

“No NOC from India, Mr. Durrani”

Once again Mr. Shakil Durrani has accused the World Bank of making the Diamer Bhasha dam (DBD) “controversial”. Earlier in February this year he had said something similar at a meeting chaired by the Deputy Chairman Planning Commission, Dr. Nadeem-ul-Haq. He has now also accused his WAPDA successor of preferring Dasu HEP over DBD. Now DBD is planned as a large reservoir, multi-purpose “mega-dam”. Dasu HEP is merely a power generation project whose first phase of 1000MW is to be funded by the World Bank. Dasu HEP has provision for future expansion to generate a total of 4000MW using additional tunnels. In fact the absence of DBD reservoir upstream of Dasu HEP will be a constraint for achieving the desired energy output of Dasu HEP as it needs the regulation capability of an upstream reservoir (DBD) to attain its maximum design capacity. These technical details one could discuss separately.

It had been a real surprise to read that Mr. Shakil Durrani an Adviser to the Ministry of Water & Power had reportedly gone on record with his position that the World Bank under Indian influence did not want any “big project” in Pakistan. He had precisely accused the World Bank of “sabotaging & wrecking the DBD project”. The former WAPDA Chairman has stated this a little late in life. During his tenure as WAPDA Chairman (2007-2012) he was a brazen supporter of the well known Indian lobby’s anti-dam position on KBD. This reservoir “mega-dam” project (KBD) on the Indus Main is downstream of proposed DBD, the proposed Dasu HEP and the existing Tarbela Dam. Infact KBD was consistently proposed by the World’s leading hydrologists & engineers over the last five decades ago and its design completed in the early 1980s. In April 2008, within some six months of his Chairmanship of WAPDA the infamous declaration “of an official closure” of the KBD was made by the Minister of Water & Power Raja Pervez Ashraf during a press briefing at the WAPDA House, Lahore. Not content with this “body-blow” to the national economy Mr. Durrani then arranged a repeat performance in February 2009 and this time ensured his photograph with the minister is prominently displayed in the national press. Two declarations from WAPDA House within ten months must have really pleased New Delhi and the ANP. Mr. Durrani had paid back & delivered to the ANP with these shameful and treacherous declarations. The Pakistani nation blissfully asleep since some thirty years on the critical issue of the KBD barely noticed and continued its deep slumber. The bureaucracy always happy to import more oil oblivious of the fact it is unsustainable looked the other way. The Indians were jubilant. Mr. Durrani’s extended tenure by the Presidency now assured.

Mr. Shakil Durrani gave a new purpose to WAPDA. He converted it to the “Water & Power Destruction Authority”. His lobbying for DBD was always insincere & Machivillian. His mission was to block every mega-dam on the Indus Main and he succeeded. This was also the position of the President of Pakistan Mr. Asif Ali Zardari who repeated the mantra “build small dams”. A master at intrigue Mr. Durrani now has the gall to blame the World Bank and the “Indian influence”. The same Indian lobby that he served so shamelessly as WAPDA Chairman and that has ensured he be retained as an adviser of the DBD project to ensure it always remains a “non-starter”. Returning to Mr. Shakil Durrani’s tenure as WAPDA Chairman it is clear as daylight that his mission was chalked out for him. Not once did the nation hear him contradict the Indian position that the Northern Areas of Pakistan (Gilgit-Baltistan) are historically part of “Greater Kashmir” and hence the World Bank & other multi-laterals may not finance any project there. Instead of advising the GoP to clarify this anomaly in its documentation he attacks the World Bank. Yes, the sleeping nation needs to realize that maintaining the “belligerent” status of the AJK must not be confused with the plebiscite “numbers game”. The conquest of Kashmir & Peshawar by Maharaja Ranjit Singh did not make those territories part of the Greater Punjab. The people of GB on all counts are definitely not Kashmiris. A senior CSP must know this.

Every senior hydrologist & civil engineer who served in WAPDA since its formation in 1958 has supported the KBD project and declared it as a “survival issue” for the national economy. It is indeed the point of maximum flow of the Indus Main. It is the location from where the poverty stricken KP province can finally receive Indus waters through gravity flow canals. The Pehur high level non-perennial canal from Tarbela Dam is insignificant. KP needs and must receive its share of Indus waters to fight the scourge of poverty and the resultant extremism that has engulfed its brave people. A senior CSP who is WAPDA Chairman should have understood. Mr. Durrani went beyond the machinations we observed Senator Nisar Memon perform in 2002. In less than a year after COAS Gen Musharraf became the Chief Executive of Pakistan the KBD project was again made controversial. In June 2001 it received a low ranking in the Vision 2025 WAPDA report as announced. Later Senator Nisar Memon’s committee managed to convince President Musharraf that the 260ft high KBD could be built on the 660ft high DBD and a combined height of 920ft at Diامر could be a two-in-one solution. This suited some Sindh lobbyists who did not want any additional canal withdrawals from the Indus Main. No doubt DBD has now been designed as a very dangerous structure due to its excessive height (& location). A tragic trust deficit in Sindh (against Punjab) had been cynically maneuvered by the incessant ANP propaganda. Senator Nisar Memon then wanted a “seal of approval” and constituted in 2003 the Technical Committee under Mr. ANG Abbasi. This was an absolutely unwarranted exercise in view of the existing World Bank financial reports on KBD including the ISO-14000 compliance certification (1987) & the March 1991 Water Apportionment Accord signed by all four Provincial Chief Ministers. Mr. Durrani & Senator Memon were clearly soul mates.

