Punjab government to set up water regulation authority

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The Amarinder Singh Cabinet on Wednesday approved the creation of the Punjab Water Regulation and Development Authority in a bid to check the depletion of groundwater in the State. It will be empowered to issue directions on water extraction but cannot impose any restrictions or tariff on extraction of water for drinking, domestic and agriculture purposes, said an official statement.

The Cabinet decided to promulgate an ordinance called the Punjab Water Resources (Management and Regulation) Ordinance, 2019. “The proposed legislation is aimed at development, management and regulation of water resources of the State for ensuring their judicious, equitable and sustainable utilisation and management,” said the statement.

The authority would be empowered to issue general directions related to extraction and use of groundwater, besides ensuring optimal and efficient utilisation of all water resources in the State, including canal irrigation. It will also issue guidelines on recycling and reuse of water and its conservation.

For drinking, domestic and agriculture purposes, the authority would be guided by the policy of the State government. It would, however, be required to issue tariff orders for use of water for industrial and commercial use.

Charges revised

The Cabinet also decided to revise charges for the use of river-canal water for purposes other than agriculture.

“The proposed rates are on a par with the neighbouring State of Haryana, and the revision is expected to increase the revenue generated from water charges from the existing ₹24 crore per annum to ₹319 crore per annum,” said the statement.