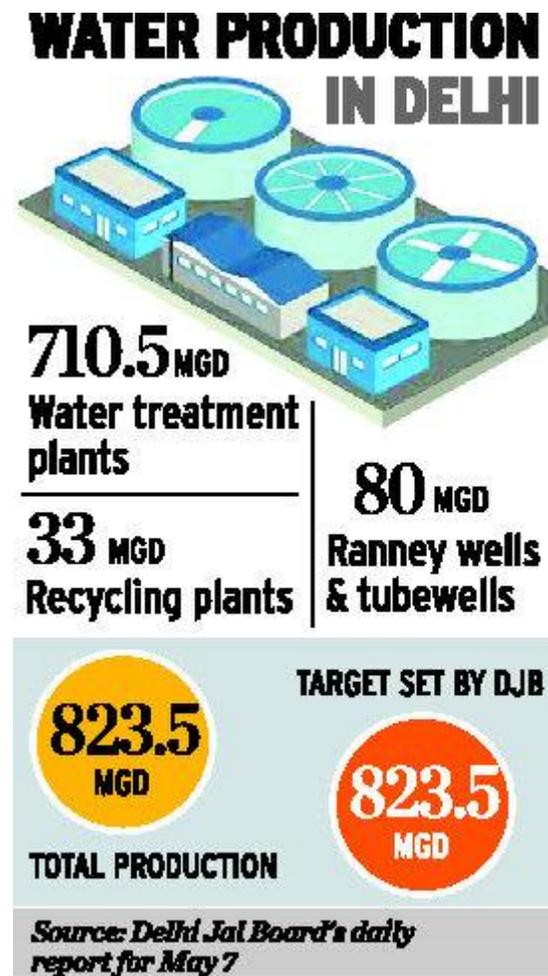


NEW DELHI, May 9, 2014

Water scarcity in Delhi a man-made crisis, says NGO

DAMINI NATH

Jal Board says it has done everything possible



Alarms are being set for unearthly hours, chaotic queues are being braved and hard-earned money is being spent by Delhiites on water. The annual summer water crisis is here.

While residents in some areas complain about scant supply through the Delhi Jal Board's pipelines, large parts of the city have no piped connections and have to rely on tankers. The DJB claims it is meeting the water supply target set by its summer action plan, but the ground reality in places like South Delhi is that it is simply not enough.

“The water supply situation in large parts of the city, including posh areas in South Delhi as well as the unauthorised colonies, is pathetic,” said DJB member Sandeep Tanwar.

But, as far as the DJB is concerned it has done everything in its power. “By optimising all the resources, current production at the plants has been achieved as per the target, 830-833 MGD (million gallons per day), in peak summer,” DJB officials told Lieutenant-Governor Najeeb Jung at a review meeting on Thursday.

So why are Delhiites sweating it out over water?

If environmentalists are to be believed, there is enough supply but it is being mismanaged.

“Delhi is far better placed in terms of water supply than other cities in the country. The water shortage we cry about every summer is a man-made crisis due to distribution losses. The resources are being mismanaged by the DJB,” said Manoj Misra, convenor of the Yamuna Jiye Abhiyaan.

According to the Centre for Science and Environment, leakages in the supply network are to blame for the shortage that becomes so acute in summer.

“The authorities are not doing enough. There should not be demand side management; it should be supply side management. The groundwater is not being recharged, stormwater is being neglected and 80 per cent of the water gets turned into waste water,” said Sushmita Sengupta, the deputy programme manager of CSE’s Water Programme Unit.

The DJB, however, denied the charge. Its summer action plan said “330 major leakages were repaired last year”. DJB spokesperson Sanjam Chima said: “We are doing the best we can”. The three municipal corporations of Delhi have also put up their hands.

While the authorities appear clueless, Delhiites continue to suffer as water becomes scarce.