# Maharashtra faces severe water crisis despite above-average monsoon rainfall



A viral video depicting a woman descending into a well to collect water has brought renewed attention to the acute water scarcity crisis afflicting parts of Maharashtra, despite the state experiencing above-average monsoon rainfall last year. The footage, originating from Borichi Bari village in Peth tehsil of Nashik district and circulating widely on social media since April 20, 2025, shows women from a tribal community receiving support as they struggle to access potable water. This scene starkly contrasts with Nashik’s reputation as one of the comparatively developed districts in Maharashtra.

The video has sparked widespread public concern and criticism of the state’s political leadership and water management policies, especially as temperatures escalate during the summer months. Maharashtra is currently facing an intense drinking water shortage, exposing the inefficiencies of the state’s irrigation and water supply systems and raising questions about the implementation of the Jal Jeevan Mission, a major government initiative aimed at ensuring water access.

Documents obtained by Frontline Magazine indicate that as of April 25, dam water storage levels are dangerously low across Maharashtra’s divisions, all reporting less than 50 per cent reservoir capacity: Konkan at 44.37 per cent, Nagpur at 37.55 per cent, Amaravati at 45.99 per cent, Marathwada at 35.82 per cent, Nashik at 40 per cent, and Pune division at a critical low of 30 per cent. This shortage has resulted in severely rationed urban water supplies; cities are receiving water as infrequently as once every 10 to 13 days in some areas. For example, Ausa in Latur district gets piped water once every 12 days, Manmad in Nashik once every 13 days, and even Pimpri-Chinchwad faces water intervals of six days. Industrial areas across multiple districts, including Thane, Nashik, Pune, Kolhapur, Dhule, and Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar, receive water only twice weekly.

Field reports reveal an extensive reliance on tanker water supply across rural Maharashtra. Nashik and Jalgaon districts are distributing water via tankers to 64 villages and 138 bastis (informal settlements). In Marathwada alone, approximately 200 water tankers were operational by April 20, with projections that around 700 villages would require similar tanker support by May 5. Similarly, nearly 600 villages in Konkan have begun receiving water through tankers. The Pune division reports acute scarcity, with about 1,000 villages dependent on tankers. Pune city itself has mobilised over 3,000 municipal tankers supplemented by nearly 40,000 private tanker operations.

Questions about water management failures have resurfaced in light of these persistent shortages. Eleven years ago, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) campaigned against alleged irrigation sector corruption in what was labelled the “Rs.70,000 crore irrigation scam,” targeting Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar at the time. Currently, both Devendra Fadnavis, who led those allegations, and Ajit Pawar serve together in Maharashtra’s ruling coalition. Despite the BJP’s dominant position in the state government for most of the past decade, water infrastructure and supply issues remain inadequately addressed.

Pradeep Purandare, retired Associate Professor at the Water and Land Management Institute (WALMI) and a noted critic of prior irrigation scandals, told Frontline: “Maharashtra’s water table is depleting rapidly. All projects—whether micro-irrigation or large-scale—are contractor-driven, not people-centric. Genuine water conservation efforts are undertaken more by NGOs and private bodies than by the government.”

The Jal Jeevan Mission, launched in 2021 with a budgeted cost of Rs.21,813 crore for 40,000 water supply schemes, has also fallen short. According to an internal report reviewed by Frontline, only around 66 per cent of the schemes have reached the stage of work order issuance. Challenges have included the exclusion of many settlements during planning, the drying up of previously identified water sources, failure by Gram Panchayats to provide land for infrastructure, and multiple redesigns due to relocated project sites.

In response, the opposition Congress party has initiated a “fact-check mission” beginning May 2, sending MPs and MLAs to verify the operational status of Jal Jeevan Mission projects on the ground. Congress State chief Harshwardhan Sapkal remarked, “Our leaders will verify whether the schemes are operational or only exist on paper.”

Further criticism comes from social activists like Professor H.M. Desarada, who has petitioned against government schemes such as Jal Yukta Shivar. He stated to Frontline, “An investigation into the Jal Jeevan Mission is necessary. Thousands of schemes have been granted work orders without adequate funding from the Centre. Contractors abandoned projects halfway, and on paper, the government claims they are still ‘in progress.’”

Corruption claims have been raised even within the ruling coalition. During the most recent monsoon session of the Maharashtra Assembly, several BJP and Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) lawmakers voiced concerns over irregularities in the Jal Jeevan Mission. Water Supply Minister Gulabrao Patil promised a third-party audit of the schemes. Frontline has learnt the audit report was submitted but has not been publicly released.

A senior official from the Water Supply Department reportedly told Frontline, “From poor-quality pipes to inflated bills for taps, many irregularities have been flagged. That’s why the report has not been made public yet.”

With natural water sources running dry and thousands of villages increasingly dependent on tanker water by early May, the demand for transparency and accountability in Maharashtra’s water management continues to intensify. The 2025 summer water crisis starkly highlights ongoing governance and infrastructural challenges despite extensive governmental programmes and expenditures targeting water security.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

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