

# Water Levels Dip in Reservoirs, Alarm Bells Ring Across States

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## **Falling water levels in 91 major reservoirs to hit availability for irrigation & drinking**

The country is heading for a shortage of water for irrigation and drinking as water level in 91 major reservoirs has dipped 16% below normal, and is expected to deplete further with the monsoon on the verge of withdrawal.

The Central Water Commission, which monitors reservoirs, plans to issue advisories to states about the situation after the weather office formally announces the date when the monsoon withdraws. Reservoirs usually fill up during the monsoon season, which provides about 75% of the country's rainfall, and supply water for irrigation and drinking for the rest of the year.

Officials say the situation is particularly disturbing in western and southern regions although central Indian reservoirs have adequate water. The situation in the north is also better due to heavy downpours in the Himalayan states.

AB Pandya, chairman of the Central Water Commission, said the situation is being monitored. "We are waiting for the India Meteorological Department to give the monsoon withdrawal dates. After that we will be in a better situation to come with an advisory," he said.

The water situation is much worse than last year, when the monsoon began with a severe dry spell of six weeks, but rainfall improved significantly towards the end of the season and filled up reservoirs to optimal levels. This year, the monsoon began strongly but has tapered off in August, leaving reservoirs depleted.

The weather office had told ET this week that the withdrawal of monsoon from West Rajasthan will be on time in early September. "By September 7-8, we expect all condition of withdrawal from west Rajasthan to be met," DS Pai, head of the long range forecast at IMD, said.

Officials at the water commission said that the situation in Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Maharashtra was a matter of concern. "This monsoon season there not been any flow of water in the Nagarjuna Sagar Dam on river Kaveri. A similar situation is on Bhima Dam also known as Ujjani Dam and Jayakwadi Dam on river Godavari in Maharashtra. States need to take immediate steps," said the official.

The water available in the major reservoirs was 92.92 billion cubic metres, or 59% of their capacity, as of Thursday.

The monsoon deficit has affected reservoir levels in Jharkhand, Odisha, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. This could affect crop planting in the country, which is in the last phase.

Reservoirs in Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Rajasthan, West Bengal, Tripura, Gujarat, Uttarakhand and Madhya Pradesh had better water levels than a year earlier.

The season's rain deficit was 12% as of Thursday , with rainfall during the 24-hour period ended Thursday morning 56% below normal.



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