

Standing Committee Report Summary

Flood Management and International Water Treaties

- The Standing Committee on Water Resources (Chair: Mr. Sanjay Jaiswal) submitted its report on the subject 'Flood Management in the Country including International Water Treaties in the field of Water Resource Management with particular reference to Treaty/Agreement entered into with China, Pakistan and Bhutan' on August 5, 2021. Key observations and recommendations made by the Committee include:
 - **Flood control under concurrent list:** The Committee noted that as per the Constitution, flood control falls under the jurisdiction of respective states. However, since most rivers flow across multiple states, flood control measures taken by one state may have inter-state ramifications. It recommended the central government to build consensus on placing flood control and management under the Concurrent list of the Constitution.
 - **Legislation:** The Committee recommended the Ministry of Jal Shakti to facilitate passage of the Dam Safety Bill and the River Basin Management Bill at the earliest. The Bills provide for optimum utilisation and efficient management of water resources along with mitigation of floods. The Committee also noted that a Model Bill providing for zoning of floodplains was circulated by the central government to all the states. It observed that most flood-prone states had not adopted the legislation. It recommended modifying the Model Bill to take into account socio-economic situations and states and provide for a compensation mechanism for implementing states.
 - **National Integrated Flood Management Group:** The Committee recommended establishing the National Integrated Flood Management Group under the Ministry of Jal Shakti as an overarching body responsible for flood management. The group may include concerned ministers of state governments as members and meet at least once a year. It should be responsible for: (i) formulating strategies on prevention and mitigation of flooding, and (ii) supervise management of floods, including aspects controlled by states or local governments and which are under international linkages.
 - **Funding:** The Committee noted that central government's share in funding of flood management programmers has reduced from 75% to 50% for general states and from 90% to 70% for special category states. The Committee recommended increasing central government's funding share in flood management schemes and providing adequate budgetary support for it.
 - **Flood control planning:** The Committee recommended adopting an integrated approach towards flood control which may halt soil erosion, and encourage ground water percolation. It suggested evolving a strategy including: (i) regeneration and conservation of natural vegetation and soil cover in catchment areas, (ii) employing agricultural methods which make best use of floods, (iii) invigorating dry springs, (iv) recharging ground water table and ensure better ground water percolation, and (v) developing an integrated river basin management plan.
 - **Floods in North East:** The Committee noted that Assam and North Eastern region face devastating floods every year. In order to tackle floods in Assam and the North Eastern region the Committee recommended: (i) taking steps to prevent floods (develop flood forecasting model, de-silting of reservoirs, set up weather stations), (ii) management of water resources (set up River Basin Organisations and River Basin Management Authority, enact North East Water Management Authority Bill, fill up vacancies in the Brahmaputra Board), and (iii) provide assistance for river erosion.
 - **International Treaties:** The Indus Water Treaty, 1960 establishes a water-sharing system between India and Pakistan. The Committee noted that under it India has unrestricted access to Eastern rivers (Sutlej, Beas and Ravi) while the water of the Western rivers (Indus, Jhelum and Chenab) can be used in a non-consumptive manner for agriculture and generation of hydro-electric power. It noted that India does not fully utilise all accessible water of the Eastern rivers and the irrigation and hydropower potential of the Western rivers. The Committee recommended the government take necessary diplomatic measures to renegotiate the treaty with Pakistan to address the impact of climate change on water availability in the Indus basin. It further suggested monitoring Chinese actions on Brahmaputra river to ensure that China does not pursue any major interventions which may adversely impact India's interests.

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