

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF JAL SHAKTI
DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES, RIVER DEVELOPMENT & GANGA REJUVENATION

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO.888

ANSWERED ON 28.07.2025

INTERLINKING OF RIVERS PROJECT

888. SHRI AYODHYA RAMI REDDY ALLA

Will the Minister of Jal Shakti be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Interlinking of Rivers Project (ILR) challenge or reinforce existing ontologies of water governance in the country, particularly in terms of the relationships between water, nature, and society, and the implications for our understanding of water as a resource; and
- (b) whether the postcolonial technopolitical implications of the ILR project, particularly in terms of the ways in which it reflects or challenges historical patterns of colonialism, modernity, and technological development in the country, and manner in which these dynamics shape the project's implementation and outcomes?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR JAL SHAKTI

(SHRI RAJ BHUSHAN CHOUDHARY)

(a) & (b) The framework of water governance in India, guided by the National Water Policy of 2012, includes a set of state level policies, institutions and practices that manage water resources and services at various levels to ensure access and equity. It encompasses the allocation, distribution and use of water, as well as the roles of different stakeholders in these processes. India's water security faces challenges due to factors like erratic rainfall, inequitable distribution of water resources, over-extraction of groundwater and inadequate infrastructure, leading to water stress and scarcity in many regions. The National Water Policy 2012 states that, "Inter-basin transfers are not merely for increasing production but also for meeting basic human need and achieving equity and social justice. Inter-basin transfers of water should be considered on the basis of merits of each case after evaluating the environmental, economic and social impacts of such transfers."

Taking into account ecological and environmental sustainability, a National Perspective Plan (NPP) for Water Resources Development was formulated by Government of India in 1980 for providing storages and transfer of surplus waters to water deficit regions. The link projects under the NPP are judiciously planned and designed to transfer water from surplus basins to the deficit/water short basins and thus, minimizing water going to sea unutilized and mitigating the effects of floods and droughts to some extent. The flood water from flood prone/water surplus river basins would be diverted to water deficit regions and

would also recharge ground water table, tanks and canals in the command areas, that ensures sustainable use of water resources and is benefiting society in terms of availability of water for irrigation, domestic and industrial uses and hydropower generation and thus leading to supporting/reinforcing existing ontologies of water governance in India as effective water governance is crucial for ensuring equitable access to water and managing water resources sustainably.

The Government of India pursues the Inter-Linking of Rivers (ILR) programme through a consultative approach. Consensus building among the concerned States is continuous and progressive process for implementation of the ILR. In addition, every project goes through a rigorous process of environmental appraisal in consultation with the stakeholders.
