

STANDING COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE
(2002)

(THIRTEENTH LOK SABHA)

TWENTY NINTH REPORT

*[Action taken by the Government on the recommendations
contained in the Twenty Second Report (Thirteenth Lok Sabha) of the Standing Committee on
Agriculture (2001) on Demands for Grants (2001-2002) of the Ministry of Water Resources]*

LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
NEW DELHI

CHAPTER I

REPORT

This Report of the Committee on Agriculture deals with the action taken by the Government on the recommendations contained in the Twenty Second Report (Thirteenth Lok Sabha) of the Standing Committee on Agriculture (2001) on Demands for Grants (2001-2002) of the Ministry of Water Resources which was presented to the Lok Sabha and laid in Rajya Sabha on 19th April, 2001.

1.2 Action taken replies have been received from the Government in respect of all the 13 recommendations contained in the Report. These have been categorized as follows:

- (i) Recommendations/Observations that have been accepted by the Government (Chapter II of the Report)

Recommendation Sl.Nos. 1,2,3,9,10 and 11.

(Total 6)

- (ii) Recommendations/Observations which the Committee do not desire to pursue in view of the Government's replies (Chapter III of the Report)

Nil

- (iii) Recommendations/Observations in respect of which reply of the Government have not been accepted by the Committee (Chapter IV of the Report to be commented upon in Chapter I of the Report)

Recommendation Sl.Nos. 4,5,8 and 12

(Total 4)

- (iv) Recommendations/Observations in respect of which final replies of the Government are still awaited (Chapter V of the Report)

Recommendation Sl.Nos. 6,7 and 13

(Total 3)

1.3 The Committee will now deal with the action taken by the Government on some of their recommendations:-

National Water Development Agency (NWDA)

Recommendation No.4

1.4 National Water Development Agency (NWDA) was established in July 1982 to carry out the water balance and other related studies for optimum utilisation of Water Resources of the country for preparation of feasibility reports of water transfer links under National

Perspective Plan, which comprised of two components namely Himalayan Rivers Component and Peninsular Rivers Component. The Committee were informed that National Water Development Agency (NWDA) had completed Feasibility Reports of five water transfer links under Peninsular Component. Field survey and investigation for preparing feasibility reports of the 9 links under peninsular component and 7 links under Himalayan Component were in progress.

The Committee had desired that the Government should consider the feasibility of limited implementation of water transfer links, where the studies had been completed so that the benefits of conducting such studies reached the ultimate beneficiaries i.e. the people of the country.

1.5 The Government in their reply have stated that National Water Development Agency (NWDA) is at present carrying out feasibility studies of inter-basin water transfer links. NWDA has identified 16 water transfer links under Peninsular Component & 14 water transfer links under Himalayan Component for preparation of feasibility reports. The feasibility studies of 5 inter-basin water transfer links under Peninsular Component have been completed and that for one more link is under finalisation. Field survey and investigations for preparation of feasibility report of 8 links under Peninsular Component and 7 links under Himalayan Component are in progress. The present mandate of NWDA is to prepare the feasibility reports. It is programmed to complete all the feasibility studies of identified inter-basin water transfer link schemes under Peninsular Component by the year 2004 and those under Himalayan Component by the year 2008.

The feasibility studies carried out by NWDA shall form the basis for the negotiations and consensus amongst the States involved regarding sharing of surplus water etc. In this connection, steps have already been initiated by NWDA to arrange Chief Engineer level discussions between Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh in respect of Ken-Betwa link, for

which the feasibility report has already been prepared by NWDA. This approach is likely to be followed for other links too.

Comments of the Committee

1.6 The Committee regret to find that although feasibility studies of 5 inter-basins water transfer links have been completed by NWDA, steps have been taken to start discussions with concerned State Governments for only one link i.e. Ken-Betwa Link. In this connection, the Committee are unhappy over the delay in initiating discussions for other links. The Committee reiterate their recommendations made earlier and urge upon the Government to start discussions at appropriate levels with the concerned State Governments for all links for which studies have been completed, so that implementation of water transfers links be effected at an early date.

