

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

**RAJYA SABHA**  
**UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 2136**  
TO BE ANSWERED ON 06.08.2026

**Effective use of water in AI Data centres**

2136. SMT. SUDHA MURTY:

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Ministry has assessed the environmental impact of high freshwater consumption by AI data centres in water-stressed regions;
- (b) whether standalone environmental clearance parameters under the EIA framework would be introduced for data centres, tracking Water Usage Effectiveness metrics;
- (c) whether the CPCB is considering to issue specific guidelines or directives for closed-loop recycling or treated greywater use for cooling in these facilities; and
- (d) whether an inter-ministerial mechanism exists between the Ministry, Ministry of Jal Shakti and MeitY to align data centre parks with local groundwater limits?

**ANSWER**

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE  
(SHRI KIRTI VARDHAN SINGH)

**(a) to (d).** Artificial Intelligence (AI) Data Centres do not, per se, require Environmental Clearance (EC) under the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Notification, 2006, as amended. However, AI Data Centres proposed as part of a “Building and Construction Project” under Item 8(a), i.e. built up area exceeding 20,000 sq. m or a “Township and Area Development Project” i.e. covering an area  $\geq 50$  ha and /or built up area  $\geq 1,50,000$  sq. m under Item 8(b) of the schedule to the EIA Notification, 2006 require prior EC. The EC for such a building project is granted by the State Environment Impact Assessment Authority (SEIAA) at the State/UT level.

During the appraisal of such building projects for grant of EC, various aspects such as availability of freshwater particularly in water-stressed regions, water balance report, generation of greywater, recycling and reuse of greywater are duly considered and appropriate environmental safeguards are prescribed. Further, the use and discharge of water and greywater during the construction and operation of AI Data Centres is regulated under the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974, and the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981. Compliance with the provisions of these Acts, including the prescribed standards for water use and wastewater discharge, is monitored by the concerned State Pollution Control Board (SPCB) or Pollution Control Committee (PCC), as applicable.

Further, groundwater extraction for infrastructure/commercial projects is regulated in accordance with the guidelines issued by the Ministry of Jal Shakti vide Notification S.O. 3289(E) dated 24.09.2020, as amended vide Notification dated 29.03.2023.

The Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) has issued the District Cooling Guidelines, 2023, which, inter alia, recommend the use of treated water as cooling tower make-up water, wherever feasible, to reduce dependence on freshwater resources and promote sustainable water management. The Guidelines also emphasize the adoption of energy-efficient cooling technologies, optimization of cooling system performance, utilization of alternative water sources, and implementation of water conservation measures. These measures are particularly relevant for large cooling-intensive facilities, including data centres, and support enhanced energy efficiency, reduced water consumption, and sustainable operation of cooling infrastructure.

As per information provided by Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, the 'Resilience, Innovation & Efficiency' Working Group of the India AI Impact Summit has been set up to examine energy efficiency, water management, and environmental resilience in digital and AI infrastructure.

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