

# People migrate to cities as state's worst drought since '72 hits home

## Western Maharashtra, Marathwada Severely Hit

Prafulla Marpakwar | TNN

**Mumbai:** Summer may still be a couple of months away but in 3,905 villages in 12 districts of Marathwada and western Maharashtra, faced with one of the worst droughts since 1972, people have started migrating to Mumbai and neighbouring Gujarat, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh.

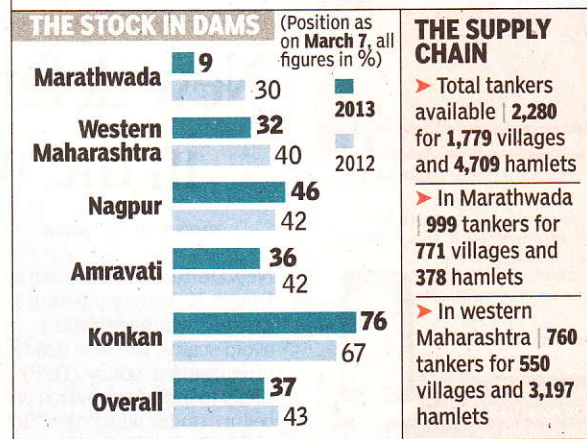
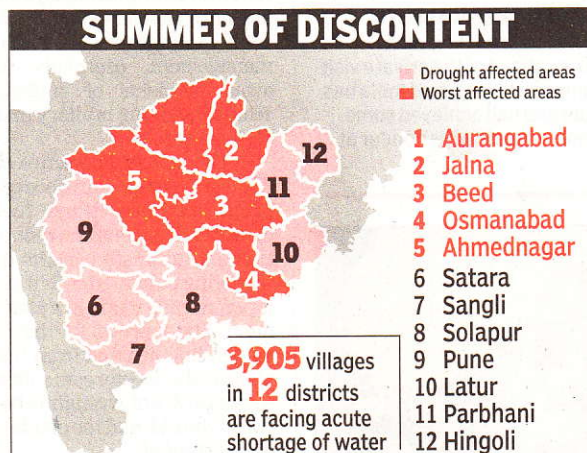
A high-ranking bureaucrat said situation in five districts—Ahmednagar, Aurangabad, Jalna, Beed and Osmanabad—is so bad that the existing drinking water will last only till the end of this month. “For the state political leadership and bureaucracy, it will be a



real testing time. After March, we will have to transport water to these areas either from neighbouring districts or even by trains from Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh,” he said.

But the official said that unlike 1972, when the state had to face shortage of foodgrains and unemployment too, this time around it is only water that is in scarcity.

“We have adequate foodgrains stock. In 1972, 30 lakh villagers had reported for work under the employment guarantee scheme. Now, against the availability of 20 lakh jobs, only 2 lakh villagers have sought work. We are providing work to all,” he said.



But he admitted that the available water in dams is grim. In the badly-affected Marathwada region, on Thursday, only 9 per cent water was left in the dams compared with 30 per cent last year. In western Maharashtra, the stock is 32 per cent against 40 per cent last year. Significantly, situation in Vidarbha, north Maharashtra and Konkan appears to be better.

On the financial assistance from the Centre, the bureaucrat said, under the National Disaster Response Fund, against the demand of Rs 1,800 crore, the state has so far received Rs 778 crore and now a fresh proposal for financial assist-

ance of Rs 2,200 crore has been submitted. “A central team was here last week. We have argued our case. We expect the empowered group of ministers will come to our rescue,” he said.

The bureaucrat pointed out that the state was facing such a situation owing to extreme exploitation of ground water. “Look at the history of the state. Once in a decade, we are facing drought, but we have not learnt lessons. We are over-drawing underground water. We have concentration of sugar factories in Solapur and Osmanabad, as a result, there was highest consumption of water in these districts,” he said.

## Aurangabad down to its last drop

Mohammed Akhef | TNN

**Aurangabad:** One of the worst-affected districts in the state, Aurangabad city is facing acute water scarcity. The live storage of the Jayakwadi dam, the main source of supply to the city, has come down to 2.62% and will last only till this month-end.

The immediate effect is that the city may get water supply only once in four days, “instead of the present once

in three days”, a water supply department official said.

The only option, the official said, is to use the dead storage of the dam to supply. Last year, too, the situation was the same but then water was released from the upstream dams near Ahmednagar. “Now, chances of water being released from these upstream dams are remote due to resistance from locals and politicians in Ahmednagar,” the official said.

## Taps run dry at Shirdi temple

**Shirdi:** Water scarcity has reached the temple town of Shirdi with the Saibaba Sansthan facing acute shortage after its tanks dried up, as the regular supply from Nashik's Darna dam has stopped. The trust, an agency report quoting sources said, is spending Rs 1 lakh daily to purchase water. TNN

## Get ready to tackle crisis, says CM

**Pune:** CM Prithviraj Chavan said that the state was initiating all steps to face severe water crisis. “There are still 3 months for monsoon. There is a challenge ahead of us to maintain water supply. The administration has been asked to provide drinking water tankers and start fodder camps as per the demand.” TNN

## Police prepare for law and order problem

Sanjeev Shivadekar | TNN

**Mumbai:** Faced with one of its severe droughts, the police force has been put on alert fearing clashes over “conflict of interest over use of available water for agriculture and drinking purpose”. In an internal circular, Ahmad Javed, additional director-general of police (law and order), has warned that there may be a “law and order problem”, as the water crisis may lead to demonstrations and agitations in the state. The circular,

however, has asked the personnel to handle protestors with patience and tact.

The circular said the problem may aggravate due to forthcoming elections. “Failure of the law enforcing agency to handle the situation could lead to violence and law and order problem.” Ahmad has also laid down the standard operations procedure. “While dispersing violent crowd, the police should make use of an effective lathicharge and should not resort to other means unless extremely necessary.”