



**78% of the Drinking water units in the country
operating without NOC: CAG Report**

78% of the Drinking water units in the country operating without NOC: CAG Report

Groundwater is the source of water that is present below the surface of the earth which exists in the zone of saturation. It is extracted with the help of wells, springs and sometimes emerges through base flows in rivers and streams. To address the issue of depleting groundwater, The Government of India had established the Central Ground Water Agency (CGWA), it oversees and regulates groundwater management. To make sure that the resource is not exploited, CGWA releases guidelines to be followed before abstracting groundwater.

On 21.12.2021, in a report by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) on Groundwater Management and Regulations, it was stated that about 78% of Packaged drinking water units were functioning without obtaining a No objection certificate (NOC) from CGWA. An audit of 15 states was made in which it was found that a total of 3189 BIS Licenses (Bureau of Indian Standards) were issued to various proprietors since 2013. Of which, only 642 had obtained the NOC from CGWA.

The Department of Water Resources (DoWR) in October 2019 had discovered that there was a glaring gap between the NOCs obtained by the Packaged water manufacturing units and the licenses issued by the BIS. The BIS licensing does not have a provision to impose the condition to obtain NOC from CGWA and the report added that this lack of mandatory interconnection between BIS license and NOC for groundwater if not resolved, the problem of not obtaining the NOC shall continue to persist. Still DoWR stated that CGWA and Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), after several meetings in 2020, concluded that FSSAI would not grant licenses to entities who do not have NOC obtained for Groundwater extraction.

The report also stated that groundwater extraction has risen from 58 % to 68 % from 2004-2017. The country's total utilisation of groundwater as compared to the rate of recharge is 63 %. The states have been advised to limit their groundwater extraction. However, states like Delhi, Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan had extracted more than 100 % of their groundwater which hampers the recharge rate in these places.

The report mentioned that only 19 states and union territories had implemented laws related to groundwater management as of December 2019. Out of this, there was only a partial implementation by 4 states. In 6 other states, the enactment was pending for various reasons. Other States and UTs had not taken any step to implement the legislation for groundwater management.



Ganesh Nair
Legal Researcher, R&D
Corpbiz