

News item/letter/article/editorial published on 27/4/2017 in the

Hindustan Times ✓	Nav Bharat Times (Hindi)	M.P.Chronicle
Statesman	Punjab Keshari (Hindi)	A a j (Hindi)
The Times of India (N.D.)	The Hindu	Indian Nation
Indian Express	Rajasthan Patrika (Hindi)	Nai Duniya (Hindi)
Tribune	Deccan Chronicle	The Times of India (A)
Hindustan (Hindi)	Deccan Herald	Blitz

and documented at Bhagirath(English)& Publicity Section, CWC.

## Centre to help J'khand, Bengal sort out water-sharing dispute

Moushumi Das Gupta

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**NEWDELHI:** In another inter-state water dispute brewing between Jharkhand and West Bengal over sharing of water from four common river basins, the Centre looks inclined to back the Jharkhand government.

The dispute revolves around the Jharkhand government's decision to review the 1978 water agreement that the then undivided Bihar -- of which Jharkhand was a part -- had signed with West Bengal to share water from four common river basins between the two states.

Jharkhand's grouse is that despite the rivers flowing from the state, it has not been able to use it as West Bengal has failed to honour its commitment to build dams on the rivers.

On the other hand, West Bengal has refused on the ground that the projects will adversely impact irrigation facilities in the state.

Sanjeev Kumar Balyan, minister of state for water resources, has said the Central Water Commission (CWC) can help the two states "re-do" the water sharing agreement.

The government's support has come at a time when the BJP government is trying to expand its footprint in West Bengal.

In a letter to Jharkhand MP Nishikant Dubey, who had raised the issue in Lok Sabha last August, Balyan said, "... the agreement not being in favour of Jharkhand, the state has taken the initiative to review it. The CWC will help the states in this initiative."

Raising the issue during zero

hour Dubey had said that "grave injustice" has been done to Jharkhand. "Though we (Jharkhand) store the water from the rivers in four dams built in the state, maximum water is being used by West Bengal. We have to also depend on West Bengal to meet our power needs...", he had said.

Dubey said that under the agreement, West Bengal had to build six dam at their expense but they have failed to do so. He had sought the Centre's intervention on the ground that though all the rivers originate in Jharkhand but West Bengal gets all the benefits.

The 1978 agreement was signed for the sharing of waters of Damodar Barakar, Ajoy, Mayurakshi Sidheshwari Noon Beel and Mahananda river basins.

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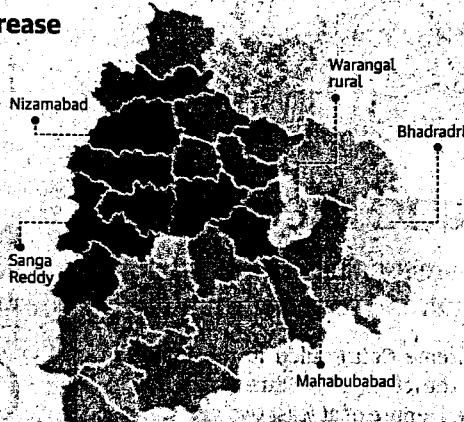
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## A meagre increase

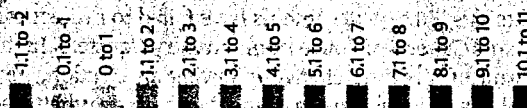
Telangana's average depth to groundwater level which had plummeted to a 17-year low in March 2016, has recovered marginally this year due to a better monsoon and the State's move to restore select water bodies



• The average depth to groundwater level fell by 2.61 mbgl in March 2016 compared to last year. But in March 2017 it rose by 3.41 mbgl compared to 2016.

• The average depth to groundwater level in March 2017 has decreased in 3 districts compared to last year

Change in average depth to groundwater in March 2017 compared to March 2016 in mbgl (Metres Below Ground Level)



## TELANGANA

### Reviving irrigation potential

R. AVADHANI  
GOLLAPUDI SRINIVASA RAO  
SANGAREDDY

For farmers of the semi-arid region of Telangana, Mission Kakatiya, the flagship programme of the State government, has brought some cheer this year. Desilting and restoration of tanks in the rural areas, the main objective of the mission, has boosted agricultural operations in the current Rabi season.

Ramachandraiah, a farmer of Danampally village in Sangareddy district, has cultivated his two acres of land for the first time. Two important tanks in the area - Anna Sagar and Andol Pedda Cheruvu - were filled with water from the Singur reservoir, after desiltation.

Consequently, the farmers cultivated an area of 600 acres under Anna Sagar and 1,200 acres under Andol Pedda Cheruvu, almost twice the area they usually cultivate under the two tanks.

In Warangal Rural district, once known for farmers committing suicide, there are now endless stretches of green paddy fields after farmers began growing a second crop again after decades.

Under Mission Kakatiya, the State government proposes to restore 46,531 tanks. So far, 11,000 tanks were restored, costing ₹1,800 crores. Independent research by the groundwater department found a significant rise in water levels wherever tanks were restored.

