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India can help draft a new Brahmaputra water treaty

India's G20 presidency is a decisive moment for the country on the global stage, and it could also have a positive payoff for human security. Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi should consider seizing the opportunity to press forward for stronger international cooperation in the Brahmaputra basin. The region contains the world's fifth-largest river by flow, traversing China, India, and Bangladesh. Unlike other major river systems, such as the Amazon, the Brahmaputra does not have a water management accord. Poor institutionalisation exacerbates existing challenges. The basin runs across a disputed border contested by two nuclear-armed countries engaged in tense border interactions. China has used its status as the upper riparian as a source of coercive leverage, including withholding hydrological data upon which India relies to forecast floods. China's plans to build dams along the river, including a proposed mega-dam in the "great bend" region near the border, have stoked concerns about China's ability to divert the river's course.

Environmental security concerns also characterise the river's basin. Millions of people rely on it, which brings floods and deaths in India's Northeast and Bangladesh. The climate crisis will exacerbate these trends. PM Modi has vowed that India's leadership of the G20 will be action-oriented. One way could be to promote peace closer to home: Launch discussions toward a water management accord in the Brahmaputra basin. Drawing on management approaches of other regional river systems — such as the Permanent Indus Commission for India and Pakistan, and the Joint Rivers Commission for India and Bangladesh — an accord could even see the creation of a Brahmaputra Basin Commission. Identifying requirements for data-sharing and scientific exchanges between riparian nations could be a first step toward the ambitious outcome that will help India make a case for its growing international leadership.

A push by India during the G20 cycle could be more productive for several reasons.

First, seeking a solution to the Brahmaputra basin's lack of a water management framework would be a tangible way to highlight India's role in advancing international legal order and stability. India has already helped achieve this outcome in the Bay of Bengal by accepting the ruling of the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) in 2014 regarding the Bangladesh-India maritime boundary dispute; in contrast, China refused to participate in the 2016 PCA process regarding the Philippines-China dispute in the South China Sea.

The second enabler concerns China's incentives for cooperation. After the 20th Party Congress last October, Xi Jinping redoubled his outreach to countries where China's image has suffered. Such outreach reflects several realities, including Xi's ability to turn his attention outwards after the party conclave, the recognition that China's international image had taken a beating, and the

attractiveness of a strategic gambit to counter US influence by courting its allies and partners. A high-profile agreement to discuss a water management accord could be a politically low risk and diplomatically high reward way for Xi to enhance ties with India. Of course, China will always have coercive leverage as an upper riparian, and no agreement will stunt its ability to build additional dams. But agreeing to discuss river management challenges could be a way to demonstrate goodwill to India and Bangladesh.

Third, the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP) provides another catalyst. Bangladesh was vocal during COP27 about the need for developed countries to elevate their commitments to adaptation financing. As the lowest riparian, Dhaka sees the Brahmaputra basin and the lack of a water management framework in the larger context of the climate crisis challenges. Working with India and China to produce an agreement would advance Dhaka's goal of pursuing regional solutions that address climate crisis impacts.

A final driver for New Delhi to lead the Brahmaputra water coop-

eration is that such an initiative would support its Inland Waterways Authority's objective to expand cooperation and economic development between the Northeast and Bangladesh.

During its G20 presidency, India could call for working-level meetings with water ministry officials from all three riparians to develop an agenda for multilateral cooperation on the river. In addition, China and India could take steps to dial down tensions by detailing their hydropower construction and river management plans. As an act of goodwill, Beijing could also offer to provide year-round river data to India and Bangladesh. Discussions could explore the contours of a plan to develop a Brahmaputra Basin Commission. The platform must be consensus-oriented, and its chair could rotate between the three primary riparians. Given the Sino-Indian boundary dispute, it would have to sidestep the fundamental question of ownership of resources. Still, it could be a way to regularise cooperation in several areas of water management, including hydrological data-sharing, flood forecasting, joint emergency response, dam safety, and sharing of climate crisis research.

Beginning to work toward a water treaty will help India demonstrate to the world how it can advance peace and the international legal order despite a complicated border dispute due to its interest in the larger issue of human security. India can start to lay the foundations for a discussion with China and Bangladesh along the G20 sidelines in September. In doing so, India would take a meaningful first step to addressing a persistent challenge facing the region.



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EXPLAINER

INDIA'S FIRST WATER BODIES CENSUS

The Jal Shakti ministry has released the report of India's first water bodies census, which provides a comprehensive database of ponds, tanks, lakes, and reservoirs in the country. The census, conducted in 2018-19, covers more than 2.42 million water bodies across states and Union territories. **Sandip Das** outlines its key findings



Status of India's water resources

INDIA ACCOUNTS for 18% of the world's population, but has only 4% of its fresh water resources. More than 80% of water in the country is consumed in agriculture while the rest is used for domestic and industrial purposes.

