POLICY MEMORANDA

Options for Managing Transboundary River Water Negotiations

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ABSTRACT

This memorandum sets out negotiating options for upcoming transboundary river water talks and the technical evidence needed to support each.

KEYWORDS

transboundary rivers, water diplomacy, Ganges, Teesta, negotiation

FULL TEXT

This memorandum is written for officials preparing for the next round of water-sharing discussions. It summarises the three broad options available: a river-by-river bilateral approach, a basin-wide framework, and a hybrid that pairs bilateral agreements with joint data sharing.

Each option is assessed against four criteria: expected benefit in the dry season, political feasibility, technical data requirements, and the ability to withstand changes in upstream flow patterns.

The hybrid option scores best on durability. It allows early progress on rivers where agreement is closer, while building the shared hydrological data and joint monitoring that a broader framework will eventually require.

Immediate actions are to commission an independent flow-data audit, establish a standing technical working group, and brief provincial and district stakeholders who depend on dry-season flows.

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