

New water policy

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Why in news?

- The Union Water Resources Ministry has finalised a committee chaired by Mihir Shah, who is a former Planning Commission member and a water expert to draft a new **National Water Policy (NWP)**. The committee has 10 principal members. The committee is expected to produce a report within six months.

Why is the new policy needed now?

- **The NWP currently in force was drafted in 2012 and is the third such policy since 1987.**
- In order to meet the present challenges in the water sector, revision of National Water Policy 2012 has been envisaged..
- **Revitalisation of rivers** needs to be brought into focus and policy parameters need to be set up accordingly.
- **Technological innovations** like sensors, Geographic Information systems (GIS) and Satellite imagery need to be introduced to modulate the water and track the flow.

Salient features of National Water Policy 2012:

- Emphasis on the need for a **national water framework law** and comprehensive legislation for optimum development of inter-State rivers and river valleys.
- **Water is treated as an economic good** so as to promote its conservation and efficient use.
- **A portion of river flows should be kept aside to meet ecological needs** ensuring that the proportional low and high flow releases correspond in time closely to the natural flow regime.
- **Adaptation strategies in view of climate change** for

designing and management of water resources structures.

- A system to evolve **benchmarks for water uses for different purposes**, e., water footprints, and water auditing be developed to ensure efficient use of water.
- Setting up of the **Water Regulatory Authority** has been recommended.
- **Water Users Associations** should be given statutory powers to collect and retain a portion of water charges, manage the volumetric quantum of water allotted to them.
- Water resources projects and services should be managed with **community participation**.



- **Adequate grants to the States to update technology, design practices, planning and management practices**, preparation of annual water balances and accounts for the site and basin, preparation of hydrologic balances for water systems, and benchmarking and performance evaluation.