

# Revised water policy to factor in impact of climate change

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**NEW DELHI:** Spurred by the need to look at impact of climate change on water resources, the Centre is formulating a revised National Water Policy in consultation with the States and other stakeholders to ensure basin-level management strategies to deal with variability in rainfall and river flows due to climate change.

## Ecology over industry?

The government is also looking at amendment to the Inter-State Water Disputes Act, and the River Boards Act for time-bound clarificatory/supplementary orders of tribunals on inter-State water disputes and for setting up Inter-State River Basin Authority for overall coordination of watershed agencies

• **Plan to amend Inter-State Water Disputes Act**

• **Locals should be first beneficiaries of projects**

under inter-State basins.

The revised policy will take on board crucial issues such as demand management of water, equitable distribution, water pricing, stringent regulatory mechanism and allocating priority to water for life-support and ecology over industry. Needless to say, the industry is opposing the last priority it might be allocated.

The Centre wants water budgeting and water auditing to be made mandatory. There is a suggestion to introduce tradable water entitlements for farmers but there is no agreement on it.

The Ministry of Water Resources is holding a series of

consultations with the States and other stakeholders on various aspects of the proposed revised policy and will reconcile various points of view. The final decision would be vested in the National Water Resources Council headed by the Prime Minister with Chief Ministers as members.

## Multipurpose reservoirs

In the new scheme of things, it is proposed to plan for multi-purpose reservoir systems with stakeholder participation after thorough examination of all alternatives. The benefits and costs

of every project along with environmental and social costs should be assessed and it should be ensured that local people are the first beneficiaries.

However, the Ministry has come up with the rider that while assessing costs-benefits, environmental and social costs, stakeholders must consider the cost of not providing water to people for different uses.

It is proposed to incentivise water conservation. State governments may be advised to set up Independent Water Regulatory Authority for addressing water allocation, water use efficiency and physical and financial sustainability of water resources.

There is a suggestion to enact an over-arching Water Act to signal water sector as an important policy priority.