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Chandigarh, July 11:

Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh has expressed the hope that the Supreme Court's directive on the formation of a committee of officers by Punjab and Haryana would lead to a long-term, just and equitable solution to the vexed SYL problem in the backdrop of the worsening water situation in his state.

Reacting to the apex court's orders, issued on Tuesday, copy of which was received by the state government on Thursday, the Chief Minister said talks were the only way to resolve the issue, which threatened to plunge Punjab into a major environmental disaster. It was imperative for all the concerned parties to the dispute to work together, in the interest of the nation, to avert such a disaster, he said.

The Chief Minister said the Centre's intervention, as directed by the Supreme Court, would be critical to facilitating constructive talks between the representatives of the two states in line with the apex court's orders.

The Supreme Court, in its orders, said "we request the Chief Ministers of both the States to form a committee of officers and also to ensure that both of them deliberate with the intervention of the Central Government at the highest level and if possible to work out a solution." The orders have been passed "without meaning to comment on the merits of the submissions of the rival parties with respect to the executability of the decree passed by this Court (earlier)."

"We hope and trust that functionaries of both the States will rise to the occasion to find out a solution which is in the interest of all and ultimately if this Court is required to hear the matter on merits definitely we will do so," the apex court further stated.

The court also stated that both the states should deliberate with the intervention of the Central Government at the highest level and if possible to work out a solution. "Any alternative can only be one which is acceptable in toto to the State of Haryana and Rajasthan", it said.

Captain Amarinder said the Punjab government will immediately initiate the process of naming officers for the proposed committee and hoped the Haryana government would also move in the same direction without delay. Given the criticality of the issue, an early resolution would be in national interest, he added.

The Chief Minister reiterated that Punjab had no problem sharing water with anyone if it had enough of the vital resource. Unfortunately, the water situation in the state was critical, with the ground water levels depleting to shocking levels and threatening to transform Punjab into a desert, he added. He said his government's stand on the issue was based on matters of principle and equity and it was important that whatever solution is found to it is in the best interest of the people of the state.

Captain Amarinder expressed the hope that an amicable solution would be found soon to the SYL problem keeping the ground realities in view, pointing to the apex court's remarks that it hoped and trusted "that functionaries of both the States will rise to the occasion to find out a solution which is in the interest of all..."