

50% of country in grip of drought, say IIT experts

Notebook: news

Created: 27-Mar-19 5:43 PM

URL: <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/nation/50-of-country-in-grip-of-drought-say-iit-experts/736262.html>

50% of country in grip of drought, say IIT experts



Gandhinagar, February 28

Nearly 50 per cent of the country is currently facing drought with at least 16 per cent falling in the “exceptional” or “extreme” category, according to IIT-Gandhinagar scientists managing India’s real-time drought prediction system.

This ongoing drought will pose a lot of challenges in water availability this summer, said Vimal Mishra, associate professor at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) here.

The real time monitoring system run by his team, which includes PhD student Amardeep Tiwari, collects weather and precipitation data from the India Meteorological Department (IMD), which is then used to simulate soil moisture and other factors that contribute to drought. The results of the simulations, prepared by the Water and Climate Lab at IIT-Gandhinagar, are available on the IMD website.

"About 47 per cent of the country is facing drought — with 16 per cent facing extreme or exceptional category of drought — which we show from our real time monitoring system that we have developed for the country," said Mishra, who heads the lab.

"Arunachal Pradesh did not get good rain this year, and parts of Jharkhand, southern Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, and northern part of Tamil Nadu are under drought," Mishra said.

If these areas experience very hot summer before the onset of monsoon, it could lead to a crisis, he warned.

According to him, continuing drought will further burden the already depleting ground water resources of the country. "We are not enhancing groundwater recharge. On the other hand, drought conditions are making us extract more and more water," he said.

While famine-like conditions are not expected, the drought will have a massive impact on the economy. "It can create long-term stress, if not mortality for poor, marginalised farmers," Mishra said.

He said global warming and climate change are likely to exacerbate drought in the coming years. "If our groundwater is not recharged, we could face a very difficult situation in the coming years," Mishra said, adding that groundwater is being used irresponsibly at present. — PTI

States in crisis

- Arunachal Pradesh, parts of Jharkhand, southern Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, and northern part of Tamil Nadu are facing a severe crisis
- Scientists say at least 16% fall in the "exceptional" or "extreme" category
- They say irresponsible use of groundwater, global warming, climate change to worsen situation

