

Irrigation 'scam' report in time: Chitale

The Water Expert Said His Team Will Try To Do Justice To The Task Allotted To It

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Pune: Water management expert Madhav Chitale, who heads the special investigation team (SIT) which is probing the allegations in the multi-crore irrigation scam, told media persons on Thursday that the SIT will submit its report to the state government within six months.

Chitale said the committee met on January 19 this year and began its work. "We will try to do justice to the task allotted to us within the stipulated period of six months. The SIT has started probing and studying the white paper. We would approach the government in case we need more information during the investigation," said Chitale, who was speaking on water issues in the state as part of the 7th Kirloskar Vasundhara International Film Festival (KVIFF). He said that though the entire country is facing a drought-like situation, the condition was more severe in Maharashtra. "It is imperative to start preparing and storing water for the next year. Farmers should be ready for alter-



Following persistent pressure from the Opposition and constant debate, the state declared the formation of a special investigation team under Madhav Chitale during the winter session on December 17

native arrangements of sowing such as alternative seeds of short-term variety if they miss the normal date of sowing," said Chitale.

Chitale suggested that nurseries should come up on a large scale. "Planting trees and plants will reduce surface run-off, and the soil will be able to retain more water. In addition, water supply, distribution and planning should be done as per the watershed zones instead of districts. Zones with less water should be looked at as separate clusters and accordingly solutions should be devised," said Chitale.

Chitale said that an immediate measure to deal with the drought-situation will be

transporting water to far-flung areas via railway, instead of relying on water tankers. "Transporting water to far-flung areas experiencing water-scarcity by means of rail instead of tankers will save 1/10th of the cost. Manmad, Daund and other such junctions around Pune could thus be supplied water through railway. Tankers could be later used to transport water to various locations within these towns," he said.

Chitale stressed the need for collective and participatory management of water. "The water policy of the state is efficient, but proper implementation of this policy is missing. In addition, the in-

dustrial development is only concentrated in certain cities, putting a lot of pressure on their water resources. Industrial development should be decentralized and industries should come up at the taluka level too," he said.

Chitale said the river inter-linking project as a good option. The project aims to join majority of India's rivers by canals and reduce persistent water shortages in parts of the country, is a good option.

"The plan that we know of is a national-level plan, but its implementation will take place at the micro-level or state-level," he said.

He emphasized the need for laws to control waste-of water in urban areas, and rural areas to be supplied with adequate amount of water. In addition, recycling of water should be made compulsory for industries, educational institutions and the like. "Pune witnesses defects in water distribution as well as usage. People do not use water consciously here. Some of Pune's old areas have old pipelines, originally laid for a differ-

ent density of population. These pipelines experience a lot of leakage, which leads to a substantial loss of water. After every 50 years, the city needs rejuvenation and this needs to happen in Pune now," he said.

He also said that the Ujani dam has been polluted due to the waste water discharged from city's Mula Mutha rivers and the civic body should devise ways to purify its sewage.

Following persistent pressure from the Opposition, the state during the winter session on December 17 announced the formation of a special investigation team.

Earlier, Chitale was chief of the fact finding committee appointed to investigate the Mumbai floods of 2005. It had submitted a detailed 283-page report two years ago.