

Exiled Kashmiri leader Dr. Mubeen Shah fears bleak fate of hydropower potential in IIOJK:



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MIRPUR (AJK): Dec. 20 : The underutilization of hydropower potential in Indian Illegally occupied

Jammu Kashmir state is deeply tied to historical, political, and economic factors.

This was observed by a veteran Istanbul-based Kashmiri economist former President of Kashmir

Chamber of Commerce and Industries Srinagar Dr. Mubeen Shah currently living in exile in

Turkey, who unveiled following detailed analysis of the issues raised recently, in a telephonic interview to our this Special Jammu Kashmir State Correspondent on Friday.

Unveiling the historical Hindrances in Hydropower Development in the IIOJK followed by the lack of Sovereign Guarantees, Dr. Mubeen Shah, also former founder President of Jammu & Kashmir Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry, forum of the business community of both sides of the LoC (Line of Control in the J&K State), revealed that during the critical decades when much of India's hydropower capacity was being developed, the Government of India denied sovereign guarantees for projects in the Indian Illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir state on the pretext that Kashmir is disputed. "This narrative they used not only in the case of power stations but also allowing international flights to kashmir of which I am witness in meetings as not only President of KCCI but as Secretary general of the same organisation in 1986-88", Dr. Shah said adding that this meant that international financing and large-scale investments were not accessible, stalling development.

Referring to the continual political uncertainty in the disputed occupied state, the exiled Kashmiri business community stalwart said "the protracted occupation and instability in the region dissuaded private and public sector investment, compounding delays in infrastructure development".

Referring to the role of NHPC India's National Hydroelectric Power Corporation in the disputed Indian occupied Jammu Kashmir state, Dr. Mubeen Shah observed that many hydropower projects in IIOJK are operated by NHPC, which function akin to a colonial entity. (East India Company).

The exiled Kashmiri leader continued that agreements made decades ago under different circumstances that gone unfavorable to the disputed region, as NHPC retains significant control and profits from these projects while the Indian Illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir state bears the environmental and social costs.

The revenue generated from these projects does not proportionally benefit the local economy or the population, exacerbating grievances in the occupied state, he observed.

Referring to the fate of the current and future projects, if launched in the disputed region, the ex President of KCCI Srinagar said "the proposal to add 3,284 MW by 2030 through new projects such as Sawalkote and Kirthai-II is a step forward. However, the ownership structure and profit-sharing mechanisms remain contentious. These projects must prioritize local ownership and benefit-sharing with the Indian occupied Jammu and Kashmir with majority shareholding of local government or entities.

Referring to the High Energy Costs, Dr. Mubeen Shah observed that despite its hydropower wealth, IIOJ&K spends a significant portion of its budget on purchasing electricity. This paradox exists because much of the generated power is transmitted to various Indian states, forcing the IIOJK region to rely on external purchases to meet its own needs.

Emphasising for demands for change centric to reclaiming Hydropower Assets in the disputed occupied state, the exiled Kashmiri leader revealed that majority in IIOJ&K advocate for transferring ownership of hydropower projects back to the state arguing that agreements signed decades ago no longer reflect the region's needs or aspirations.

Talking about the fate of local participation in future projects, Dr. Mubeen Shah said that future projects should ensure majority local ownership, job creation for local residents, and reinvestment of profits into the region's development.

Emphasising for environmental and Social Costs, Dr. Mubeen Shah said that since hydropower projects come with significant ecological and social impacts, ensuring fair compensation and mitigation for affected communities was imperative to secure results which seems not possible immediately in the disputed state in Indian forced and unlawful occupation.

Concluding, the Istanbul-based exiled Kashmiri leader said "underutilization of J&K's hydropower potential is a result of historical neglect, political dynamics, and economic structures that have marginalized the region's interests. For meaningful progress, the ownership and management of hydropower projects must be revisited, ensuring that they serve the aspirations and development goals of the local population while addressing the historical injustices that have constrained the disputed region's growth", the message added.