

Government has Taken a Number of Initiatives for River Development and Rejuvenation

The average annual water availability of any region or country is largely dependent upon hydro-meteorological and geological factors and is generally constant. The average annual water potential in the country has been assessed as 1869 billion cubic meters (BCM). Due to topographical and other factors, the utilizable water availability is limited to 1137 BCM per annum, comprising of 690 BCM of surface water and 447 BCM of replenishable ground water.

Two types of rivers exist in the country; (1) Perennial Rivers and (2) Non-Perennial Rivers. In Perennial Rivers water remains available throughout the year. Non-perennial rivers are rain fed rivers in which water flows only during the rainfall period. The flow in the rivers is dynamic and depends on many parameters such as rainfall, its distribution and intensity in the catchment, catchment characteristics and withdrawals/utilizations of water, etc. Central Water Commission (CWC) under this Ministry has Hydrological Observation sites on all important/major rivers in the country. On the basis of annual average flows of last 20 years, no increasing/decreasing trend in water availability has been observed in major rivers in the country.

However, water available per person is dependent on population of the country and for India; water availability per capita is reducing progressively due to increase in population. The average annual per capita water availability in the years 2001 and 2011 was assessed as 1816 cubic meters and 1545 cubic meters, respectively, which may reduce further to 1340 and 1140 in the years 2025 and 2050 respectively. Annual per-capita water availability of less than 1700 cubic meters is considered as water stressed condition, whereas annual per-capita water availability below 1000 cubic meters is considered as a water scarcity condition. Due to high temporal and spatial variation of precipitation, the water availability of many region of the country is much below the national average and can be considered as water stressed / water scarce.

The Government of India has taken a number of initiatives for river development/rejuvenation. The work of development of River Ganga and its tributaries is undertaken by Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation under National Mission for Clean Ganga. The development work for rest of the rivers is undertaken by Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change under the National River Conservation Plan on cost sharing basis between the Central and State Government on the basis of proposals received from the State Governments.

Government of India has constituted an expert group under the chairmanship of Chief Executive Officer (CEO), NITI Aayog consisting of Secretaries of the Ministry of Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation, Ministry of Environment, Forests & Climate Change, Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs, Ministry of Drinking Water & Sanitation, Ministry of Rural Development and Ministry of Agriculture, Cooperation & Farmer's Welfare to examine the draft policy recommendations for revitalization of rivers in India submitted by Isha Foundation and workout an action plan for the Government. Subsequently, Department of Rural Development prepared programme for action "River Rejuvenation under MNREGS" and the same has been forwarded by NITI Aayog to Chief Secretaries/Administrators of all States/UTs.

The Government of India has formulated a National Perspective Plan (NPP) for Water Resources Development which envisages transfer of water from surplus river basins to water deficit river basins. Under the NPP, the National Water Development Agency (NWDA) identified 30 inter basin water transfer links (16 under Peninsular Component & 14 under Himalayan Component) for preparation of Feasibility Reports (FR). The Pre-Feasibility Reports (PFRs) of the all 30 links have been prepared and

circulated to the concerned State Governments. After survey and investigations, Feasibility Reports (FR) of 14 links under Peninsular Component and FRs of 2 links (Indian portion) and draft FRs of 7 links (Indian portion) under Himalayan Component have been completed.

The implementation of Inter linking of Rivers (ILR) projects involves various steps such as preparation of Pre-feasibility Reports (PFRs) / Feasibility Reports (FRs) of links, negotiation and consensus among concerned States, agreement with neighbouring countries if link involves area lying in those countries, preparation of DPRs of the projects, clearance from appraisal agencies which includes clearance by Ministry of Environment & Forests and Climate Change (MoEF & CC) and Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA), techno-economic clearance by Advisory Committee on Irrigation, Flood control & multipurpose projects of MoWR, RD & GR, investment clearance and the construction time required for the completion of the project as per the DPR. The stage of implementation of a project would be reached after its DPR is prepared and the requisite statutory clearances are obtained. Thus, the implementation of the projects will take varying periods of time.

This information was given by Union Minister of State for Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation Shri Arjun Ram Meghwal in a written reply in Lok Sabha today.

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