

Press Invite

The People's Campaign for Right to Water - Karnataka

Campaign Planning against The US Water Trade Mission to India

**10.30 AM to 1.00 PM, 15th of February 2011
SCM House, off Mission Road, Bangalore**

The Americans are coming for our water. Stop the Water Terrorists.

After a series of water privatization programs in Karnataka, the governments of India and the United States have now hatched a larger plan to convert all our waters into a huge business opportunity. The US Government and an exclusive group of American business executives are coming to India on the 28th of February and in their own word, they will be here on a mission to ***"Tap the \$50 billion Indian Water Market"***. The idea of water as a life giving resource that is to be equitably shared and conserved for all life forms and forever has been gutted because the mighty Americans have other plans. That is to quietly infiltrate our country with the idea that water is a business product just like any other on which the Americans can exercise their hegemony over.

We have seen enough of this in history. From overt colonization to organizing coups, from planting of tyrannical rulers to subtle policy making for expropriation, from waging of wars to militarization of globalization, the Americans and Europeans have terrorized the world for the last four centuries with the primary intention of capturing and controlling natural resources around the world. Land, gold, minerals, coal, metals, petrol and every other natural resource that there is, the Americans and the Europeans have pillaged them at will. Water, because of its cultural and religious nuances and political implications is still largely out of corporate control on a global scale. Well, almost. Currently, our governments are selling out everything on and below the ground for a song. Large scale cutting down of trees, unaccounted list of mines, millions of hectares of fertile land on a platter for industries – it is destruction of an irreversible kind.

Despite this assault on nature on an unprecedented order, public opinion and common sense are being overwhelmed by a dangerous nexus between politicians, corporate leaders, bureaucrats and foreign governments. Any voice of reason is deemed a challenge to the dominant power structure and the source of such a voice is quickly sidelined, threatened or exterminated. Like a vulture that seeks out vulnerability from great distances, corporate forces with an eye on water have smelt their kill in India and they are descending for their feast.

The US water trade mission has selected Bangalore as their first destination because the aforementioned nexus has been active in the state for almost a decade and Karnataka today is being promoted as the water privatization capital of the world. Instead of responding to the water needs of people in the state or to conserve water resources, successive state governments from the late 90s have been happily signing up one project after another with international banks and foreign governments to privatize every aspect of its constitutional responsibility of providing clean potable drinking water for all. International private companies and their consultants in Karnataka are directly influencing water policies, suggesting tariffs, amending laws, assessing needs, designing infrastructure, manufacturing public consent and have already taken over the operation and maintenance of water supply of five of our cities including Mysore, Hubli, Dharwad, Belgaum and Gulbarga. None of these processes are being informed, discussed or debated in democratic institutions or in the public realm. Information is suppressed and decisions manipulated.

The Government of Karnataka is paying hundreds of Crores of rupees to these private companies and consultants and signing up agreements that are unduly biased against the government and the public in Karnataka. Like the British East India Company which got all the resources it wanted as well arrogated an illegitimate right to rule and divide the country, the US Water Trade Mission is aimed at a complete corporate control over our water resources as well as our sovereignty.

The mission statement openly suggests that ***“the purpose of the mission is to expose U.S. firms to India’s rapidly expanding water and waste water market and to assist U.S. companies to seize export opportunities in this sector”***. The deliberate use of the words like - ‘water market’, ‘water trade’ - underlines the intention of transforming our traditional idea of water as a natural resource to that of a product that can be traded or whose access depends on your ability to pay for it. The idea that the state is a people elected institution for their well being is also being made nonessential.

The mission statement also promises ***“Additional opportunities in providing consulting and design services to the Indian water industry”***. The Americans want us to believe that it does not rain water but is produced in an industry and that the constitutional responsibility of the state is an industrial activity. It further offers ***“networking opportunities, current market information and a platform for policy discussions with the local Municipal Corporations”***. The arrogance of the mission rests on its ability to get the government of Karnataka to hold water related policy discussions with them. This is also ironic as the state has never discussed such policies with the public of Karnataka themselves.

Clearly, the American Water Trade Mission is a historical event, both for the Americans who want to establish control over our water and for those in Karnataka who want to uphold the character of water as a common good and protect it from being exploited for private profits at the cost of equity, ecological justice and the rights of all peoples’ - present and future.

We need to raise our voice against this attempt by the Americans. The people of the state have the responsibility to stop them from stealing our water. The planning meeting o

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