

Hindustan Times- 22- February-2023

Centre forms panel to save wheat from heat

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NEW DELHI: The Centre has mounted an unprecedented interministerial effort to protect the country's wheat crop, a winter staple, which faces imminent risks from anticipated heatwaves due to an early summer, and has set up a panel to deal with the problem.

Last year, a similar disastrous hot spell in March, when temperatures leapt to record highs, crippled wheat yields as output shrank 2.5% in the world's sec-

ond-largest producer, stoking a crisis-like situation. The country, which banned exports of the grain last May, has officially forecast wheat harvests of 112 million tonnes this year, the highest ever.

Scores of state-employed farm scientists from institutions such as the flagship Indian Institute of Wheat and Barley Research, and Krishi Vigyan Kendras (crop advisory centres) have been deployed to fields in five states to apprise growers of crop protection measures in case of a heatwave, said an official.

HT said in an analysis earlier this week that temperatures in seven states, including Punjab, a major grower of wheat, are at levels usually seen in mid-March. That, and fears of an El Niño effect later this year have prompted fears of an early and intense summer.

Persisting domestic consumer inflation, which touched a three-month high of 6.52% in January, global food shortages, the Russia-Ukraine conflict, and frayed supply lines due to the knock-on effects of the pandemic still weigh

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PANEL ON WHEAT

heavily on India.

The states that could see a heatwave, amid rising temperatures, are mostly in the northwestern part of the country, in its main food bowl plain, comprising Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. Rajasthan, commonly viewed as a desert state, is a major grower of a variety of cereal and oilseeds. It faces the most risk of a heatwave, said an official. Madhya Pradesh, another large grower, faces the least threat because the state's wheat crop matures earlier than elsewhere.

The committee has got working. Officials from several departments and ministries are coordinating with states to ensure there is sufficient water at sources such as reservoirs and dams to supply canals for protective irrigation. They are also checking supply lines for cheap diesel and ensuring steady electricity supply, which farmers need to run pumps.

Experts from the animal husbandry department are advising farmers on how to protect themselves and their cattle from heat strokes, asking them to keep bovines supported by wet hay shades and 'desert coolers', a type of motorised fan that disperses mist, while increasing intake of water, said a third official.

"Farmers know a lot. They are experienced. We are telling them to remember the key things. So far, the crops are good," said Narendra Goyal of Damla Krishi Vig-

yan Kendra, Haryana. India has one of these centres in nearly each of the country's 766 districts.

Farmers must check on their crops daily, undertake mulching, which refers to the practice of covering of soil with organic matter to prevent moisture loss, undertake light irrigation and follow weather forecasts, said a scientist.

"There's no panic. The important thing is that nights are considerably cooler than days. There is no heatwave till now, only higher temperatures. Cooler nights help plants to remain healthy," said Gyanendra Singh of the Indian Institute of Wheat and Barley Research.

A good harvest is critical in a country where agriculture employs the largest number of people. Ample food stocks drive up rural incomes, which in turn creates growth-propelling demand for consumer goods.

According to the India Meteorological Department's (IMD) classifications, a heatwave condition is declared when either the mercury is higher by 4.5°C to 6.40°C for at least two days or if the maximum temperature of an IMD weather station reaches at least 40°C or more for plains and at least 30°C or more for hilly regions. Temperatures in Punjab, Rajasthan and Haryana have ranged between 28 and 30°C for the past two weeks.

On Sunday, IMD, the national weather bureau, issued the first heatwave alert for the year, predicting maximum temperatures of

37-39°C in parts of the Kutch and the Konkan regions of western India.

The El Niño effect refers to warmer-than-usual temperatures in the equatorial Pacific Ocean.

The Hindu- 22- February-2023

Turn off the tap of urban bias in rural development

The divide between the rural and the urban has grown due to an inherent urban bias among policymakers and institutions, including the government. This happens because groups in urban areas are able to effectively influence these institutions in their favour. Second, the spill-over from markets in urban areas is also limited to the rural areas that are closer to urban settlements. This is known as the spill-over effect where the development of rural areas is dependent on larger urban cores. Consequently, rural areas which are far away from the urban core not only suffer from a lack of development but also keep falling behind rural areas which are closer to the urban core. It is for this reason that the state must step in to correct the rural-urban disparity by having in place special and targeted measures to develop rural areas. The Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM), launched in August 2019, is one such project which aims to provide access to safe and adequate drinking water to all households in rural India by 2024.

