

ADDRESS FOR CORRESPONDENCE:

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To
Shri Salman Khurshid
Union Minister of Water Resources
Shramshakti Bhawan,
Rafi Marg,
New Delhi 110001

Respected Sir,

The Advisory Committee for consideration of techno economic viability of Irrigation, Flood Control and Multipurpose Project Proposals (called TAC in short, it is a standing institutional arrangement chaired by secretary, Union Ministry of Water Resources and serviced by the Central Water Commission) considers dozens of such projects with huge economic, social, environmental and other implications for the country in every one of its meetings. All of these projects are supposed to be public purpose projects, and are taken up using public resources. The Planning Commission accords investment clearance to the projects only after the TAC clearance. This Committee's decisions are perhaps the ones which impact on India as a whole the most - as they relate to land and water - which are the basic life sustaining and livelihood providing resources for the people.

It would be important and useful to have some basic norms of transparency and participation for the functioning of the TAC. We would like to suggest a few basic steps in that direction.

1. Put up the agenda notes and minutes (along with all the annexures) of the TAC meetings on the website. The agenda notes should be on the web site at least a couple of weeks before the scheduled meeting, the minutes of the meeting should also be up before the agenda notes of the next meeting is put up. The documents related to the proposals included in the agenda notes should also be available on website of the project proponent with links for the same on the websites of CWC/ MWR/ PC.
2. The agenda notes should also invite representations from all concerned on the proposals to be discussed at the TAC meeting and such representations should be discussed when discussing specific proposals.
3. The TAC also needs to have credible non governmental members, who have shown track record of taking independent position and for whom there is no issue of conflict of interest. Appropriate persons fitting this description should be invited to be members of the TAC.
4. Similar guidelines for state level appraisal should also be formulated and states encouraged to follow them.

5. The guidelines for the appraisal of the projects needs to be updated considering the experience of the past projects, possible new and emerging issues including climate change, dominance of groundwater, performance of past projects, including in costs the forgone value of services provided by rivers, proper options assessment (including optimising performance of existing projects), evolving policy on displacement/rehabilitation, ensuring participation of people right from planning and decision making stage and so on.

6. The guidelines for TAC has been updated it seems - in 2010. Many shortcomings could be listed- but the fundamental issue is the concept of eminent domain that underlies the guidelines. In stead, the underlining theme of the TAC and the MWR should be public trust doctrine.

We would be happy to meet you to explain why these reforms are urgently required. We would look forward to hearing your responses.

Yours sincerely,

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On behalf of:

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Copy for information, action and response to:

1. Secretary, Union Ministry of Water Resources
2. Chairman, Central Water Commission
3. Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission
4. Member (Water) Planning Commission
5. Ms Aruna Roy, Chairperson, working group on Transparency, Accountability, Governance at National Advisory Council