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Circular 02/07/08

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AM Branch
Irrigation Department
Colombo 7
09th April 2008

Regional Director
Irrigation Engineer

Usage of Irrigation Reservoirs for Recreational and Other Unauthorized Activities

Many instances have been reported in recent past, that damages occurred to the head works of irrigation schemes when the irrigation reservoirs are made use for unauthorized activities. ID had to set apart a considerable portion of the maintenance fund that would otherwise had been used for increasing efficiency of the system, to repair these damages to prevent disasters.

This circular summarizes the contents of some previous ID regulations, circulars and also policy decisions by the Ministry in this respect to refresh the memory of the officers who are responsible for operation and management of the irrigation schemes.

1. The Irrigation Ordinance has clearly spelled out the responsibility of the Director General of Irrigation in safeguarding these highly vulnerable structures. It is the responsibility of operation staff to exercise same at field, to safeguard these National Assets.
2. Irrigation reservoirs are created using the public funds mainly to store water for irrigation. However practically many of the schemes have become multi functional reservoirs serving different users. Even though the responsibility of water management and safety lies with the Irrigation Department, the user groups (specially the farmers who possess riparian rights to water) should get involved in decision making when proposals are considered for using reservoirs for some other purposes.
3. Tree planting in bunds, unauthorized cultivation and brick cutting in reservoir bed, anchoring of fishing boats in the upstream slope, operation of recreational boat services are the very common misuses happening without prior approval of the Irrigation Department. Constant vigilance of our officers is required to prevent these activities.

4. Headworks of Irrigation scheme should not be allowed as venues for festivals and celebrations. Videoing the headworks (for films, teledrama etc.) should not be allowed without prior approval of head office.
5. The bund crest is meant to use as O & M road for irrigation officials to attend for their duties in headworks. However many of the Irrigation embankments are merged in the highway network leaving above original purpose in shadow. Action to be taken after discussing with the road authorities to provide alternate roadways to minimize the damages due to heavy vehicles.

Accordingly, no activity should be allowed in the catchment, reservoir periphery, and within the reservation boundary of the head works & systems, that would make negative impacts on the whole system.

EAA, WSS, MLL (who are supposed to inspect the scheme daily, weekly or bi-weekly according to their rank) should be given specific instructions to report any unauthorized activities promptly to the attention of the Divisional Engineer. Please make all the efforts to prevent such illicit activities within your Range / Division and send information to Head Office for advice when such issues can not be resolved at your level. District Secretaries and Divisional Secretaries are also to be informed when and where their intervention is necessary.

Please bring the contents of this circular to the attention of all the officers.



Eng. H. P. S. Somasri
Director General of Irrigation

- Copies :
1. Secretary/ Ministry of Irrigation & Water Management
 2. All Directors/ Senior DD