Variations in Tamil Nadu

The provision of safe drinking water is an important non-food factor influencing health and nutrition. Besides enabling tap water access at the household level, it helps reduce the drudgery women and girl children have to face and ensures their safety as well. Ensuring the "availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all" is the sixth goal in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations to be achieved by 2030.

As it has been three years since its implementation at the all-India level, tracking its progress in Tamil Nadu is important; this analysis is specifically important as Tamil Nadu's progress was better than the other States during the first two quarters of 2022.

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The case of providing tap water connections in Tamil Nadu is an example of this bias

The data for this study have been sourced from the dashboards of the website of the JJM (October 14, 2022) for the period between August 2019 and October 2022. As there was no mention of the total number of households as of August 2019 (when the JJM started), the data for October 2022 data have been used as the base.

The district-level data reveal wider variations in providing tap water connections to rural households among districts. For instance, a significant proportion of rural households in Kanchipuram (100%), Ranipet (98.73%), Kanniyakumari (83.99%), Vellore (80.89%), and Tiruchirappalli (78.55%) districts have tap water. Coimbatore, Tiruppur, Thanjavur and Dindigul districts have also made significant progress, where more than one lakh rural households got tap water connections in this period.

However, progress in Dharmapuri, Kallakurichi, Nagapattinam, Ramanathapuram and Virudhunagar districts was not commensurate with progress in the others. In Dharmapuri and Kallakurichi districts, it was only 2,049 (from 15.77% to 16.37%) and 2,089 (from 42.26% to 42.95%) households, respectively, in the last three years. Ramanathapuram and Virudhunagar also added only around 9% in the last three years. Only 22.4% of 3,02,402 rural households in Ramanathapuram and 31.12% of 4,28,435 rural households in Virudhunagar had a tap water connection in October 2022. Most importantly, overall progress in Nagapattinam district was very low, reaching only 5.97% of households

Falling behind

The percentage of additional tap water connections in rural areas of a district provided by the government between 2019 and 2022 was found to be significantly associated with the

percentage of the urban population in the districts concerned. When it comes to the total population of Tamil Nadu, its urban share is 48.4% as compared to 31.2% of India (Census 2011); but districts with low urban population percentages are lagging in the implementation of the JJM. For instance, among the five low performing districts, four districts have an urban population below 31%.

Similarly, among the 10 low performing districts, eight have an urban population below 38%. Of course, there are notable exceptions too. This kind of relationship between urban and rural regions has been found in other places of the world as well.

Left to itself, this may exacerbate the rural-urban disparity across regions and districts. In the case of Tamil Nadu, even the provisioning of tap water connections by the government seems to be impacted by the persistence of this kind of urban bias in rural development. Hence, the government must take additional measures to prioritise the implementation of the JJM scheme in districts with a high rural population such as Sivaganga, Ramanathapuram, Virudhunagar, Dharmapuri, and Nagapattinam.

Otherwise, it is highly unlikely that the goal of reaching all rural households by 2024 or even 2030 will be reached if the State does not change its methods. The achievements in these districts will likely have a demonstration effect on other districts with a high rural population. This will not only help to correct urban bias but also meet the SDG goal with regard to tapping water connections by 2024. In addition to the data on tap water connections, the provision of additional details such as the volume of water being supplied per day to each household as well as its quality will help in understanding the rate of progress better.

The Statesman- 22- February-2023

Jal Jeevan Mission: UP provides tap water connections to over 81 L rural households

SNS & AGENCIES

LUCKNOW, 21 FEBRUARY

More than 5 crore people in Uttar Pradesh have started getting pure drinking water through household taps. Yogi-led government has also strengthened its position among states by providing tap water connections to over 81 lakh rural families in the state, according to the latest available official data.

Uttar Pradesh ranks fourth in the country in providing tap water connections under the Har Ghar Jal Yojana of the Jal Jeevan Mission and is ahead of several states, including Jharkhand and West Bengal, it informed.

