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Telangana Today- 07- April-2024

Borewell drillers, pumpset mechanics make a comeback

Amid water crisis, farmers are forced to use their services

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Borewell drilling machines and agriculture pumpset repair stalls that had almost gone into oblivion in the last few years in Telangana are now back in demand in many districts.

Due to the lack of sufficient irrigation water and quality power supply, farmers desperate to save standing crops are hitting borewell drilling agencies and winding machine repair stalls. For the last few days, these scenes are being witnessed in many villages across the State.

Bicchaiah, a paddy farmer at Chintabai thanda in Jangaon, says borewell drilling agencies were charging Rs 110 to dig a foot. Farmers were forced to spend about Rs 40,000 to drill one borewell. The sad part is despite spending huge amounts, all efforts put in by farmers are going in vain. "My brother drilled six borewells in his fields and not one was successful,"



Scenes of people digging borewells and getting winding machines repaired have become common across villages in the State. (Above) A borewell being dug in Warangal.

says Bicchaiah, pointing to a failed borewell point.

Similarly, Shivashankar drilled six borewells, Nar-simha drilled four, Lakshmi drilled six and so did a few other farmers in the last three months. All their efforts and money went down the drain as not a drop of water was pumped out. While farmers are piling up losses, drilling agencies in Jangaon, Suryapet and

neighbouring towns are making quick money.

Due to financial constraints, marginal farmers were paying an amount to their counterparts, who are blessed with borewells, to supply water. A farmer from Devaruppala, U Jannaiah, owns 1.5 acres and the borewell in his field dried up. To save his crops, Jannaiah paid Rs 2,000 to his neighbour to ensure water

for wetting his paddy field. He had to also buy a water pipe to cover a distance of 60 feet from the borewell to his field. Such was the plight of many farmers in Kadavendi, Golapally, Manpahad and other villages. If this was the situation in parts of Jangaon, Suryapet and Nalgonda, farmers in Ranga Reddy are lining up at pumpset winding machines repair outlets. (SEE PAGE 2)

Borewell drillers, pumpset mechanics make a comeback

Due to low voltage power supply, farmers complain that agriculture pumpsets were developing snags. While a few complain about bush and coil problems, others are fed up with wiring issues. Many in Kandivanam, Mogalgidda, Devapally, Kishan Nagar and neighbouring villages are lining up at the repair stalls in Shadnagar.

For every single visit to the repair stall, they have to shell out Rs 2,000 towards service charges, besides waiting for at least two-three days to get the pump set repaired. "All these days, winding machine repair stalls were gathering dust. Ever since the low volt-

age issues surfaced, they have been minting money," said Anjaneyulu, a dairy farmer.

This situation was not limited to one particular area in the State. Huzurabad MLA Padi Kaushik Reddy interacted with Srinivas, a winding shop owner at Veenvanka, last fortnight. He shared the video of his interaction with the motor mechanic on X. The mechanic informed him that three motors were being repaired a day and Rs 3,500 was being charged per motor. "During the BRS rule, there was hardly any work for us," he tells the MLA.

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THE CURSE OF WATER CRISIS IN URBAN INDIA

YOU could call it a short-lived episode of *schadenfreude*. Last week P Rajeev, Kerala's minister for industries and law, wooed IT companies in Bengaluru, which is reeling under water shortage, to shift to Kerala. He pointed out that Kerala has "44 rivers, big and small" and that "water is no issue at all". Predictably, the serenade grabbed headlines. The audacity fizzled out soon enough as reality—the gap between the demand and supply of water in Kerala—came knocking and surfaced in news reports. In fact, within three days of the minister's claim, headlines screaming 'Bangalore days in Kochi' appeared and residents in the state capital Thiruvananthapuram agitated about dry taps.

There is scarcely any city where Indians are not confronted by water shortage and the tyranny of the tanker mafia. Google 'water cut' and check the list of cities that have ongoing water cuts or are announcing them. In Mumbai, residents have normalised declared and undeclared water cuts. Pune, a rising hub for start-ups, is facing a baffling phenomenon—the expansion of construction amid neglect of water availability.



THE THIRD EYE

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2018 report observed "21 major cities are expected to reach zero ground water levels affecting access for over 100 million people". My 2020 book, *The Gated Republic*, documented the extent of the crisis, the interplay of public failures and private solutions and chronicled the migration away from government provision to pay-to-use services. Ironically, even gated communities are now haunted.

Vignettes of the unattended crisis are visible across cities. Early morning traffic in most towns includes water tankers hurtling down residential localities with that peculiar horn blaring away. In Mumbai, one can encounter the unique phenomenon on V S Marg of tanker suppliers offering RO-treated or filtered water. Across urban habitats, packaged water companies have leveraged the opportunity—dial a 1800 number to have drinking water delivered home.

The bitter reality is that India's urbanisation is unplanned and amoebic in nature—infrastructure follows construction rather than the other way around. Every city in India depends on rural reservoirs often located between 50 km and 100 km away. Bengaluru gets its water from dying aquifers and from Cauvery over 100 km away. Chennai draws water from Cholavaram and Veeranam lakes well out of the city. Delhi depends on ground water and Sonia Vihar, which is fed by the waters of Ganga and Yamuna. Mumbai must rely on seven lakes, including upper Vaitarna over 150 km away.

