GS-I: Rethinking water management issues.

News

- NITI Aayog’s strategy for water resources is a constitutional of failed policies of the past.
- NITI Aayog released its strategy for New India @75 which defined clear objectives for 2022-23 with an overview of 41 distinct areas.
- Effective strategic planning must satisfy three essential requirements. One acknowledges and analyse past failures. Two suggests realistic and implementable goals and three stipulate who will do what and within what time frame. The ‘strategy’ for water fails on all three counts.

No new vision:

- The document reiterates two failed ideas adopting an integrated river basin management approach and setting up of river basin management approach and setting up of river basin organisation for major basins.
- The integrated management concept has been around for 70 years but not even on moderate size basin has been managed thus anywhere in the world.
- The water resources regulatory authority is another failed idea. Maharashtra established a water resources regulatory authority in 2005. But far from an improvement in managing resources water management in Maharashtra is worse.
- Goals include providing adequate and safe piped water supply to all citizens and livestock, providing irrigation to all farm providing water to industries and clean flow in the Ganga and other rivers along with their tributaries.

Who is accountable?

A strategy document must specify who will be responsible and accountable for achieving the specific goals and in what time-frame.

NITI Aayog does not say who will do this encouraging and how? Should the state water Ministries do this by restricting or even withholding recalcitrant industry’s access to fresh water?

However the free electricity provided by solar units further encourage unrestricted pumping of groundwater and will further aggravate the problem of a steady decline of groundwater levels.

Way Forward:

India’s water problems can be solved with existing knowledge technology and available funds. It is unfortunate that NITI Aayog has failed to admit this and has prescribed only a continuation of past failed policies.