DJB to go underground to plug demand-supply gap

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New Delhi: Delhi Jal Board has set in motion its plan to plug the ever-widening demand-supply gap in peak summers.

At a meeting chaired by chief minister Arvind Kejriwal, who is also the DJB chairman, four different projects to exploit underground water resources have been cleared with a deadline of March 2019. Additionally, MLAs of areas in north and east Delhi — where the water table is high — have been asked to help identify points that can be used for sinking borewells.

Ankit Srivastava, technical adviser to DJB, said the biggest project among these four would involve water extraction from the riverside aquifers between Wazirabad and Okhla. “The Central Ground Water Board had identified six locations on the Yamuna floodplain between Wazirabad and Okhla with a potential of 383 MLD. DJB is already extracting some water from two of the locations near the Palla stretch. However, most of the potential is untapped. It was decided at the meeting that the extraction be done to the full potential of 85 MGD,” Srivastava said.

The four points where plants will be set up with ammonia-removal mechanism are: north of NH24 to the railway tracks near Akshardham, south of NH24 to Mayur Vihar, both sides of DND to Okhla barrage and, finally, Kalindi Kunj to Jaipur. Also, WAPCOS — a consultant of DJB — has identified new freshwater pockets in Dwarka. “These pockets will now be developed to augment supply in the area. It is expected to get us an additional 22.5 MLD,” he said.

A recent NITI Aayog report had warned that based on current levels of exploitation, Delhi’s groundwater reserves would be exhausted by 2020. A latest CGWB report stated that groundwater levels in more than 15% of Delhi’s areas were now alarmingly below 40 metres.

DJB has argued that due to studies have been conducted and the new extraction plans would not lead to adverse environmental effects. “We will be replenishing the aquifers through our lake development scheme too,” Srivastava said.

DJB officials have been told to identify areas for additional bores in north and east Delhi where the water table is high. Srivastava said it was feasible to use such borewells in areas where the water table was above 8 metres. Besides making these areas self-sufficient, the surplus water will be supplied to south Delhi.