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Topic: Water Resources

Level of groundwater extraction lowest in 18 years, finds study

Total groundwater recharge was 437.6 billion cubic metres, as opposed to extraction of 239.16 bcm, reports Ministry of Water Resources

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NEW DELHI

Groundwater extraction in India saw an 18-year decline, according to an assessment by the Central Ground Water Board (CGWB) made public on Wednesday.

The total annual groundwater recharge for the entire country is 437.6 billion cubic metres (bcm) and annual groundwater extraction for the entire country is 239.16 bcm, according to the 2022 assessment report. Further, out of the total 7,089 assessment units in the country, 1,006 units have been categorised as “over-exploited” in the report.

By comparison, an assessment in 2020 found that the annual groundwater recharge was 436 bcm and extraction 245 bcm. In 2017, recharge was 432 bcm and extraction 249 bcm. The 2022 assessment suggests that groundwater



Promising data: The last time groundwater extraction was this low was in 2004, at 231 bcm. AKHILESH KUMAR

extraction is the lowest since 2004, when it was 231 bcm.

Such joint exercises between the CGWB and States/Union Territories were carried out earlier in 1980, 1995, 2004, 2009, 2011, 2013, 2017 and 2020.

“A detailed analysis of the information collected from the assessment indicates increase in ground water recharge which may mainly be attributed to increase in recharge from canal seepage, return flow of irrigation water and recharges from water bodies/

tanks & water conservation structures. Further, analysis indicates improvement in ground water conditions in 909 assessment units in the country when compared with 2017 assessment data. In addition, overall decrease in number of over-exploited units and decrease in stage of groundwater extraction level have also been observed,” the Ministry of Water Resources said in a statement.

The full report wasn't made public by the Ministry.

Topic: Judiciary

D.Y. Chandrachud takes charge as the 50th Chief Justice of India

Appointment of Chief Justice

- The CJI and the Judges of the SC are appointed by the President under clause (2) of Article 124 of the Constitution.
- From 1950 to 1973, the practice has been to appoint the senior most judge of the SC as the CJI.
- This established convention was violated in 1973 when A N Ray was appointed as the Chief Justice of India by superseding three senior judges.
- This discretion of the government was curtailed by the SC in the Second Judges Case (1993), in which the SC ruled that the senior most judge should alone be appointed to the office of the CJI.

Topic: State Executive

Needless needling

The ties between the Governor and the government in TN must be reset

The presentation of a memorandum against Tamil Nadu Governor R.N. Ravi by MPs of the ruling DMK-led Secular Progressive Alliance to President Droupadi Murmu is yet another reflection of the fractured relationship between the DMK regime and the Governor. Irrespective of their differences, this unfortunate development could have been avoided with some effort and reasoning on both sides. The memorandum has slammed the Governor's way of functioning, "openly contradicting its [Tamil Nadu government's] policy in public and unduly delaying assent to Bills". In an account of 20 Bills passed by the State Assembly and pending with the Governor, the memorandum, expectedly, dealt with Mr. Ravi's approach towards the TN Admission to UG Medical Degree Courses Bill 2021, also called NEET [National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test] exemption Bill, which is now awaiting presidential assent. What the Alliance argued was that Mr. Ravi, instead of forwarding the Bill to the President, even in the first instance had chosen to return it to the Assembly, "which is *ultra vires* of the powers conferred on a Governor". But quite needlessly, the joint statement also took strong exception to the Governor's public statements on matters unrelated to governance such as *Sanatana Dharma*, Dravidian heritage, Tamil pride and *Thirukkural*, a Tamil classical work. Ever since he assumed charge in September 2021, Mr. Ravi, a former Nagaland Governor, has earned the DMK's wrath over the NEET exemption Bill. In addition, his presenting himself as a strong advocate of the three-language formula and the National Education Policy (NEP) has not been palatable to many parties in the State.

While it is perfectly legitimate to have contrarian views in a democratic set up, every constitutional authority should conduct himself or herself in a manner that adheres to the letter and spirit of the Constitution. Notwithstanding the correctness or otherwise of his position, the Governor should not be seen as one needlessly provoking a duly-elected government to confront him on one issue or the other. He should walk the extra mile to establish that he stays within constitutional limits. Given his non-political background, Mr. Ravi is better placed than many of his gubernatorial counterparts to present himself as being fair and objective. Meanwhile, critics including those from the ruling party should refrain from reacting adversely to every single observation as their responses may create an impression of their wanting to be in a state of perpetual conflict with the Governor. After all, the ties between the institution of Governor and the State government rest and flourish on understanding and mutual respect. Otherwise, Tamil Nadu will be the loser, undermining governance.



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