

**Minutes of the first meeting of the
High Level Empowered Committee (HLEC), Rebuild Kerala
Initiative(RKI) held on 8.11.2018 in the committee room of
Chief Secretary**

The Chief Secretary chaired the meeting. A list of members present is appended.

In his opening remarks, Chief Secretary outlined the background of the constitution of the HLEC. He stressed the need for a long term plan of action to rebuild the State with a view to repair/restore infrastructure, with resilience and adopting high ecological safeguards.

The items listed in the Agenda were discussed thereafter.

The extract of the PDNA document listing the studies to be commissioned was discussed in detail. In the field of integrated water resources management, the recommendation is to prepare terms of reference for and start local implementation of a comparative study of IWRM legislation, preparation of comprehensive river basin planning is preferred long term vision in respect of water resources management, term of reference for master plan in Kuttanad river basin etc.

Shri T K A Nair, former Secretary to Prime Minister, pointed out that the issues of water and land needed to be addressed together. There is no dearth of studies. The Pamba river action plan and the Kuttanad master plan are examples of how the studies and reports have not yielded desired results. We have to learn from these experiences and create an institutional mechanism to implement the recommendations of previous studies. The expertise available within the State, particularly in CWRDM and Land Use Board can be utilised for this purpose.

Secretary (Water Resources) pointed out that studies are urgently needed to address important issues in water, sanitation and irrigation sectors. Recalling that although the Pamba authority was formed, the rules were not framed, she stressed the need for a professional management set up. The irrigation department needs to be restructured and an effective institutional mechanism has to be created.

Additional Chief Secretary (Rev &DMD) pointed out that the issues of multiple controlling authorities managing rivers and river basins has to be addressed.

Additional Chief Secretary (LSGD) suggested that the rivers should vest with the department of Irrigation. The proposed study may prioritise the 4 major river basins flowing into the Vembanad Lake.

Following the discussions, it was discussed that Secretary, Water Resources will prepare a document outlining the contours of studies on the following two areas.

- Water Resources Management and River basin Planning
- A master plan for Kuttanad basin

She may be provided technical assistance for the formulation of terms of reference for the studies by the RKI Implementation committee. The proposals for conducting the above studies may be placed before the Advisory Council.

The issues relating to land use were discussed in detail. It was noted that these need to be examined in detail by concerned departments as complex issues of regulation, planning and legislation were involved, as also multiple regulatory authorities. Several studies have been proposed in the PDNA, which may be examined by ACS (LSG) and ACS (Rev).

Chairman, RKI Implementation Committee suggested that the proposed studies may be examined by the Secretaries with a view to identify requirements and scale of resources that may be needed to prepare profiles of studies that are essential. The RKI Implementation Committee will find the necessary human resources in order to provide technical support to the Secretaries in preparation of terms of reference for such studies.

Additional Chief Secretary (Revenue) observed that the large number of land laws and forest related laws have not prevented encroachments or settlements in fragile areas. There is urgent need to revisit the policy of providing land to all landless persons, given the severe shortage of land in the state.

Shri T K A Nair pointed out that the tendency of issuing building permits without any regulation has resulted in construction in unsafe areas. The State should have a policy to identify appropriate land that is safe and suitable for residential construction and also to identify land where no construction should be allowed. There is also a need to identify the district specific issues and create implementation plans that can be driven by District Collectors.

The issue of housing was discussed in detail. The Chief Secretary directed

5

that the designs prepared by Life Mission should be vetted by a Structural Engineer. Principal Secretary PWD was asked to identify a competent officer in department for this purpose. The Concept note on housing that was circulated was approved. It was decided to place the note before the Advisory Council.

Regarding the proposal of Archade Foundation, Chief Secretary suggested that Additional Chief Secretary (Planning & Economic Affairs) may examine whether the services of the members of the foundation can be used in the district level to facilitate housing activities, particularly to operate the housing facilitation centres.

Chairman, RKI Implementation Committee suggested that the HLEC may meet weekly. He also informed that a system of online submission of proposals is being finalised which will enable members of HLEC to offer their views on proposals even though they may be unable to be physically present during the meetings.

The meeting ended with a vote of thanks to the Chair.