Proposed Jal Jeevan Mission

Why in News?

Prime Minister of India announced the Jal Jeevan Mission in his 2019 Independence Day speech which plans to supply water to all households by 2024.

How can the target of the basic quantity of water access to rural India be achieved?

- For many years, the central and state governments have been making efforts to increase access to safe and adequate drinking water.
- The provision of a basic quantity of drinking water in rural India has been achieved through hand pumps, dug wells, household water supply (HWS), etc.
- Thus, while states like Sikkim managed to achieve high levels of HWS, a relatively low percentage of rural Indian households have access to this.

What are the challenges for the strategy to increase HWS access?

- No enough attention to sustaining or recharging groundwater, the primary source.
- Treating service delivery primarily as an engineering solution without adequate involvement of the users.
- Until now, the institutional landscape for water at both the Centre and state government has been fragmented,
- Several union ministries and state departments deal with different water management aspects, with overlapping roles and responsibilities.

Was there any step taken?

- The creation of the Jal Shakti Mantralaya to integrate the management of India's water resources and supply of drinking water is a landmark step in diagnosing and addressing the problem.
- At a policy level, the stage has been set to deliver integrated water management solutions.

What are the implementation challenges?

- In rural drinking water service delivery, there is **inadequate attention**

given to taking measures to sustain the source of the water, in most cases groundwater is a challenge.
- This proposed mission will make source sustainability measures mandatory prior to pumping and distributing water to households.
- Another issue with the traditional approach to service delivery was that the **provision of drinking water was viewed primarily as an engineering solution**, with schemes being planned and executed by the public health and engineering departments.
- However, water is an ideal sector for the applicability of the principle of subsidiarity, performing only those tasks which cannot be performed effectively at a more immediate or local level.

What are some best practices to be integrated in the programme?

- With adequate capacity building and training, water can be most efficiently managed at the lowest appropriate level.
- Adopting this principle, the Jal Jeevan Mission's first preference will be to have community-managed **single village ground water-based schemes**, wherever sufficient quantity and good quality of groundwater exists.
- Wherever adequate quantity of safe groundwater is not present, or where it may be technically not feasible to have single-village schemes, **surface water-based multi-village schemes** will be promoted.
- Further, in some remote regions, where it may not be techno-economically feasible to have household water supply schemes, **local innovations, such as solar-based schemes** will be encouraged.

How can the problem of household waste water be managed?

- It is not commonly known that household waste water from HWS amounts to about 75% of the amount of water supplied.
- With the rural households to get HWS under the proposed mission, huge quantities of household waste water will be generated across the country, therefore making its effective management critical.
- There is a plan to include a mandatory provision under the mission for the effective channelling and treatment of household waste water, through appropriate and low cost drainage and treatment systems.
- Once appropriately treated, this waste water can be used for both recharge of groundwater as well as for irrigation purposes.

What is the conclusion?

- An extensive information, education and communication will be needed to create a people's movement for water management.

- The ongoing Jal Shakti Abhiyan will help in creating awareness about the importance of integrating source sustainability and water reuse.
- This integrated approach to **decentralised, community managed, and sustainable water management** is the backbone of the government's plan to ensure that every household gets the benefits of water supply.
- The Jal Jeevan Mission will be a major step towards improving our people's ease of living and meeting their aspirations of a New India.

Source: The Indian Express

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