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Premium

Bengal tops list of States with most ponds and reservoirs: first-ever waterbody census

Over 24 lakh waterbodies across India, states census data released by the Ministry of Jal Shakti recently

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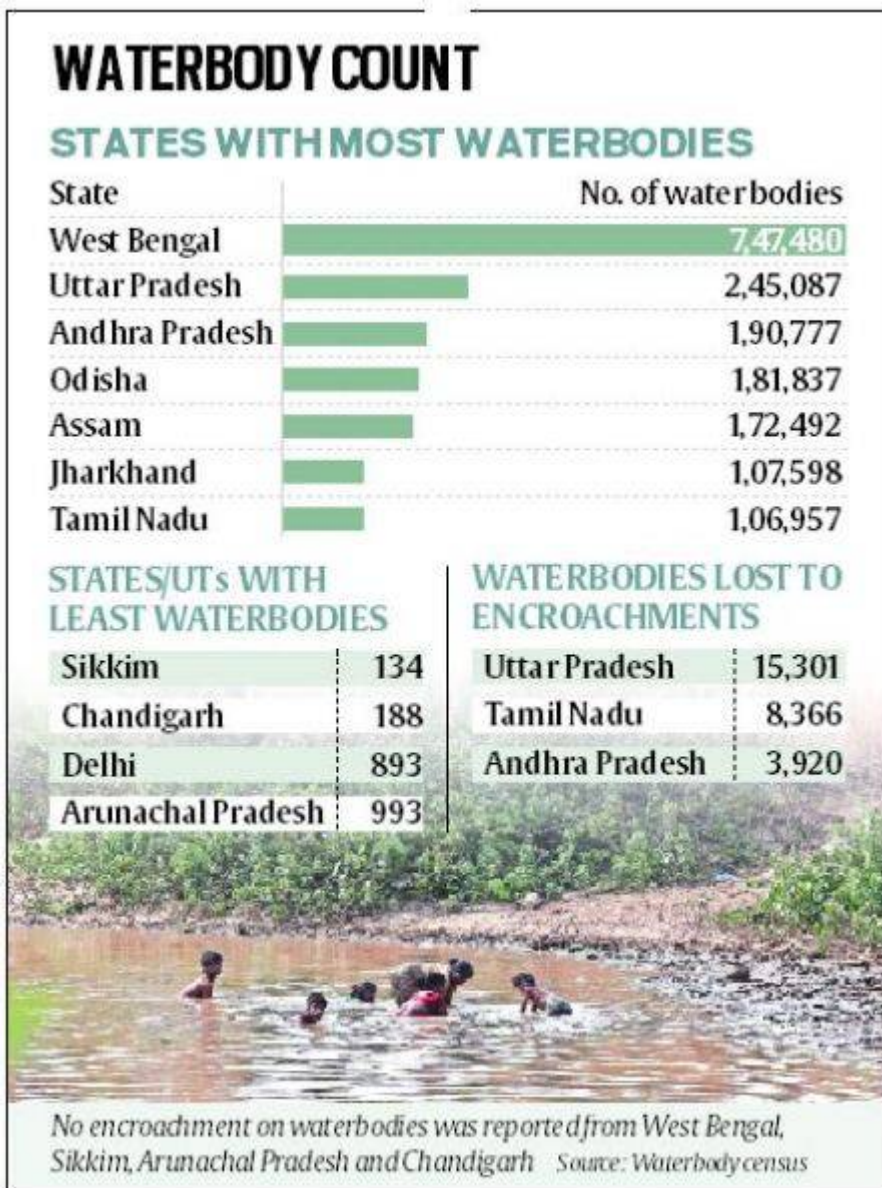
West Bengal's South 24 Parganas has been ranked as the top district having the highest (3.55 lakh) number of waterbodies across the country. In addition to West Bengal, six other states have over one lakh waterbodies, while four states and UTs account for less than 1,000 waterbodies each (see box).

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India has 24.24 lakh waterbodies like ponds, tanks and lakes, with West Bengal accounting for the most (7.47 lakh) and Sikkim the least (134), according to the report of the first census of waterbodies released by the Ministry of Jal Shakti recently.

The report states, “24,24,540 waterbodies have been enumerated in the country, out of which 97.1% (23,55,055) are in rural areas and only 2.9% (69,485) in urban areas.”



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The census defines a waterbody as “all natural or man-made units bounded on all sides with some or no masonry work used for storing water for irrigation or other purposes (example industrial, pisciculture, domestic/drinking, recreation, religious, ground water recharge etc)”

“Waterbodies are usually of various types known by different names like tank, reservoirs, ponds and bundhies etc. A structure where water from ice-melt, streams, springs, rain or drainage of water from residential or other areas is accumulated or water is stored by diversion from a stream, nala or river will also be treated as waterbody,” state the report. The waterbodies census was conducted along with the 6th Minor Irrigation Census for 2017-18. The results of the census have been released recently.

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As per the report, 59.5 per cent (14,42,993) of waterbodies are ponds, followed by tanks (15.7 per cent i.e. 3,81,805), reservoirs (12.1 per cent i.e. 2,92,280), water conservation schemes/percolation tanks/check dams (9.3% i.e. 2,26,217), lakes (0.9% i.e. 22,361) and others (2.5% i.e. 58,884”).

According to the report, “West Bengal has the highest number of ponds and reservoirs, whereas Andhra Pradesh has highest number of tanks. Tamil Nadu has the highest number of lakes and Maharashtra is the leading state with water conservation schemes.”

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West Bengal’s South 24 Parganas has been ranked as the top district having the highest (3.55 lakh) number of waterbodies across the country. In addition to West Bengal, six other states have over one lakh waterbodies, while four states and UTs account for less than 1,000 waterbodies each (see box).

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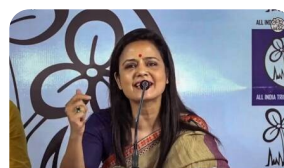
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The census also collected data on encroachment of waterbodies for the first time. “1.6% waterbodies out of all the enumerated waterbodies are reported to be encroached, out of which 95.4% are in rural areas and remaining 4.6% in urban areas. Out of all encroached waterbodies, 62.8% have less than 25% area under encroachment, whereas 11.8% waterbodies have more than 75% area under encroachment,” said the report.

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