Govt. Notification on RO System

Why in News?

The Environment Ministry has released a draft notification to regulate the use of membrane-based water purification systems.

What is the notification about?

- The notification primarily concerns the **manufacturers** of Reverse Osmosis (RO) water filters.
- It also effectively bars domestic **users** from installing RO systems.
- It mainly deals with rules for integration of systems that inform consumers about total dissolved solids (TDS) levels.
- This is envisaged both before water enters filtration systems and after it has been filtered.
- The aim is also to ensure that after 2022, no more than 25% of water being treated is wasted, and for residential complexes to reuse the residual wastewater for other activities, including gardening.

Why this notification was made?

- There was a legal dispute before the National Green Tribunal.
- It banned RO water filter use in Delhi as the purification process wastes water.
- This legal dispute is the reason why this notification was culminated.
- The association of water filter manufacturers challenged this order and this lawsuit has led to this pan-India notification which intent to **conserve water and cut waste**.

How does RO work?

- In RO, the total dissolved solids (TDS) - a major determinant of water quality - in water are reduced to meet potable water standards.
- (TDS comprise inorganic salts like calcium, magnesium, etc and some small amounts of organic matter that are dissolved in water.)
- Home filters waste nearly 80% of the water during treatment.
- The resort to restrict home filters may cause consumer to worry but it is unlikely that they will be taken to task for using such water filters.

- For one, the notification implies, these filters are prohibited only if the home gets water supply that conforms to Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) for Drinking Water.
- Although several State and city water boards claim BIS standards, the water at homes falls short of the test parameters.

What does the BIS and NITI Aayog say?

- **BIS** - In 2019, the BIS ranked several cities on official water supply quality.
- In the 28 test parameters, Delhi failed 19, Chennai 9, and Kolkata 10, and only Mumbai met all the standards.
- The BIS norms are voluntary for public agencies that supply piped water but are mandatory for bottled water producers.
- Moreover, most of the country does not have the luxury of piped water.
- **CWMI** - The Composite Water Management Index of NITI Aayog says that 70% of water supply is contaminated.
- Thus, the case for restricting people's choices on the means they employ to ensure potable water is weak.

How the notification should be implemented?

- When implemented, the primary aim of the notification should be to persuade authorities to upgrade and supply BIS-standard water at the consumer's end.
- This should be done without additional costs, particularly on millions who now lack access to protected supply.

Source: The Hindu

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