The country's water resources have become extremely polluted, with 70% of surface water found to be "unfit" for human consumption. A sound and reliable database on water bodies is prerequisite for effective planning and policy making for prevention of pollution and furthering of conservation and restoration of water bodies.

Per capita availability of water in the country is projected to fall from 1,486 cubic metres in 2021 to 1,367 cubic metres by 2031, the government said, citing data from a report compiled by the Central Water Commission (CWC). Per the 1951 census, the per capita availability was more than 5,000 cubic metres.

Why was the census needed

THE JAL SHAKTI ministry undertook the census so that the findings can help in policies on judicious water use and conservation. The census was conducted in convergence with the sixth minor irrigation census. All natural or man-made water units bounded on all sides with some or no masonry work, used for storing water for irrigation or other purposes—such as industrial, pisciculture, drinking, ground-water recharge, etc—qualify.

Water bodies are structures where water from ice-melts, streams, springs, rain or drainage from residential or other areas is accumulated. Storage of water diverted from a stream, *nala* or river is also included. The definition excludes oceans, rivers, waterfalls, swimming pools, covered water tanks made by individuals, factories and temporary water bodies.

2.42 mn

WATER BODIES IN THE COUNTRY; 2.345 MN IN RURAL AREAS

1.44 mn

HAVE BEEN CLASSIFIED AS PONDS BY THE CENSUS

2.03 mn

ARE IN USE, WHILE THE REMAINING ARE NON-FUNCTIONAL

Only 1.6%

OF THOSE ENUMERATED HAVE BEEN ENCROACHED

Key findings

THE CENSUS HAS enumerated 2.42 million water bodies, out of which 97.1% (2.35 million) are in rural areas and 2.9% (69,485) in urban areas. The census classifies 59.5% (1.44 million) of the water bodies as 'ponds'—tanks (15.7%), reservoirs (12.1%), water conservation schemes, percolation tanks & check dams (9.3%), lakes (0.9%) and others (2.5%).

Among these water bodies, 83.7% (2.03 million) are 'in use'; the remaining are non-functional on account of drying up, silting, construction, etc. According to the census, 55.2% (1.33 million) are owned by private entities and 44.8% are under public ownership. Information on encroachment of water bodies has been collected, according to which only 1.6% water bodies out of all the enumerated bodies have suffered encroachment. Within this pool of encroached bodies, 95.4% are in rural areas and remaining 4.6% in urban areas.

Regional variations

MAHARASHTRA LEADS amongst all the states and UTs in building water bodies under water conservation schemes. The census found West Bengal has highest number of ponds and reservoirs, while Andhra Pradesh has highest number of tanks and Tamil Nadu has highest number of lakes. Out of 97,062 water

bodies in Maharashtra, 96,343 are in located in rural areas and only 719 in urban areas. Almost 93% of water bodies in Maharashtra are in the form of check dams, indicating that the rural part of the state relies on water-conservation schemes—more than any other state in the country, as per the census.

West Bengal's South 24 Parganas has been reported to be the district with the highest (0.35 million) number of water bodies across the country. It is followed by Andhra Pradesh's Anantapur (50,537) and West Bengal's Howrah (37,301). In terms of privately-owned water bodies, most of them are either

owned by individuals or farmers, followed by a group of individuals and other private bodies.

West Bengal topped the list with the largest number of water bodies owned by private individuals followed by Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha and Jharkhand.

Business Line- 28- April-2023

‘States cannot tax water used for hydro power generation’

NOT DONE. Levy in any form on water used in hydel projects deemed unconstitutional

Our Bureau
New Delhi

The Power Ministry has said that State taxes or duties on electricity generation is unconstitutional, after some State governments levied a cess on water use for hydropower generation.

“It has come to the notice of the Government of India (GoI) that some State governments have imposed taxes/duties on generation of electricity. This is illegal and unconstitutional. Any tax/duty on generation of electricity, which encompasses all types of generation, namely thermal, hydro, wind, solar, nuclear, etc, is illegal and unconstitutional,” the Ministry said in a communication to chief secretaries.

SCOPE FOR LEVY

The Union Ministry explained to States that powers to levy taxes/duties are specifically stated in the VII Schedule. Taxes/duties that are not specifically mentioned in this list cannot be levied by States under any guise



RATIONALE. Electricity is generated by directing the flow of water through a turbine and water is not actually consumed

whatsoever, as the residuary powers are with the central government.

“Entry-53 of List-II (State List) authorises the States to put taxes on consumption or sale of electricity in its jurisdiction. This does not include the power to impose any tax or duty on the generation of electricity. This is because electricity generated within the territory of one State may be consumed in other States and no State has the power to levy taxes/ duties on residents

of other States,” it added. Article 286 of the Constitution explicitly prohibits states from imposing any taxes/duties on supply of goods or services or both where the supply takes place outside the state.

