

'Ice stupas' could help irrigate Ladakh fields

Times Of India, New Delhi Dated : January 17, 2020 Written By :Ambika Pandit

In its search for an answer to the problem of acute water shortages in Ladakh, particularly in regions which grow a single crop, the government is now looking to assess the impact of "ice stupas" set-up under the guidance of the Students Educational and Cultural Movement of Ladakh (SECMOL) and explore if these can be scaled up as solutions to help create more livelihood options.

These stupas store large reserves of water as ice through the winter and carry the potential to provide for irrigation and drinking water in summers. SECMOL will be executing an on-ground experiment over two years across 40 villages and will present to the ministry of tribal affairs a detailed report on the impact of ice stupas and how this model can be broad-based for mass utilisation.

The action research, which will be financially supported by the government, aims at supporting research by reputed institutions that are working in the field of tribal development and research. Renowned innovator and education reformist Sonam Wangchuk is one of the founders of SECMOL and has been steering the 'ice stupa' project on-ground.

SECMOL will work on building ice stupas and work on the rehabilitation of abandoned villages. The only source of water in Ladakh is glaciers, which melt and water goes into the Indus river through water channels.

SECMOL is learnt to have shared that if the existing water streams are channelised and brought to the villages, this will be nothing short of a revolution as it will not only make water available but also generate livelihood. The organisation proposed three inter-linked projects. For instance each ice stupa has scope for storing millions of litres of water which will melt and provide drinking water and water for agriculture and forestation and result in rejuvenating the economy of the village.

It was also pointed that due to the water shortage, the villages had become uninhabitable. So, some of the houses can be used as farmstays.
