Looming Water Crisis

What is the issue?

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- Cape Town in South Africa is facing the prospect of all its taps running dry by June-July this year.
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- This is a wake up call for stakeholders across the globe to assess practices of water usage.
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What is the looming water crisis?

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- According to the United Nations, 2.1 billion people lack access to safely managed drinking water services.
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- Water scarcity already affects 4 out of every 10 people.
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- 90% of all natural disasters are water related.
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- Nearly 3 lakh children under five die every year from diarrhoeal diseases.
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- 80% of wastewater flows back into the ecosystem without being treated or reused.
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- Meanwhile, the demand for water in urban areas is projected to increase by 50-70% in the next 3 decades.
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What is the New Agenda for Water Action?

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- A crisis as that of Cape Town is looming large in other cities in the world as people continue to be reckless in their use of water.
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- 12 world leaders (11 heads of state and a special adviser of a high-level panel on water) wrote an open letter to global leaders recently.
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- They warned that the world is facing a water crisis and issued a New Agenda for Water Action.
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- It observed the need to make "**every drop count**" and called for a new approach.
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- The panel called for **rethinking** how people understand, value and manage water as a precious resource.
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- It also demands catalysing **change** and building **partnerships** to achieve the water-related goals of Sustainable Development.
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- The social, cultural, economic and environmental values of water to society need to be reassessed.
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- Water needs to be **allocated** in ways which maximize overall benefits to societies.
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- It mentioned the need to put in place policies to allow for at least a doubling of **water infrastructure** investment in the next 5 years.
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- It called for governments, communities, the private sector, and researchers to collaborate.
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What is India's water scenario?

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- In India, **Bengaluru** is ranked second in the list of 11 global cities which might face the threat of running out of drinking water.
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- According to a forecast by the Asian Development Bank, India will have a **water deficit** of 50% by 2030.
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- Although India receives an average **rainfall** of 1,170 mm per year, it is estimated that only 6% of **rainwater** is stored.

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- India’s water needs are thus primarily met by **rivers and groundwater.**
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- **Water scarcity** can lead to disastrous consequences impacting food production as most of the farming is rain-fed.
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- Ground water caters to about 60% of the country’s irrigation, 85% of rural drinking water requirements and 50% of urban water needs.
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- This signifies the importance of according top priority for replenishing the aquifers.
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- Millions across India still do not have access to safe drinking water.
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- Some of the notable challenges and concerns include:
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i. growing population
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ii. lack of adequate planning
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iii. crumbling infrastructure
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iv. indiscriminate drilling of borewells
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v. large-scale consumption of water
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vi. false sense of entitlement in using water carelessly
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What are the possible measures?

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- The World Bank’s Water Scarce Cities Initiative seeks to promote an integrated approach.
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- It aims at **managing water resources and service delivery** in water-scarce cities as the basis for building climate change resilience.
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- Putting in place an **efficient piped supply system** (without leakage of pipes) has to be top on the agenda.

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- **Ancient India** had well-managed wells and canal systems.
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- The Indus Valley Civilization had a well-managed canal system, while Chanakya's Arthashastra also talks of irrigation.
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- **Indigenous water harvesting systems** need to be **revived** and protected at the local level.
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- **Micro irrigation practices** like drip and sprinkler systems have to be promoted in a big way for efficient water use in agriculture.
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- Digging of **rainwater harvesting** pits must be made mandatory for all types of buildings, both in urban and rural areas.
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- Sustained measures should be taken to **prevent pollution** of water bodies and contamination of groundwater.
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- Ensuring proper treatment of domestic and industrial waste water is also essential.
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Source: The Hindu

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