Accelerated Irrigated Benefits Programme (AIBP)

Recommendation No.5

1.7 The Committee had noted that Accelerated Irrigation Benefits Programme (AIBP) was launched by the Central Government in 1996-97 for expeditious completion of projects which were in the advanced stage of completion. Since the launching of this programme in 1996-2000, an amount of Rs.5239.702 crore had been released upto February, 2001. The Committee had been informed that only 20 projects were likely to be completed during the IX Plan out of 104 projects that had been included under AIBP.

The Committee had noted that according to mid-term appraisal of Ninth Plan out of 104 projects now under AIBP only 24 projects were in advanced stage of implementation and the share of irrigation projects at advanced stage i.e. having expenditure level more than 75% was just 14% in the total AIBP funds released during the period 1996-2000.

The Committee had felt that this defeats the very objective of the scheme, more funds should have been given to projects in advanced stage of completion so that they were completed expeditiously and with comparatively small investment, the benefits could start flowing to farmer community.

The Committee had desired that the Ministry should review critically the progress of all the on-going schemes under AIBP and had recommended that only those projects be taken up for further release of funds which fulfill the objective of AIBP. There should be a time bound programme for their completion so as to yield benefits from the investments that had already been made.

1.8 The Government in their reply have stated that the Government of India had launched the Accelerated Irrigation Benefits Programme (AIBP) during 1996-97. Since then, an amount of about Rs.5755.041 crore for 140 major/medium projects in various states and Rs.123.0068 crore for 2187 Surface M.I. Schemes in 10 Special Category States has been released by Ministry of Finance on the recommendations of Ministry of Water Resources. Out of these, 20 major/medium projects and 230 M.I. Schemes have been completed and an additional irrigation potential to the tune of 786 th.ha. has been created under AIBP upto March, 2000 through major/medium schemes.

At present 105 Major/Medium Projects are getting Central Loan Assistance under the AIBP. Keeping in view the gestation period of 10-15 years for Major/Medium irrigation projects, expeditious completion of 20 projects with the help of AIBP is a step forward.

The projects covered under AIBP are monitored by the Central Water Commission with the help of its regional offices situated all over the country and the releases of funds are based upon their reports. Periodical review meetings with State Irrigation Officers are also held to review the progress of irrigation projects covered under the AIBP.

Recently, Secretary (WR) has requested the Chief Secretaries of various State Governments to set the firm dates for completion of pre-fifth plan major on-going approved projects and has suggested that in case the completion of such projects is held up for want of financial assistance, in that case and subject to fulfilling the eligibility criteria of the AIBP, such projects may be posed for CLA under the AIBP. However, due care is generally taken while releasing CLA under the AIBP and such projects are given priority which have shown adequate progress in yielding early benefits. The Projects getting CLA under the AIBP have a

time bound programme of completion and quality of monitoring under AIBP is also being strengthened.

Comments of the Committee

1.9 The Committee are not satisfied with the reply of the Government. They had observed that the expenditure in projects under AIBP which are more than 75% complete is only 14% of the total fund released. The Ministry is silent about such distortions taking place and the steps taken to see that such distortions do not happen in future. The Committee desire that the Government should submit a report detailing inter-alia the list of projects under AIBP with the percentage and stage of completion of each project, likely date of their completion and the total amount released to such projects which are more than 75% complete.

Artificial Ground Water Recharge

Recommendation No.8

1.10 The Committee were distressed to note that Centrally Sponsored Scheme on Artificial Ground Water Recharge had still not been approved by the Planning Commission though there were widespread reports of depleting ground water level in various States. The Pilot scheme on Artificial Recharge of Ground Water under which 1-2 schemes had been taken for implementation in all the States had shown very good results. The Committee in their last Report on Demands for Grants (1999-2000) had strongly recommended that in view of encouraging result of the Pilot schemes, Planning Commission should clear the Centrally Sponsored Scheme urgently. In spite of this fact, the Planning Commission chose to lower the allocation for this Programme. The Committee had therefore, strongly recommended again that the scheme be cleared without any further loss of time so that depletion of water level was contained in affected States.

