

VIOLATION OF 1991 WATER ACCORD BY 'ISRA' (INDUS RIVER SYSTEM AUTHORITY)

**BY
M.H. PANHWAR**

A news item has appeared in the press that IRSA (Indus River System Authority) set up is being changed. The back ground of the case is that a century old water dispute between provinces was settled by 1991 Accord and rectified by the Council of Common Interests. The 1991 Water Accord provided establishment of IRSA by the Government. There was no provision for a Federal Member in IRSA. Each province was to nominate its one member. The IRSA had to take decisions according to consensus. The Federal Government had to prepare Ground Rules acceptable to all provinces.

Violation of Accord took place in 1994 when in Ministers meeting Sindh allowed the Punjab to use 2 MAF (Million Acre Feet) water temporary, but then Punjab came out with the claim that they had established historical rights on this water and Sindh could not claim it. In 1994 it was also decided that IRSA will take decisions by majority vote. It was also decided that in case of shortages the allocation of two smaller Provinces NWFP and Baluchistan will not be reduced and Punjab will get more water than its share. Thus Sindh will meet all shortages.

The Federal Government under President Parwaiz Musharaf decided that its own Federal Member will be from Sindh. Accord makes no provision for a Federal Member. The Ground Rules were to be formulated by the Federal Government for regulating and operation of Accord, rather than making IRSA an executing body and allowing them to frame their own rules and take decisions by majority. Decision had to be according to consensus rather than majority and international principle of lower riparian right's had to be followed, i.e., lower riparian's water requirements had to be met first irrespective of amount of shortages. The present position is other-wise that in case of shortage NWFP and Baluchistan are unaffected and the Punjab gets more water than when shortages do not exist.

Our party's stand is that Ground Rules may be laid down guaranteeing full right of Lower Riparians and acceptable to Sindh, making IRSA to take decisions according to consensus and not according to majority. Adding Federal Member is also violation of 1991 Accord and giving that position to any one from any province, will be giving weight age to that province.