CESS ON HYDROPOWER

Besides, Articles 287 and 288 prohibit taxes on consumption or sale of electricity that is consumed by the central government or sold to the central government for consumption by the government or its

agencies, the ministry said. “Hydropower projects do not consume water to produce electricity. Electricity is generated by directing the flow of water through a turbine, which generates electricity on the same principle as electricity from wind projects, where wind is utilised to turn the turbine to produce electricity. Therefore, there is no rationale for levy of water cess or air cess,” it added.

The Union Ministry pointed out that levy of water cess is against Constitution Entry-17 of List-II, which does not authorise States to levy any tax or duty on water.

“As per Entry 56 of the Union List of the Constitution of India, regulations of issues related to inter-state rivers come under the purview of the Centre. Most of the hydroelectric plants in the States are located/proposed to be developed on inter-state rivers. Any imposition of tax on the non-consumptive use of water of these rivers for electricity generation is in violation of provisions of the Constitution of India,” the Ministry added.

Mint- 28- April-2023

'Pushing states on piped drinking water'

Puja Das & Subhash Narayan

A political tussle seems to be playing out between the Centre and non-BJP ruled states over the scheme to connect all rural households with piped drinking water by 2024. In an interview, secretary of department of drinking water and sanitation Vini Mahajan said although Bharat Rashtra Samithi-ruled Telangana is "fully covered", it has refused to use central grants under the ₹3.6 trillion Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM), choosing instead to use state funds.

Mahajan added that coverage in TMC-ruled West Bengal is "snail-paced". In contrast, BJP-ruled Uttar Pradesh expected to be fully covered in the next two-months despite being India's most populous state. She said 66% of rural households will be provided with tap water across the country by December, with spending by the Centre likely to be ₹1.8 trillion in the current financial year. *Edited excerpts.*

Some states have asked for an extension in JJM beyond 2024. What is the progress update on JJM?

I do not comment on this, because we do not want to talk publicly about delays. We are



pushing states to do as much work as possible without compromising on the quality. Whether it will be 2024 or 2025, we will see later. All our efforts are to make sure whatever needs to be done is done, while keeping a close watch with states on quality of implementation. We are at over 60% in terms of JJM coverage. West Bengal, a little less than one-third coverage. Jharkhand and Rajasthan are at the lowest. At one time, Uttar Pradesh used to be rock-bottom, but the state has moved very rapidly, and they are assuring us that they are going to overtake Chhattisgarh soon. UP is giving 40,000 connections each day now compared to 4,000 during the corresponding period of last year. All states are working very hard, but some states did get a little late in planning and taking

forward. Some states are water-stressed or have other issues. So, they need a large multi-level scheme, which is time-consuming. So, we are trying to get the maximum possible coverage in the shortest possible time. By next month, we will cross 120 million households covered. Currently, we are at 118.4 million against the total target of 194 million set in 2019.

In terms of certification after a village achieving 100% tap connection, how are you making sure of it?

As we are dealing with some 600,000 villages in the country, we are pushing states to ensure that gram panchayats must meet, consider and certify once the village is fully covered. There must be a gram sabha meeting where the issue should be discussed and there should be a written resolution uploaded on our website. There has to be a video recording of the meeting uploaded on our website. Eight states have completed the cer-

tification at the gram panchayat level. Though Telangana is fully covered, it has not opted for certification. The state runs its own water supply scheme.

Some states are lagging, and there are some 150,000 such villages. What are the constraints?

Six of eight states, excluding Telangana, are fully covered. Most of these villages are in Bihar and Telangana, which

did not use JJM funds. They use their own state funds. They have not used centre funds in the last two years. **By the end of FY24 how much funds would be required?**

Spending on JJM is doubling year-on-year. If we can keep up the same pace, the Centre and states together should be able to spend ₹1.8 trillion.

As far as the coverage is concerned. We have already crossed 60%, and if the pace remains same, 66-70% coverage could be expected by December this year.

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Uttar Pradesh is giving 40k connections each day now compared to 4k during the corresponding period of last year

Vini Mahajan

Secretary, Department of drinking water and sanitation

Millennium Post- 28- April-2023

Hry CM announces to increase area under direct seeding of paddy to about 2 lakh acre

SWATI MAHAJAN

CHANDIGARH: Moving towards water conservation, Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar on Thursday announced that the area under direct seeding of paddy has been increased by 275 per cent from 73,000 acres to nearly 2 lakh acres.

"This will save 218 MCM of water. For this, provision will be made for availability of machinery and subsidy," he added.

