



drishti

Mains Practice Questions

 drishtias.com/mains-practice-question/question-841/pnt



Q. Climate change, overexploitation, and policy measures have combinedly turned India into a water-stressed economy. Discuss.

10 Mar, 2021 GS Paper 3 Economy

Approach

- Start the answer by briefly discussing about the condition of water scarcity in India.
- Discuss the reasons for water stress in India.
- Suggest some measures to address the problem of water scarcity.
- Conclude Suitably.

Introduction

Depletion of water resources due to overuse and decline in water supplies due to climate change is pushing India closer to the tipping point of water scarcity. Apart from these, several government policies especially pertaining to Agriculture (minimum support price), also resulted in over-exploitation of water. These factors make India a water-stressed economy.

Body

Reasons for Water Stress in India

- **Over-exploitation of Ground Water:** In India groundwater provides for over two-thirds of irrigation requirements. However, in the last four decades, about 85% of the total addition to irrigation has come from groundwater.
This is clearly unsustainable resulting in steep depletion of the groundwater table.
- **Policy Issues:** The problem of groundwater over-exploitation gets compounded by Indian law which extends exclusive rights to landowners over groundwater.
More importantly, the open-ended state procurement policy of wheat & rice and subsidized electricity also contributes to the blindness harnessing of groundwater.
- **Rapid Urbanization:** India is urbanizing rapidly. This implies heightened water demand from households, industry, and agriculture. Further, concretization also reduces the ground-water replenishment.
- **Sub-optimal Utilization of Surface Water:** Given suboptimal command area development and distribution of water in ill-maintained (and uncovered) canals, leads to the suboptimal utilization of water infrastructure and often results in heavy soil erosion and siltation.
- **Increasingly Variability in Monsoon:** A recent report by the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) shows a 'significant' drop in rainfall in Northern India over the past three decades, and rising variability in the monsoons nationwide.

Way Forward

- **Policy Intervention:** River rejuvenation ought to be a policy priority of the Centre and state governments. Sustainable operations and maintenance of irrigation systems must be boosted. For example, Rainwater harvesting should be incorporated into urban planning.
- **Sustainable Agriculture:** There is a need to follow conservation agriculture i.e. farming practices adapted to the requirements of crops and local conditions.
- **Decentralized Approach:** There is a need for a key focus on water conservation, source sustainability, storage, and reuse wherever possible.
- **Citizen Led Solution:** Need to emphasize behavioral change, differentiating of potable and non-potable water usage by the citizenry will go a long way in bringing a Jan Andolan.

Conclusion

For sustainable utilization of the stressed water resource, there is a need for follow-through action under the framework of cooperative federalism and citizen activism. In this context, a participatory approach is needed in water governance.