Mr. Durrani while blocking the reservoir projects KBD & DBD took a keen interest in the Neelum Jhelum HEP (Tunnel project) using the false pretext of a race. Such a misinterpretation was both suicidal and treacherous. The flow of the Western Rivers are perpetually a Pak endowment and for the “uninterrupted use” of Pakistan. It is clear that once the intention of using the Waters of the Neelum had been shown in 1991 the Indians should have stopped the Kishenganga HEP involving transfer of Neelum Waters to another tributary of the Jhelum inside IHK. The “race” story has been clearly used for profiteering while giving India a free hand. The false pretext was also used to induct two tunnel boring machines (TBMs) inspite of the fact that no independent consultant had recommended it due to the soil & seismic factors. If there truly was a race between India and Pakistan the first design option with less than 60% total tunnel length should have been chosen. The second design option (969MW) requires the deepest hydraulic tunnel in the world (under the Jhelum upper limb). The first option could help generate 550MW at a head of 220 meters and cost about USD 1bn requiring half the construction time. Surprisingly the contract for the second option was signed for USD 1.4bn in 2008 (a clear bluff). Estimates crossed USD 3.3bn in 2010 and this project will cost USD 5bn by 2025 when it can hope to be commissioned. In May 2012 WAPDA announced a 22% work progress. A year later 52% work was completed? Exim Bank of China finally agrees to give a loan of USD 448mn. The truth is that for an additional 400MW the nation will spend at least USD 4bn. Both Mr. Durrani & his successor continue to conceal that the Kishenganga Arbitration has been in India’s favor.

It is people like Mr. Durrani who have permitted & emboldened the Indians to block financing for our mega-projects in the Northern Areas. So KBD is blocked politically by the ANP (& its southern soul mates) while DBD is blocked financially by a combination of errors at the Kashmir Ministry and a deafening silence of the WAPDA management. The nation bleeds. The water endowment; with a hydel potential of +80,000MW besides the irrigation component both seriously under-utilized to the extent of around USD 60bn annually. Instead of WAPDA being the prime mover of the economy as per its charter of 1958 the enemies of the state had created by 1994 this terrible dependence, on imported energy. Then WAPDA top men like Mr. Durrani continued intrigues against the mega-dams & the economy has reached this terminal stage.

The defeat of the Pak cases on Baghliar-I HEP & now Kishenganga HEP are actually in absolute contradiction of the tenets of the IWT 1960. Mr. Kamal Majeedullah, a nominee of President Zardari was not qualified to represent Pakistan. WAPDA had a major role in the IWT 1960 implementation. The Pak Commissioner for Indus Waters had to take the advice of WAPDA in all technical matters. Is it not a calamity that such national issues are handled by unqualified & incompetent individuals? The adversary has a huge resource base of hydrologists/scientists/engineers with ICIW & ICID. WAPDA management must share major responsibility for these lapses. The fact that India builds +173 HEP projects in IHK (mostly in violation of IWT 1960) and blocks financing of Pak projects in the Northern Areas / GB Province using the World Bank Kashmir Policy was known to WAPDA top managers since many years. In spite of this there have been two inaugurations of DBD project in 2006 & 2011. It is a failure of the Federal Ministry & the WAPDA management, compounded doubly because Mr. Durrani above all concealed it from the nation and made too many false promises. A perfect fifth columnist.

Whatever suits the Indians clearly makes the ANP happy and Mr. Shakil Durrani is a faithful servant. He was as WAPDA Chairman ably assisted by his Member Water Mr. Raghbir Abbas Shah. The duo tried to convince the nation that if KBD had existed the 2010 flood damage would have been much greater. They could not create a study document inside WAPDA to prove this absurd & illogical idea, yet the megalomaniac in Mr. Durrani gave a press statement that if KBD had existed the flood damage in 2010 would have been greater. Speaks volumes of the mindset of Mr. Durrani & also his Member Water. Mr. Durrani actively lobbied for his Member Water to succeed him as the WAPDA Chairman. Mr. Raghbir Abbas Shah was already on extension as Member Water. He was not eligible for the post of Chairman. To ensure that the Indian lobby is fully served Mr. Shah now retains both the posts viz Chairman & Member Water in defiance of rules. It clearly pleases President Zardari while the nation sleeps blissfully.

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