



India stares at water scarcity

Posted at: 23/01/2019

Tackling drought must be the immediate priority for administrators across the country

- Something urgent is already upon us.
- And something that is going to coincide with the elections--A drought.
- The rains' let down this time comes on top of an already low-rain and, in many places, no-rain ground situation.

What the sky says

- When droughts and elections intersect, it is extremely uncomfortable to leaders.
- It is India's great good luck that public awareness, nudged and prodded by public discussions on meteorological data and media reportage, has kept droughts from deepening into famines in our country.
- The IMD report on scant rains has received scant attention so far, with exceptions being provided by P. Sainath's relentless warnings and observations of experts of the calibre and veracity of Ramchandra Sable, agro-meteorologist, and D.M. More, Secretary of the Second Maharashtra Irrigation Commission.

Rain deficit facts

- The actual deficit last monsoon was modest — barely 10%.
- But the post-monsoon rainfall (October to December, 2018) or PMR as it is called by meteorologists has registered a 44% deficit.
- This national average deficit conceals shortages in some regions where it is much higher. In Marathwada, according to the IMD, the deficit is 84%, in Vidarbha, 88%.
- For the reason that this low-rain and no-rain situation is going to aggravate the water crisis that we have brought upon ourselves without the 'help' of a dry sky.
- Urban India does not realise this fast enough or well enough.
- Let there be no doubt that the Prime Minister of India 2019 will have to

be India's Drought Commissioner.

- And let her or him face the challenge four-square and render a national service.
- The failure of rains this time is so serious that 'drought' now means not just a farm crisis but a national crisis that will affect towns and cities no less than villages.
- 'Agrarian crisis' appears to urban India as something 'out there'.
- Whoever becomes Prime Minister will do well to appoint a commission like the Farmers' Commission, which Dr. M.S. Swaminathan headed, to advise him or her on how water scarce India, all of India, needs to face drought.
- And this time, not advisories or appeals but penalties will be needed.
- Addressing the deepening drought, agrarian distress and water-management are critical not just for our governments to survive but for us to survive our governments.

The Hindu

