

# Standing Committee Report Summary

## Indigenous and Modern Forms of Water Conservation

- The Standing Committee on Water Resources (Chair: Mr. Hukum Singh) submitted its report on the 'Indigenous and Modern Forms of Water Conservation-Techniques and Practices' on March 16, 2017. The Committee looked into the following aspects in relation to conservation of water: (i) need for water conservation, (ii) techniques and practices of water conservation, (iii) factors influencing water conservation, and (iv) the National Water Mission.
- The salient observations and recommendations of the Committee include:
  - **Low Per Capita Water Storage and Availability:** Water storage in India is about 209 cubic meters (Cu. M) per person, far below the minimum threshold (1,000 Cu. M) per person for identifying water scarcity in a country. In addition, the per capita availability of water has reduced due to an increase in population, from 2,209 Cu. M per year in 1991, to 1,545 Cu. M per year in 2011.
  - In this regard, the Committee recommended that certain measures should be undertaken by the central government. These measures include: (i) compiling data regarding large and medium dams presently under implementation, (ii) reviewing the status of execution of these dams, and (iii) making a plan for the timely completion of such dams.
  - **Decline in ground water levels:** In certain states, the Committee noted: (i) increase in pumping depths of wells and tube wells, (ii) rise in the cost of pumping ground water, (iii) scarcity of ground water in summer months (for irrigation and drinking uses), and (iv) increase in fluoride content in the water and increase in salinity (in coastal areas). For example, it noted that in Punjab, cultivation of water intensive crops has resulted in depletion of the ground water table due to over-exploitation.
  - The Committee recommended that the government should create a well-defined policy on ground water extraction. The practice of free supply of electricity to farmers for extraction of ground water for cultivation should be regulated. In addition, a scientific study of the impact of excessive withdrawal of water in Punjab should also be undertaken.
- **Traditional water recharge and harvesting practices:** Traditional water harvesting structures in the country are no longer being used to store water with dependence on piped water supply system. The Committee recommended that the Ministry of Water Resources should constitute a panel of experts to undertake a study on the merits and viability of traditional water recharge and harvesting techniques in the country. Further, consultations should be held with various state governments to develop ways to preserve and improve indigenous water harvesting methods.
- **Aquifer Mapping:** The CGWB in 2012 started the National Project on Aquifer Management (NAQUIM) to identify and map aquifers, and quantify the available ground water potential. Since the inception of NAQUIM, only 5.5 lakh sq. km. has been mapped, and an additional areas of 23 lakh sq. km. still remains to be mapped. Further, out of a total outlay of Rs 3,319 crore for five years (2012-2017), an expenditure of only Rs 146 crore has been made on the scheme till June 2016.
- The Committee recommended that the government should devise effective measures for timely and optimum utilisation of budgetary allocations for the scheme.
- **Water Budgeting:** Water budgeting is accounting of all water that flows in and out of a project area. It also helps to conserve water from rainfall and surface runoff.
- The Committee recommended that appropriate guidelines for water budgeting should be issued to all state governments by the Ministry of Water Resources. The Ministry should also ensure that all state governments prepare State-Specific Action Plan for the water sector, and link it to State Action Plans for Climate Change, within a specified time period. In addition, Water Regulatory Authorities for regulating the use of water and its conservation should also be set up in every state, as already established in the states of Maharashtra and Gujarat.
- **Water use efficiency under National Water Mission:** To increase water use efficiency by 20% under the National Water Mission, a national framework directive on water use efficiency should be framed by the Ministry of Water Resources and circulated to all the states.



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