

A RIVER DIES

While Government of India has launched a holistic national policy of conservation of our river resources, it is far from translated into actions. Here is a case of flagrant violation of the policy, rather an instance of outright water terrorism or indulgence of environmental injustice. According to a report in *Down to Earth* (February, 2009, pp.16-28), overexploitation of the river Howra and the groundwater in the vicinity for drinking water supplies to 5 lakh inhabitants of Agartala in Tripura state of India has led to drying up of the river. No conservation measure to protect the river and groundwater through rainwater harvesting and optimization of water use has so far been undertaken or contemplated. State government has embarked on a project to transport water over 70 km from

Gumati River at a cost of Rs.659 crores to meet the rising shortage of water supplies depriving the poor farmers along the river course of much needed water which is the source of their livelihood. Environmentalists are already up in arms against the project. This will ultimately end up in virtual destruction of the ecology, environment and hinterland. While Rajendra Singh, Water Man, is striving hard and leading mass movements across the country to create awareness and taking steps to regenerate the flow in rivers of Rajasthan, practices in other parts of the country are directed towards drying up the flow in rivers. Such indiscriminate appropriation of water by the powerful few against the interests of the large farming community should stop. – S. DAS