

STATEMENT REGARDING INDO-PAKISTAN CANAL WATER DISPUTE

THE MINISTER OF IRRIGATION AND POWER (SHRI S. K. PATIL): Sir, with your permission I would like to make the following statement on the Indo-Pakistan dispute over the waters of the Indus Basin.

The House is aware that the Governments of India and Pakistan entered into an agreement on the Canal Waters as far back as May 1948 on the basis of India progressively diminishing supply to Pakistan canals in order to give reasonable time to Pakistan to tap alternative sources. Although over nine years have elapsed since the signing of the agreement, the Indus Water dispute still remains unsettled owing to the unwillingness of Pakistan to settle it in the only manner possible namely, by developing supplies from the western rivers to replace the pre-partition withdrawals from the eastern rivers. The House is also aware that in 1952, at the instance of Mr. Eugene R. Black, President of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, negotiations were started on an engineering basis to work out a comprehensive plan for the co-operative development of the waters of the Indus system of rivers. After a careful study of the problem, the Bank put forward in February 1954, a proposal which envisaged the division of waters on the basis that the three western rivers (Indus, Jhelum and Chenab), except for minor uses in the State of Jammu and Kashmir, would be available for the use and benefit of Pakistan and the three eastern rivers (Ravi, Beas and Sutlej) for the use and benefit of India. That proposal also provided for a transition period of about five years during which Pakistan was to construct link canals from the western rivers. India was also required to pay for the cost of these link canals. Notwithstanding the fact that its acceptance involved great sacrifices, financial and other, on our part, we accepted the Bank proposal in principle but Pakistan did

not. The negotiations thereupon broke down but were resumed again at the instance of the Bank in December 1954. When these talks also failed to bring about an agreement the Bank put forward an *aide memoire* in which, while reiterating its conviction that the division of waters envisaged in its proposal of 1954 afforded the best prospects of a settlement, the Bank indicated that it might be necessary to provide for some storage as a part of the replacement plan. Though the talks were extended up to 31st March, 1957, no significant progress could be made because of Pakistan's unwillingness to co-operate in working out a plan on the basis of the Bank proposal and the *aide memoire*.

2. In April, 1957, the Bank suggested that the co-operative work should be extended up to 30th September 1957 to give the Bank and the Governments of India and Pakistan an opportunity to review the situation. This was agreed to by the two Governments.

3. In June last, a Bank Team headed by Mr. W.A.B. Iliff, Vice-President of the Bank, visited India and Pakistan and held consultations with the Prime Ministers and Ministers concerned in both the countries. Before leaving for Washington, Mr. Iliff handed over to both sides a letter in which he asked for the views of the two Governments, in writing, on some General Heads of Agreement which should form the basis of an approach to an international water treaty. These Heads of Agreement follow generally the Bank proposal of 1954, but seek to provide some machinery for resolving points on which the Bank may be unable to secure an agreement. The two Governments have since communicated their views to the Bank who have in turn forwarded the views of each Government to the other for comments. Pakistan Government's reply to the Bank is under examination.

The Government of India have scrupulously refrained from making any

statements on the canal water dispute which might even remotely have the effect of embarrassing the Bank in its difficult and delicate task of bringing about a settlement between the parties.

4. But in the recent months statements have been made by persons in authority in Pakistan which are so palpably false and mischievous that they cannot be allowed to go unchallenged. Among other things it has been alleged that India has cut off or is threatening to cut off canal supplies to Pakistan and that Pakistan's economy is in grave jeopardy as Pakistan would revert to desert if India stops the supply of water from the eastern rivers.

5. The statements made against India have not only no basis in fact, but are completely misleading. Ever since the Agreement of May 1948 to which I have already referred, there has not been a single occasion when supplies were cut off from Pakistan. For the two years ending 31st of March 1957, three agreements were executed through the good offices of the Bank and formed the basis of regulation of canal waters between the two countries. Under these *ad hoc* transitional agreements, India agreed to restrict her additional withdrawals for the Bhakra canals in accordance with Pakistan's ability to replace supplies. There is no such agreement however, from April, 1957 as no request was made for one. It is understood that the three link canals already constructed in Pakistan are capable of replacing all the waters that the new Indian canals would withdraw during the current kharif season.

6. The three western rivers allocated to Pakistan under the Bank proposal carry 80 per cent. of the waters of the Indus system. At present Pakistan depends upon the eastern rivers only for about 5 per cent. of the total supplies used by her for irrigation in Indus basin in Pakistan, if she makes full use of the link canals already constructed by her. There is, therefore, no question of the whole of the

irrigated area in West Pakistan turning into a desert, or of Pakistan's economy being endangered.

7. Had the World Bank proposal been accepted by Pakistan in 1954, the transition period would have expired some time in 1959. Unfortunately, Pakistan has imparted a political bias to what is essentially an economic and engineering problem and while going ahead with her development plans on the western rivers has sought to hold up development on the eastern rivers in India by placing difficulties in the way of a quick settlement. We have shown great restraint by imposing on ourselves restrictions on the utilisation of the waters flowing through the eastern rivers during the last nine years. To avoid suffering to the cultivator in Pakistan we have continued to supply water in spite of the fact that Pakistan, contrary to the obligations under the Agreement of May 1948 has defaulted in the payment of canal water charges.

8. We owe a duty to our own people and cannot wait indefinitely for a settlement. Despite our pressing needs we have, with a view to promoting a settlement, informed the Bank that we would be prepared to extend the transition period up to 1962, i.e. five years from now, although under the Bank proposal this period would have terminated in 1959. We cannot go any further without jeopardising the vital interests of millions of our people.

SHRI V. K. DHAGE (Bombay): What is the reply of the Government to the letter of Mr. Iliff?

SHRI S. K. PATIL: Is any question allowed on a statement?

MR. CHAIRMAN: No. Mr. Raj Bahadur.

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