

Standing Committee Report Summary

Repair, Renovation and Restoration of Water Bodies

- The Standing Committee on Water Resources (Chair: Mr. Hukum Singh) submitted its report on the repair and restoration of water bodies, encroachment on water bodies and steps required to remove the encroachments on August 8, 2016. The Committee also examined the state of water bodies in the country, and the implementation of the Repair, Renovation and Restoration of Water Bodies Scheme. The salient observations and recommendations of the Committee include:
 - **Census of water bodies:** The Ministry of Water Resources does not have complete information about the status of water bodies in the country. Information on water bodies, such as, total number, status in terms of shrinkage (dried or vanished), and change in land use due to increase or decrease in catchment area has not been documented. Also, the data collected through Minor Irrigation (surface and ground water irrigation structures) census only covers water bodies in rural areas.
 - The Committee recommended that for a fair assessment of water bodies and their condition, a national database incorporating information from states should be set up. For this, a census of water bodies should be taken within a definite time-frame.
 - **Uniform classification of water bodies:** Presently, different states classify water bodies on different parameters such as total area covered, type of water body, location of water body, etc. Some states do not have a system of classification of water bodies.
 - The Committee recommended that the Ministry should devise its own classification system, which should be uniformly applicable to all water bodies in the country. This would aid in better administration and monitoring of water bodies in all states.
 - **Restoration of water bodies:** Presently, four different Ministries (Water Resources, Rural Development, Environment & Forests and Urban Development) have their own schemes or programs for conservation and rejuvenation of water bodies. In the absence of a cohesive policy measure, such schemes individually fail to have a desired effect.
 - It has been recommended that instead of multiple schemes, there should be one national scheme with inter-ministerial co-ordination for restoration of water bodies.
 - **Encroachment of water bodies:** Lack of enforcement of existing laws and poor maintenance of land records in both urban and rural areas has resulted in unchecked encroachment of water bodies. To address this issue in the past, the Ministry of Urban Development had issued an advisory for including water bodies as municipal assets in land records. The Committee noted that no state had maintained such a record.
 - It has been recommended that the Ministry of Water Resources with the Ministry of Urban Development should pursue state governments to include water bodies in land records. Monitoring by local bodies should also be strengthened to check encroachment on water bodies and consequent change in land use.
 - **Implementation issues in the Repair, Renovation and Restoration of Water Bodies Scheme:** Under this scheme, 10,000 water bodies are planned to be restored between 2012-17. Rs 10,000 crore has been allocated for this purpose. So far, 1,342 water bodies in nine states have been approved for inclusion under the scheme. The Committee observed that achieving the target set under the scheme by 2017 may be difficult. In addition, impact assessment under the scheme has not been done.
 - The Committee suggested that independent agencies should be identified to carry out impact assessment of the scheme. Additionally, the ambit of the scheme should be increased to cover the creation of new water bodies under it. Special focus should be given to urban areas where the problem of encroachment of existing water bodies is very significant.

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