It is worth mentioning here that the Yogi Government has carried out the exercise of providing tap water connections in rural areas at a remarkably fast pace



despite the pandemic.

Statistics reveal that tap

water connections have been provided to altogether

81,87,394 rural households in UP to date while more than

4,91,24,364 villagers are benefiting from the scheme to date. The effective implementation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ambitious scheme by the Yogi Government has ensured the supply of tap water to 31.1 per cent of rural households in UP, as against, 30.95 rural households in Jharkhand and 30.56 in West Bengal. The UP Government provides more than 30,000 tap connections in rural areas every day against 2,500 in Jharkhand and 7,000 in West Bengal.

According to the data of February 21, Bihar tops among states by providing 1,59,00,575 tap water connections whereas Maharashtra is second with 1,07,34,14 and Gujarat comes third with 91,18,449 tap water connections to rural households.

Business Standard- 22- February-2023

Mega push for Jal Jeevan Mission to reach target within year

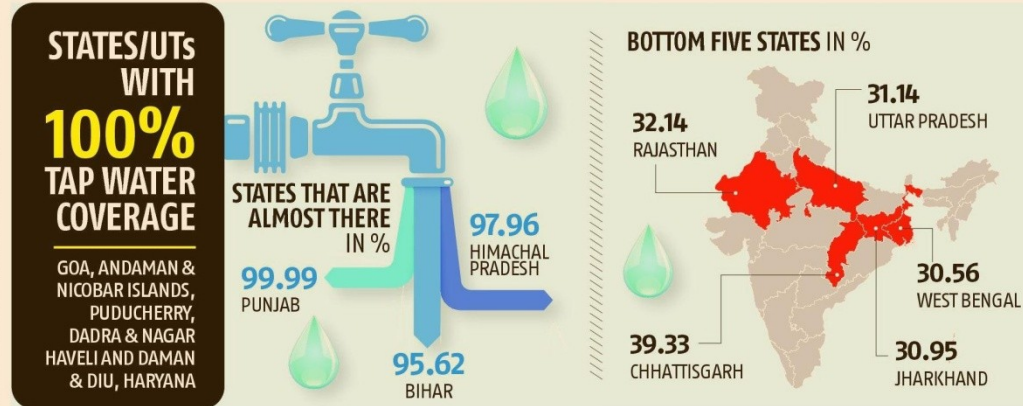
Govt expects tap water coverage to reach 90% of households by 2024

RUCHIKA CHITRAVANSHI
New Delhi, 21 February

One of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's flagship programmes, the Jal Jeevan Mission, might not be able to achieve the target set for it of 100 per cent tap water coverage for households by 2024, but the Centre is confident that it will come close.

This would mean nearly doubling the current coverage of 57 per cent under the scheme, launched in 2019, to about 90 per cent by 2024.

Budgetary allocation has been raised by 27 per cent for financial year 2023-24 (FY24) to ensure that there is no delay in the programme due to paucity of funds. For instance, if contractors do not get paid on time then the pace of work suffers. It has, however, not been an easy road for the ambitious scheme, with several challenges coming its way. Many of the tenders had become economically unviable



after the Russia-Ukraine war led to a rise in metal prices. Government officials said they have tided over that crisis now but state level difficulties remain. States where the coverage is in the range of 50-75 per cent, the government says, will achieve saturation by 2024. These include Ladakh, Maharashtra, Mizoram, Uttarakhand, Manipur, and Sikkim. The

bottom five states with coverage of less than 40 per cent include Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, and Chhattisgarh.

Although Uttar Pradesh, officials said, started late on the programme, its tap water coverage went from 20 per cent of households last year to about 30 per cent, according to latest data. "The first two

years of the Jal Jeevan Mission were wasted in UP. But after a push from the Centre the work has picked up pace in the state," a government official said.

Despite implementation challenges, the government is hopeful that India's most populous state would be able to achieve up to 90 per cent coverage in a year, having processed and awarded a

lot of projects already. While UP has assured that it has adequate water supply, it is the opposite challenge in Rajasthan. A government official said that because households in many areas in Rajasthan are far flung from the source of water, providing piped water connectivity has been difficult.

