



India's Water Woes

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Why in News

Recently, the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare** (MoHFW) has issued an **advisory** to state governments asking them to ensure safe drinking water supply and management during the nationwide **lockdown** that has been **extended to 3rd May, 2020**.

Key Points

- **Advisory:**
 - State governments need to **assess the requirements of water purifying chemicals**, including chlorine tablets, bleaching powder, **sodium hypochlorite** solution and alum and use them wherever necessary.
These purifying products are **classified under the list of essential commodities (Essential Commodities Act, 1955)**
 - For **ensuring social distancing**, states are recommended to **increase water supply hours** if demand goes up and people come to fetch water from the public stand post.
- **Reasons Behind the Advisory**
 - The **urgent need to ensure the availability of safe potable water to all citizens**, mainly in the **rural areas** where medical sanitisers may not be available, has been highlighted in the wake of the **Covid-19 pandemic**.
 - In the list of preventive measures for controlling the spread of coronavirus, **frequent washing of hands with frothing soaps is the most efficient and effective measure**.

Water Crisis of India

- India has been facing the **challenge of lack of access to clean water** for several years.
Falling groundwater levels, drought, increasing demand from agriculture and industry, pollution and poor water resource management are few other challenges which will intensify with the **changing climate**.
- According to the data of the **Ministry of Water Resources** in 2017, (merged into the **Ministry of Jal Shakti** in 2019) **average annual per capita water availability** fell from 1820 cubic meters assessed in 2001 to 1545 cubic meters in 2011.
 The data also highlighted the possibility of it **reducing further to 1341 and 1140 in the years 2025 and 2050 respectively**.
- The ministry also held that the **water availability** of water stressed/water scarce regions of the country is **much below the national average** due to the **high temporal and spatial variation of precipitation**.
 - **Water Stressed Condition:** Where annual per-capita water availability is **less than 1700 cubic meters**.
 - **Water Scarcity Condition:** Where annual per- capita water availability is **below 1000 cubic meters**.
- According to the **Global Annual Report, 2018 by the WaterAid**, the **water and sanitation advocacy group**, India ranked at the top of 10 countries with **lowest access to clean water close to home**, with 16.3 crore people not having such access.
- However, the **government's efforts (such as Jal Jeevan Mission) in solving the water crisis have been appreciated** as well. It has been highlighted that despite facing several challenges, **India is one of the world's most-improved nations for reaching the most people with clean water**.

Water in the Constitution

- In the Constitution, water is a matter included in **Entry 17 of List-II i.e. State List**. This entry is subject to the provision of **Entry 56 of List-I i.e. Union List**.
 Under **Article 246**, the Indian **Constitution allocates responsibilities of the States and the Centre into three lists– Union List, State List and Concurrent List**.
- Most of the rivers in the country give rise to **inter-state differences and disputes (Article 262) on the regulation and development of waters of these rivers**.

Source: IE