## KERALA

### Degrading the hilly terrain

RADHAKRISHNAN KUTTOOR  
PATHANAMTHITTA

As the land of 44 rivers, Kerala used to receive an average annual rainfall of 3100 mm. However, the State is facing an acute water scarcity, which experts attached to the National Centre for Earth Science Studies (NCESS), Thiruvananthapuram, attribute to the loss of hills, giant rocks, and forest cover.

Pathanamthitta district, where the Sabarimala Ayyappa Temple is located, presents a classic case of a landscape undergoing rapid change, with hills such as Chembanmudi, Ponnimala, Thudiyurullippara and Avolimala being razed by the hour, weakening the water-holding capability of the terrain.

"Removal of five- to six-metre thick upper layer of the hills that used to retain rainwater in a big way prior to advent of rampant granite quarrying has fundamentally altered the micro climate of the region," says N.K. Sukumaran Nair, general secretary of the Pampa Parirakshana Samithi, which has been campaigning for the cause of River Pampa for the past three decades.

In a landmark judgment on February 27, 2012, the Supreme Court of India ruled that mining affecting the natural water flow should not be permitted. However, freshwater sources continue to be converted, making a mockery of the land enforcing agencies, he says.

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DRY DAYS | LANDSCAPE OF SCARCITY

# Desperation-fuelled drilling

Excessive borewell drilling has savaged the landscape and water table of Andhra Pradesh, and hit the livelihoods of water-starved farmers badly

V.K. RAKESH REDDY  
ANANTAPUR

Venkata Narayana Reddy, owner of a five-acre farm, was considered a well-to-do, big agriculturist in Kautapalli village, in Nallamada mandal of the arid Anantapur district of Andhra Pradesh. He had an annual income of ₹3 lakhs from the mulberry he cultivated, and a silk rearing unit. But this was 10 years ago.

In a tragic twist, there was a drastic drop in the water table in his farm, and Mr. Reddy lost everything. Accruing a debt of ₹6 lakhs from six failed borewells, he migrated to Hyderabad searching for work. One day he threw himself under a running train and ended his life.

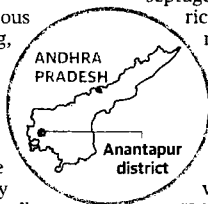
This is not the story of just one farmer in Anantapur district. Failed borewells have bled thousands of farmers of their means of livelihood and pushed them into debt traps. Several big farmers have been reduced to farm labour to feed their families and repay massive debts.

The people of Kotalapalli village, who have raised loans to cover expenditures of over ₹4 crores in the last one year, have sunk as many as 500 borewells and attained the dubious distinction of having a borewell each for every male, adult and child.

## Big transformation

This village was once famous for its silkworm rearing, thanks to the cultivation of mulberry in over 90% of its cultivated area, yet is reduced to barren land today. The only evidence of its erstwhile pastoral glory is the array of 1,500 dried up borewells that pockmark the once-green landscape.

The borewell drilling companies touched everything in the small village. The local petrol bunk got over 50% of its earnings from borewell rigs. They guzzled ₹1.2 crore worth



of diesel last year alone, said bunk owner Venkatanarayana Reddy.

Bodugundlapalli Venkat Reddy, a septugenarian, has seen it all, the riches brought by silkworm rearing as well as today's borewell proliferation.

He once had 25 borewells on the 12 acres of land he owned. Now all that he is left with are four acres and six borewells, all of which are dry. "It's as if the entire village has become poor by just drilling borewells," he says.

## Persisting frenzy

Kuruva Venkatesulu of Marur village, Rapthadu mandal, has sunk fifty borewells in his 20-acre farm.

Every time a borewell stops yielding water he drills another one.

"Please put my husband in jail, I am afraid that he will commit suicide once the borewells he is drilling stop yielding water," says Lakshmi Devi, his wife. Mr. Venkatesulu is barely eking a sustainable livelihood from agriculture, so he sends Lakshmi Devi and his children to work in others farms to make ends meet.

While there are over four lakh borewells in the district, only 10% of which are functional, the number of borewells in the government's records is only 2.3 lakh.

One of the prime reasons for the drastic reduction in ground water is said to be the severe drop in area under tank irrigation. The net area under tank irrigation came down from

around 40% in 1960 to less than 3% in 2006 and to less than 2% by 2012.

As the area under tank irrigation dropped, the area under borewell irrigation rose from 0.01% to around 53% in 2006 and up to 65% by 2012.

The government spent over ₹170 crores on borewells in the last four decades and spends close to ₹20 crores every year on either drilling or deepening borewells.

"What these statistics show is irrational, unplanned use of ground-water with no plan and long-term vision to rejuvenate the ground water reserves, simultaneously," says Y.V. Malla Reddy of the AFEcology Centre, Anantapur.

**TOMORROW:  
TRAVELLING FOR WATER**



**Thirst spares none:** A man along with his children travels to collect a few pots of water from a borewell at Yerragondapalem in Prakasam district of Andhra Pradesh. ■ KOMMURI SRINIVAS