Apart from this, the Chief Minister also announced that more than 9,500 water sources would be renovated in the next two years; which include 5,308 ponds, 63 check dams, 81 shallow tubewells and 4,000 recharge borewells.

The Chief Minister was speaking at the concluding session of the two-day 'Water Conclave' organised by the Haryana Water Resources



CM Manohar Lal Khattar addressing a gathering at Panchkula

PIC/BIJU PT

Authority under Amrit Jal Kranti at Panchkula.

He said that the area under natural farming will be increased by more than 300 per cent, i.e., from 6,000 acres to 25,000 acres. This effort will not only save water but also improve soil health, said Khattar.

The Chief Minister said that the state government has set a target of reclamation of 1 lakh acres of saline land in brackish

water areas. "To expedite the work and to achieve this target, the Agriculture Department will work closely with the Central Soil Salinity Research Institute and finalize its action plan in the next three months. Machines will also be made available for this work and if provision of subsidy has to be made, that too will be done," he asserted.

Khattar said that the World Bank has given in-principle approval for the expansion of the Atal Bhujal Yojana to 14 districts of the state. In the first phase, a budget of 700 crores was received under the five-year plan. In the second phase also, a budget of about Rs 700 crore will be made available by the World Bank. This will cover 90 per cent of the waterlogged area of the state, he added.

The Chief Minister said that in the next two years, 50 per cent of the demand for water in the agriculture sector would be

met by the treated wastewater of STPs. In addition, the water of 75 STPs will be used for agricultural needs; besides 100 per cent of the treated wastewater will be reused in 18 out of 31 HSIIDC estates in the next two years," he said.

The Chief Minister said that there is a major use of water in the industry sector also, and the state government has made a special plan under which Zero Liquid Discharge (ZLD) will be implemented in IMT Sohna, IMT Kharkhoda and Global City Gurugram. He said that the area under fisheries will also be increased. Presently fish farming is being done on 2,500 acres, which has been targeted to be increased.

Khattar said that the Energy Department would prepare DPRs of projects for the reuse of treated wastewater in Yamunanagar, Panipat, Hisar and Jhajar power plants in the next three months.

Haribhoomi- 28- April-2023

मुख्यमंत्री मनोहर ने जल संगोष्ठी में किए बड़े ऐलान

9500 से अधिक जल स्रोतों का किया जाएगा जीर्णोद्धार

हरिभूमि ब्यूरो ►► पंजीगढ़

मुख्यमंत्री मनोहर लाल ने जल संरक्षण की दिशा में बढ़ते हुए अहम घोषणा की है कि धान की सीधी बिजाई के तहत क्षेत्र में 275 प्रतिशत की वृद्धि करते हुए इसके अधीन 73,000 एकड़ क्षेत्र को बढ़ाकर लगभग 2 लाख एकड़ किया जाएगा। इससे 218 एम.सी.एम. पानी की बचत होगी। इसके लिए मशीनरी की उपलब्धता और सब्सिडी की का प्रावधान किया जाएगा। इसके अलावा, उन्होंने यह भी घोषणा की कि अगले दो वर्षों में 9500 से अधिक जल स्रोतों का जीर्णोद्धार किया जाएगा। इनमें 5308 तालाब, 63 चैक डैम, 81 उथले ट्यूबवेल और 4000 रिचार्ज बोरवेल शामिल हैं। मुख्यमंत्री बृहस्पतिवार को पंचकूला में अमृत जल क्रांति के अंतर्गत हरियाणा जल संसाधन प्राधिकरण द्वारा आयोजित 2 दिवसीय जल संगोष्ठी के दूसरे दिन समापन सत्र को संबोधित कर रहे थे। उन्होंने कहा कि प्राकृतिक खेती के तहत 300 प्रतिशत से अधिक की वृद्धि करके इसके अधीन 6,000 एकड़ क्षेत्र से 25 हजार एकड़ क्षेत्र को लाया जाएगा। इस प्रयास से न केवल पानी की बचत होगी बल्कि मृदा स्वास्थ्य में भी सुधार होगा।



अटल भू जल योजना के लिए 700 करोड़ रुपये का बजट

उन्होंने ने कहा कि यह बताते हुए खुशी हो रही है कि विश्व बैंक ने अटल भूजल योजना का राज्य के 14 जिलों में विस्तार करने के लिए सैद्धांतिक मंजूरी प्रदान कर दी है। पहले चरण में पंचवर्षीय योजना के तहत 700 करोड़ों का बजट मिला था। दूसरे चरण में भी विश्व बैंक की ओर से लगभग 700 करोड़ रुपये का बजट उपलब्ध करवाएगा। इससे राज्य का जल भराव का 90 प्रतिशत क्षेत्र कवर हो जाएगा।