

## CORRESPONDENCE

### GROUNDWATER RECHARGE

A couple of my friends who have no background in earth science, read through the editorial on "Groundwater Recharge" in a recent issue of the Journal (Jour. Geol. Soc. India, v.62(2), 2003, pp.135-138) and expressed the opinion that the article is of educative value and hence should be published in popular magazines in Indian languages for the benefit of a wider circle of readers. I am one with them in agreeing that the article analyzing the core issues involved, is simple, straight and compelling.

The points that the cost-intensive and technologically challenging task of interlinking rivers will benefit only river valleys is not widely realized. Dams have been built at considerable cost to impound water in reservoirs, but recharging aquifers through the simple age old natural process of infiltration using tanks and lakes, has been sadly

neglected. Desilting of tanks and lakes is taken up now and then, more to provide employment to rural people when drought conditions prevail, than to keep the receptacles of rainwater in condition.

A scheme for rainwater harvesting through open wells and bore wells is being implemented in Chennai. Hopefully, if heavy rains are precipitated during the northeast monsoon period, fresh water will find its way to the subsurface. As it is, bore wells yield saline water in many localities in Chennai. Perhaps, open wells will be more beneficial in recharging than tube wells.

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### CLOSURE OF KUDREMUKH IRON ORE MINES

The arguments advanced by Radhakrishna (Jour. Geol. Soc. India, v.61(2), pp.127-130 and v.62(3), pp.267-269, 2003) against the closure of the Kudremukh iron ore mines are well within the framework and spirit of the National Mineral Policy (1993) of Department of Mines, Government of India, as brought out here. Under the Chapter on "Strategy of Mineral development", the policy statement reads thus:

"7.1.4. Conservation of minerals shall be construed not in the restrictive sense of abstinence from consumption or preservation for future use, but as a positive concept leading to augmentation of resource base through...output etc".

This clearly implies that environmental preservation does not mean mere preservation, or abstinence from consumption, of mineral resources; there is more to it. The policy further reads:

" 7.13.1. Extraction and development of minerals are closely interlinked with other natural resources like land, water, air, and forest. The areas in which minerals occur often have other resources presenting a choice of utilization of the resources. Some such areas are ecologically fragile

and some are biologically rich. It is necessary to take a comprehensive view to facilitate the choice or order of land use keeping in view the needs of development as well as need of protecting the forests, environment and ecology. *Both aspects have to be properly coordinated to facilitate and ensure a sustainable development of mineral resources in harmony with environment....*

...No mining lease would be granted to any party, private or public, without a proper mining plan including the environmental management plan approved and enforced by statutory authorities....As far as possible, reclamation and afforestation will proceed concurrently with mineral extraction."

What the policy advocates is sustainable development of mineral resources and not abstinence from developing them. In other words, what the policy lays down is that while exploiting the minerals, measures should be taken concurrently to ensure environmental preservation. This can be achieved only by adopting a mining strategy that is compatible to the needs of environmental preservation. And, this should not be difficult to the authorities concerned, as they have all the resources and scientific/technical expertise at their command.

Therefore, before deciding to close down the mines, concerned authorities should consider the option of renewing the lease with clear-cut guidelines on how the Company should revamp its exploitation strategy to meet the demands of environmental balancing. Advancing environmental degradation as the prime or sole reason for non-renewal of

the lease, amounts to negating the very spirit of 'sustainable development' enshrined in the National Mineral Policy.

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## ANNOUNCEMENT

### NOMINATIONS FOR PHYSICAL RESEARCH LABORATORY AWARDS

Nominations are invited for the **Shri Hari Om Ashram Prerit Dr. Vikram Sarabhai Research Awards** and the **PRL Award for 2003**. The former awards were established from funds kindly provided by Pujya Shri Mota of Hari Om Ashram of Nadiad while the latter was instituted from the Arun Lal Endowment Fund established by Prof. Devendra Lal, Honorary Fellow and former Director of PRL. The awards, given in alternate years, consist of a cash prize of Rs.25000/- and a medal will be given to outstanding Indian Scientists, who are below 45 years of age, on 1st January 2003 for their original work in the following fields:

**A. Hari Om Awards**, one each in the following four disciplines

1. Space Sciences (including Astronomy, Astrophysics, Planetary and Atmospheric Sciences).
2. Space Applications (in the areas of Meteorology, Hydrology, Remote Sensing and related ground truths).
3. Electronics, Informatics, Telematics and Automation.
4. System Analysis or Management including non-linear, non-equilibrium systems in Natural and Social Sciences and Technology.

**B. PRL Award**, one award in:

Innovative theoretical and/or experimental studies in dynamic earth and planetary systems including areas of oceanography, atmospheric sciences and meteorology.

Although the overall work of the candidates would be taken into account, the work done in India would be given prime consideration. The selection for the year 2003 will be completed by the first quarter of 2004 and the awards presented on 12th August 2004.

The last date for receiving nominations is December 31, 2003. Nominators are required to send six copies of a brief write up (two page note) summarising the contributions and achievements of the candidate together with his/her biodata (6 copies) in a cover marked 'confidential', addressed to the Director, Physical Research Laboratory, Navrangpura, Ahmedabad - 380 009; **Website:** <http://www.prl.ernet.in>