The desert state with 32 per cent tap water coverage is relying heavily on groundwater presently, a strategy not considered sustainable. "Rajasthan's strategy is twofold — take up groundwater recharge and shift the drinking water supply to surface water and tap into irrigation sources," the senior official said.

This means accessing the river Satluj towards the north, and the river Chambal in the south, in the neighbouring Madhya Pradesh.

Even as Rajasthan struggles with supply, West Bengal seems to have a problem of plenty. The state is also among the laggards in the Jal Jeevan Mission with coverage the same as UP — about 31 per cent. "While water supply is not an issue, we have to deal with the problem of contamination. So there the focus is a lot on treatment and supply," the senior official said.

West Bengal, too, was a late entrant to the scheme after it toyed with the idea of having its own programme for drinking water supply. "But now it has dropped that idea. The team is good. West Bengal will also see a dramatic rise," the senior official added.

The JJM currently boasts of supplying 55 litres per capita per day of water to 57 per cent of rural households through functional taps. It has a threshold of providing functional tap water connection to each house in habitation with at least 20 households. Anything less than that and the responsibility falls on the state government.

Another key responsibility is to come up with operation and maintenance of these connections. The Jal Shakti ministry has asked states to come up with a plan and decide on a mix of user charges and government subsidy for upkeep of the drinking water infrastructure. "The decision on user charges has to be left to communities, panchayats. If we get into it now many might refuse a tap water connection. But in some time they may see value in paying a nominal charge for a tap facility," a government official said.

Telangana Today- 22- February-2023

Telangana  Today

Telangana objects to diversion of Krishna water

STATE BUREAU
Hyderabad

The Telangana government has taken strong exception to diversion of Krishna water to KC Canal and Tungabhadra water meant

for KC Canal and Low Level Canal (LLC) to High Level Canal (HLC) by Andhra Pradesh in violation of the Krishna Water Disputes Tribunal (KWDT) award.

Telangana Irrigation Engineer-in-Chief C Muralid-

har wrote to Tungabhadra Board informing it about the violation of KWDT award. In contravention to the Tribunal Awards, AP has been utilising water for K C canal from Krishna main river from Srisailem and swap-

ping that quantum of water to Tungabhadra Right Bank HLC from Tungabhadra Dam, he said. He further stated that TB RB LLC is already utilising its entitled share from Tungabhadra Dam and additionally using

Tungabhadra river water for the same ayacut from unauthorised Guru Raghavendra Lift Irrigation Schemes jeopardising Telangana interests at Rajolibanda Diversion Scheme, Srisailem and Nagarjunasagar projects.

Jansatta- 22- February-2023

हिमालय का विनाश रोकने की फरियाद वाली याचिका केंद्र सरकार, जल शक्ति मंत्रालय को नोटिस दिया सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने

जनसत्ता ब्यूरो
नई दिल्ली 21 फरवरी।

देश की हिमालयी पर्वत शृंखला को विनाश से बचाने की फरियाद वाली याचिका पर सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने केंद्र सरकार, जल शक्ति मंत्रालय और अन्य को नोटिस जारी किया है।

पूर्व आईपीएस अधिकारी अशोक राघव की एक जनहित याचिका पर सुनवाई के बाद प्रधान न्यायाधीश धनंजय यशवंत की पीठ ने यह कदम उठाया। याचिका में जोशीमठ के पहाड़ों में पिछले दिनों आई दरार का हवाला देते हुए इस पूरे क्षेत्र

के पर्यावरण के साथ किए जा रहे खिलवाड़ पर चिंता जताई गई है।

याचिका में इस बात पर चिंता जताई गई है कि केंद्र और राज्यों की सरकारें पारिस्थितिकीय नजरिए से कमजोर हिमालयी पर्वत शृंखला की बोझ सहने की क्षमता का मूल्यांकन करने में नाकाम रही हैं। ये पर्वत शृंखला कुल 13 राज्यों और केंद्र शासित प्रदेशों में फैली हैं। अंधाधुंध हो रहे पक्के निर्माण, जल विद्युत परियोजनाओं, बहुमंजिली इमारतों और व्यावसायिक भवनों के कारण इन पहाड़ों के अस्तित्व पर ही संकट मंडरा रहा है।