neglected the out flows to the sea.
- The consequence of all the above discussed projects is permanent friction between Sindh and Punjab. It is harmful for the Federation of Pakistan.