

Standing Committee Report Summary

Accelerated Irrigation Benefits Programme

- The Public Accounts Committee (Chairperson: Mr. Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury) submitted its report on the Accelerated Irrigation Benefits Programme (AIBP) on March 23, 2020. The Programme was launched in 1996 with the aim of accelerating the implementation of irrigation projects that exceed the resource capabilities of states. It is currently being implemented by the Ministry of Jal Shakti. Key observations and recommendations of the Committee include:
 - **Inclusion of projects under AIBP:** The Committee noted that the criteria for inclusion of a project under the scheme has undergone frequent revisions. It observed that such frequent changes in the guidelines for inclusion displays a discontinuity in the original plan of the scheme. It recommended the Ministry of Jal Shakti to consult all stakeholders and state governments and assess the need for a comprehensive revision of the guidelines. Further, the Committee recommended the Ministry to frame timelines for the inclusion of projects, which may include the possibility of changes, so as to remove the need for frequent revisions. It also recommended that concrete action be taken to adhere to the guidelines and timelines thus formed.
 - **Dilution in focus and objectives:** The Committee noted instances of: (i) delay in preparation of Detailed Project Reports (DPRs), and (ii) wastage of public money, while examining the performance of the Programme. It noted that the DPRs of 14 major and medium projects (sanctioned cost of Rs 10,551 crore) have not been made available for audit. It recommended that the deficiencies in preparing and processing of DPRs such as delays, inadequate surveys, and inaccurate assessment of command area be rectified. Further, it recommended that action be taken against those responsible for the wastage of public money. The Committee recommended the Ministry to open more audits for projects under the Programme, starting with the 14 projects whose DPRs are not available.
 - **Inefficient fiscal management:** The Committee noted that the Central Water Commission and project authorities are not adopting uniform parameters to calculate the benefit cost ratio (an indicator of economic viability) of projects. It recommended adopting a uniform parameter for calculation of benefit cost ratio.
- Further, the Committee noted irregularities with regards to cases of fraudulent and fictitious expenditure. It noted that the central government was unable to get a response from the Uttar Pradesh government on suspected irregular expenditure of Rs 1.5 crore, and unable to recover a suspected irregular payment of Rs 2.6 crore from the Karnataka government. It recommended the Ministry to pursue such cases robustly. The Committee also noted instances of short realisation of revenue and recommended the government to take measures to address the same and take strict action against defaulters.
- **Deficiencies in work management:** The Committee noted various deficiencies in management of work under the scheme such as inaccurate project planning, and substandard execution. It recommended the Ministry to advise state governments to ensure appropriate checks in management of works and fix accountability for deficiencies. Further, it held that the government should put in place a mechanism to monitor the due diligence of states in adhering to such advice.
- **Undue benefits to contractors:** The Committee noted that there were undue benefits to contractors amounting to Rs 303 crore. These were due to reasons such as termination of contracts without recovery of advance, excess payment to contractors, and hindrances due to local interferences. It recommended that such cases should be probed individually. Further, the government may form a separate cell to examine cases of undue benefits to contractors.
- **Inefficient monitoring of the scheme:** The Committee noted that the use of satellite imagery and field reports can increase effective monitoring of the irrigation potential. Therefore, it recommended that Ministry to take steps to reduce variations between satellite imagery and field verifications by working with remote sensing authorities. Further, it recommended to strengthen the participatory model of irrigation through Water Users Associations to tackle various issues related to irrigation. It recommended the Ministry to increase its efforts in facilitating the formation of Water Users Associations in all states.

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