The persistence of the water woes is a combination of poor availability and patchy management. India has around 16 percent of the global population and 4 percent of water resources. Its population is as large as that of China, but per capita availability of internal freshwater resources, as per World Bank data, is half of what China has. India receives an annual precipitation of 3,880 billion cubic metres, but is able to harness only 1,999 bcm. Ground water extraction is around 249 bcm, of which 89 percent is used for agriculture.

It is evident that India's policy makers must address the inadequacies in availability and management. There is no dearth of studies or solutions. The primary focus must be on improving the efficiency of usage for food production. Beyond the 'more crop per drop' theme, the need for redrawing the crop map is critical—to end, for instance, the growing of paddy or cane in water-scarce areas. This will redress the skewed and excessive use of water by farming.

There is also a need to configure usage and design recycling of water. Two global examples merit attention. In 2019, Singapore set a target of recycling 70 percent of its water by 2030. Waste water from sewers is pumped through 48 km of tunnels and treated by a high-tech system and released at the other end as NEWater. The island state is also targeting water savings of around 9 million gallons per day. Sure, Singapore is a small nation, but its efforts to recycle water can be a template for urban India.

A second case study worth looking at is Israel, which is located in a water-scarce geography. The bulk of its crops—well over 70 percent by some estimates—are drip irrigated. Its desalination plants annually produce 700 million cubic metres of water, of which it exports roughly 200 cubic metres to Jordan. Israel is targeting desalination of 1.2 bcm of water per year by 2030. India currently has four desalination plants, with a coastline of over 7,500 km India can surely leverage the solution.

It is true that measures to improve availability and rejig the management require retrofitting and resources. It is equally true that sustaining the aspiration of a \$10-trillion GDP demands these structural changes. And it is useful to remember that investment in sustainability will propel job creation, incomes and growth.

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बुझाई गांव की प्यास: कोरबा के दो गांवों में ग्रामीणों ने 50 हजार गड्ढे खोदकर जमा किया बरसात का पानी। कभी 400 फीट था भू-जलस्तर, अब ले रहे दोहरी फसल

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कोरबा. गिरते भू-जलस्तर को बचाने के लिए कारतला विकासखंड के गांव पुरैना और खरहरी के लोगों ने कमाल का काम किया है। बारिश के पानी को गांव में रोका गया जिससे अब पानी समस्या गांवों से दूर हो गई है। इसका फायदा हुआ कि किसान दोहरी फसल ले रहे हैं। यह संभव हुआ है ग्रामीणों के हठ इच्छाशक्ति और नाबाई के आर्थिक सहयोग से।

400 फीट तक गिर गया था भूजल स्तर : गांव पुरैना में रहने वाले जल प्रबंधन समिति के अध्यक्ष रामानुज गभेल



दो साल की मेहनत के बाद गड्ढे खोदे गए

ने बताया कि वर्ष 2022 से पहले उनके गांव में भूजल स्तर काफी गिर गया था। गांव में अधिकतर बोर फेल हो गए थे। 300 से 400 फीट की गहराई पर पानी मिल रहा था। इस कारण गांव में बारिश पर आधरित धान की खेती को छोड़कर अन्य फसल उगाना मुश्किल हो गया था।

इस समस्या से जूझ रहे ग्रामीणों ने जल संकट को लेकर आपस में विचार-विमर्श किया और इसके लिए भारत सरकार की एजेंसी नाबाई से संपर्क किया। जल स्तर बढ़ाने के लिए ग्रामीणों ने दो साल तक पूरी मेहनत से बारिश के पानी को रोकने

के लिए ट्रेंज (गड्ढा) खोदे गए। ग्राम पुरैना और खरहरी में एक मीटर लंबा और एक मीटर गहरा से लेकर 10 मीटर लंबा और एक मीटर गहरा ट्रेंज खोदा गया। दोनों गांव में 50 हजार से अधिक ट्रेंज खोदे गए हैं और अब इसका असर गांव में दिखने लगा है।

831 हेक्टेयर में ट्रेंज का काम पूरा

गांव ट्रेंज का काम कर रही सिविल इंजीनियर सीमा पोर्त ने बताया कि अभी तक 831 हेक्टेयर में ट्रेंज का कार्य पूरा हो गया है और 450 हेक्टेयर में किया जाना है। भजदूर ममता विश्वार, बीरकुंवर विश्वार और सुकुन विश्वार ने बताया कि बारिश का पानी गड्ढे में एकत्र होकर धरती के अंदर समा जाता है और इसका लाभ गांव के लोगों को मिल रहा है।

सब्जी की बाड़ी में भी रैनक

बारिश का पानी ट्रेंज में एकत्र होने से गांव के भूजल स्तर बढ़ा है और अब बाड़ी में सब्जी की खेती के लिए पानी की कमी नहीं हो रही है। कई किसान तो धान की दोहरी फसल भी ले रहे हैं। पुरैना में एक पथरीली जमीन पर ट्रेंज खुदाई के दौरान हमारी मुलाकात मजदूर भावरमती और कुंजराम से भी हुई। दोनों ने बताया कि उनकी ओर से गांव में कई माह से गड्ढे खोदे जा रहे हैं और इसके बदले उन्हें नाबाई की ओर से पारिश्रमिक भी दिया जा रहा है।