

UN-AUTHORIZED DIVERSION OF INDUS WATERS IN THE PUNJAB AND CAUSING WATER SHORTAGES IN SINDH

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There have been a number of agreements or accords between the Governments of Sindh and the Punjab on distribution of waters of the Indus and its distributaries in the past 60 years. All such accords provide proportionate distribution of waters between the Provinces. The records from 1903 to this date when examined show that average discharge of water has recently been decreasing year after year. Where does this water go? Can we blame climatic changes for the lower discharges or could it be little known and un-authorized withdrawal of water outside the accords.

The people in Sindh do not know the developments taking place in the Punjab and specially those which have reduced the discharge of water as it reaches the Sindh border in recent years. The fact is that there is continuous stealth of water on the up-stream side in form of a number of governmental schemes, under which water is diverted for local farming use in the Punjab and this causes lower and lower discharges in the rivers as years pass by. Since all the accords distributed water in certain proportions between the Provinces, any diversion of water in any Province should be met from the allocation of that Province. This factor has gone un-noticed for past 35 years. In the northern Punjab water is being diverted from the foot-hills in pre-laid fields and each one of them constitutes a small dam. These fields spread over many hundred thousand acres retain 2 to 3 feet of water column, during the rains and thus stop its flow to the various streams feeding the rivers. This water gets absorbed in the soil in the form of preserved moisture. On this moisture both summer and winter crops are raised. The method of diverting as such is known as Sailabi in Sindh, Sailaba in Baluchistan and soil and Water Conservation in the Punjab. The diversion of such water is going on since early 60's and the organizations involved are Soil and Water Conservation set-up of Irrigation Department, Agriculture Engineering Section of Agriculture Department, Soil and Water Conservation Organization of Agriculture Department, Soil and Water Conservation Scheme of Agriculture Department Cooperation, established in 1964 and merged in agriculture department and various Federal Government Agencies including ABAD and some others. The extent of diversion can be realized from the statistics of the machinery used for these projects. Agriculture Department (Soil Conservation) put in some 700 bulldozers in the Northern Punjab in 1967. In

addition a fleet of many other bulldozers of Agriculture Engineering Section. Most of these started in 1966/67.

Agriculture Development Corporation put in some 100 bulldozers for Soan Valley Project and the number of bulldozers was added until 1970. Agriculture Department's Soil and Water Organization's 700 bulldozers are periodically replaced by new ones. Irrigation Department of the Punjab and also Agriculture Engineering Section of Agriculture Department has been doing some work in the Northern Punjab for years. ABAD is the latest addition to divert these waters. In general each bulldozer can re-claim about 500 acres each year and the total number of fleets involved would by this time have reclaimed many million acres, and each acre diverting about 3 acre feet of water for summer crops and the same quantity for winter crops.

Thus it can be seen that Northern Punjab which had no barrages to feed its lands, got water out of combined quota of all the Provinces. This water should have come out of the Punjab's allocation.

How much is the water diversion needs an engineering study. I had proposed to Sindhi Association of Northern America (SANA) to finance an independent study of this kind, so that we are fully equipped with statistics to press our case. No funds came from that source, because of in house quarrels between various Sindhi factions. Without such detailed study and statistics we can not present our case satisfactory.