The Committee had found that due to drought condition in M.P. and Rajasthan in the last 2 years, water level in these states had also gone down alarmingly. The Committee had

desired that the Ministry should formulate suitable schemes/plans in this regard on priority basis and get them approved by the Planning Commission at the earliest.

1.11 The Government in their reply have stated that the views of the Standing Committee on Agriculture as contained in their last report on the Demands for Grants (1999-2000) for clearance of the Centrally Sponsored Scheme on Assisting the States on artificial recharge of ground water were communicated to the Planning Commission. A letter from Hon'ble Minister (WR) was also sent to the Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission in March 2000 in the matter. Subsequently, the Hon'ble Minister (WR) met the Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission on 04.04.2000 for early clearance of the scheme. The matter is being pursued.

Comments of the Committee

1.12 The Committee are highly perturbed to note that an issue of vital importance relating to depletion of ground water level had not been addressed to by the Planning Commission with due seriousness. The Committee would like to know the reservations the Planning Commission has in clearing the scheme. The Committee had also recommended that the Ministry should formulate suitable schemes on priority basis for drought ridden States like MP and Rajasthan etc. where the water level had gone down alarmingly. The Ministry chose to remain silent on this recommendation of the Committee. The Committee, therefore, express their utmost displeasure in this regard and desire that highest priority should be given to this scheme and early clearance be obtained from the Planning Commission.

Sutlej Yamuna Link Canal Project

Recommendation No.12

1.13 The Committee were unhappy to note that the hundred per cent Centrally funded Sutlej Yamuna Link Canal Project, which was already about 90% physically completed was pending for completion since 1990. Every year provision of fund was made for this project, but no expenditure was being incurred under this project, since the work was at a standstill. The

Committee had felt that concerted efforts had not been made by the Government in this regard, despite their repeated recommendations year after year to settle the issue at the earliest.

The Committee had therefore, once again strongly recommended to the Ministry of Water Resources to make sincere and vigorous efforts to settle the issue relating to Sutlej Yamuna Link Canal Project urgently so that the benefits of this project reach the people of Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan.

1.14 The Government in their reply have stated that, “After the Hon’ble Minister (Water Resources) requested the Chief Minister of Punjab for a convenient date suitable to him for convening the proposed meeting of the Chief Ministers of Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan to discuss the water related issues of these States including the completion of the Sutlej Yamuna Link Canal and endeavour to arrive at a negotiated settlement among them. The Ministry of Water Resources had been pursuing the matter with Government of Punjab through its letters of 10.11.2000, 20.11.2000 and 20.02.2001. The Hon’ble Minister (Water Resources) had again asked the Chief Ministers in his letters dated 16.4.2001 and 8.5.2001 , to indicate a convenient date for the meeting. While awaiting a convenient date from the Government of Punjab, Hon’ble Minister (Water Resources) had also fixed the date for the meeting of the Chief Ministers of Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan , for 27th June 2001. However, as the Government of Punjab and Rajasthan have expressed the inability of their Chief Ministers to attend the meeting on this date, the meeting has been postponed”.

Comments of the Committee

1.15 **The Committee are dismayed at the casualness in approach shown by the concerned State Governments of Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan in regard to issues relating to Sutlej Yamuna Link Canal Project inspite of concerted and persistant efforts made by the Hon’ble Minister of Water Resources for settlement of outstanding differences among these participating States.**

The Committee, therefore, desire that since the matter is hanging fire for a long time, the Hon'ble Prime Minister may intervene and bring the Chief Ministers of the three concerned States to the negotiating table in order to arrive at an amicable settlement of the issue.