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## Water for Preservation of Haors, Baors, and Beels

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Water bodies like haors, baors, and beels are precious assets of Bangladesh with unique regional characteristics. Apart from their scenic beauty, they have great economic and environmental value. Even during extremely dry seasons, when the smaller beels turn into quagmires, the haors and the baors retain considerable amount of water. These water bodies account for a large share of the natural capture fisheries and provide a habitat for a wide variety of aquatic vegetation and birds. They also provide sanctuary to migratory birds during winter. The haors and the beels usually connect to some adjoining river through khals.

In the past, many beels have been drained through engineering interventions and turned into cropland for immediate gains. The adverse effects of such interventions have been deleterious to the environment. They have destroyed the fish and aquatic vegetables that thrive in these wetlands and are important in the diet of the rural poor. They have also blocked the flow of wastes, discharged from the flood plains and domestic sources, which naturally move out of the beels through the khals into the river's drainage system. Only submersible dikes have provided tangible benefits in certain haor areas by enabling cultivation of high yielding variety boro rice.

The Government believes that in order to assist the natural processes of groundwater recharge, maintenance of aquatic life and ecological balance, disposal of wastes through the dynamic river system, and for turning the huge water bodies into recreational areas, their planned development is essential.

**It is, therefore, the policy of the Government that:**

- a. Natural water bodies such as beels, haors, and baors will be preserved for maintaining the aquatic environment and facilitating drainage.
- b. Only those water related projects will be taken up for execution that will not interfere with the aquatic characteristics of those water bodies.
- c. Haors that naturally dry up during the winter will be developed for dry season agriculture.
- d. Take up integrated projects in those water bodies for increasing fish production.

Natural water bodies will be developed, where possible, for recreational use in support of tourism.