Source : Deccan Chronicle Date : 08.06.2009

State’s water reserves alarming

June 8th, 2009 By Our Correspondent

Bengaluru, June 7: Karnataka entered its current water year on June 1 and the situation looks grim. And if the rain gods are not generous enough, the state will have to be prepared to face not just an irrigation crisis but also a critical power situation and an acute shortage of drinking water.

Whatever the situation may be, the state will have to continue its supply of 205 TMC water to Tamil Nadu like every year. But with the water level in reservoirs at a new low, only bountiful rains in the next few weeks can ensure good irrigation apart from ensuring supply of drinking water to major cities.

Water levels in all reservoirs put together measure up to 131.68 TMC water (as on June 4, 2009), as against last year’s corresponding level —188.31 TMC — resulting in a shortage of 57 TMC. It may be too early to conclude that the situation is grim but the state after having endured three continuous drought years in early 2000, still isn’t prepared enough to face a water crisis. Last year, this resulted in the government shelling out crores of rupees to purchase power after the monsoon failed. If there is a repeat this year, Karnataka will also have to deal with angry farmers. Not to mention the crisis arising from the drinking water shortage in Bengaluru, Ramanagara, Bidadi, and Kanakapura.

June, July, August and September are crucial for Karnataka as it is the kharif season. And if reservoirs are not full by July, the BJP government would probably be facing the worst crisis of its tenure. Right now, KRS, the major reservoir has a serious shortage with just 7.5 TMC as against 22.7 TMC that was stored last year.

According to officials in the Water Resources Development Organisation (WRDO), the reservoirs were filled to the brim in 2008-09 because of the heavy rains in 2007. “If the rains do not come to our aid, then it will be very difficult to convince farmers on the shortage,” added an official.

After crying foul over the Cauvery water sharing verdict, Karnataka approached the Supreme Court and got the final order stayed. Although the hearing is in November, the situation doesn’t look positive for Karnataka because the higher bench that was to be formed for the hearing hasn’t yet been formed.

The Met department has indicated near normal rains this year.