

1. **water crisis** (noun) – water scarcity, water stress; the lack of sufficient available fresh water resources to meet water demand.
2. **holistic** (adjective) – wholesome, comprehensive/entire, integrated.
3. **resonant** (adjective) – clear and loud, intensified; suggestive, expressive.
4. **shadow** (noun) – hint, faint sign, trace/glimmer.
5. **drought** (noun) – lack/dry spell, lack of rain, shortage of water.
6. **stretch** (verb) – extend, prolong, continue.
7. **torrid** (adjective) – hot, sweltering, scorching.
8. **reservoir** (noun) – pool, lake, pond (a source of water).
9. **prosperity** (noun) – welfare, comfort, the good life/well being.
10. **hunt** (verb) – search, look, seek.
11. **disperse** (verb) – allot, distribute, disburse/supply.
12. **ironically** (adverb) – paradoxically, unexpectedly, strangely.
13. **lay low** (phrase) – bring to an end the good fortune enjoyed by something/someone earlier.
14. **indifference** (noun) – disregard, neglect, lack of attention.
15. **successive** (adjective) – following, consecutive, succeeding.
16. **meagre** (adjective) – limited, little, inadequate.
17. **desalination** (noun) – the process of removing salt from seawater.
18. **faraway** (adjective) – distant, far off, remote.
19. **neglect** (noun) – negligence, carelessness, irresponsibility.
20. **elicit** (verb) – evoke, induce, obtain/cause.
21. **vague** (adjective) – imprecise, uncertain, ambiguous.
22. **augment** (verb) – increase, boost, improve.
23. **scarcity** (noun) – shortage, lack, insufficiency.
24. **exaggeration** (noun) – overstatement, dramatization, hyperbole.
25. **business as usual** (phrase) – routine, a normal pattern, a normal state of affairs.
26. **time-bound** (adjective) – related to a certain moment or era in time.
27. **encompass** (verb) – include, subsume, incorporate.
28. **credentialed** (adjective) – relating to something/someone given credentials.
29. **academia** (noun) – the community related to the education, research, etc.
30. **significance** (noun) – importance, substance, seriousness.
31. **prudent** (adjective) – wise, sensible, careful/ far-sighted.
32. **withering** (adjective) – intense, extreme, fierce/strong.
33. **white paper** (noun) – a government report that informs people concisely about a complex issue.
34. **sustainable** (adjective) – acceptable, valid/reliable, dependable.
35. **quantify** (verb) – determine, evaluate, measure.
36. **harvest** (verb) – obtain, gather in, gain.
37. **superior** (noun) – finer, better, greater.
38. **fire-fighting** (adjective) – an act of dealing problems as they come (instead of avoiding them strategically).
39. **incentive** (noun) – stimulus, impetus, boost.
40. **bottleneck** (noun) – a condition which appears as not solvable and so delays the process; snag, difficulty/problem.
41. **quantifiable** (adjective) – able to be measured as a quantity.
42. **vested interest** (noun) – a personal interest in something to get benefit.

A city gone dry: on Chennai water crisis

The water crisis in Chennai needs holistic and widely resonant solutions

Chennai's aspirations to grow into a global economic hub appear considerably weakened as it [struggles to find water](#). The shadow of drought from 2018 has stretched into the torrid summer this year, evaporating not just the city's reservoirs, but the prosperity of its residents who are forced to hunt for tankers, pay bribes and spend hours even at night waiting for trucks to dispense some water. Ironically, Tamil Nadu's capital, which in a normal year gets anything between 1,300 mm and 1,400 mm of rainfall, has been laid low by the indifference of successive governments. That residents are now given minimum piped water and meagre tanker supplies totalling a third of the installed capacity of 1,494 million litres a day, that too mainly from desalination plants, faraway lakes and farm wells, is proof of the neglect of water governance. Yet, even searching questions posed by the Madras High Court to the AIADMK government have elicited only vague assurances on meeting basic requirements and restoring 210 waterbodies to augment future storage, rather than a firm timeline. Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami was wrong to dismiss reports on water scarcity as "an exaggeration", and he must end this business-as-usual approach. A time-bound plan is needed to augment the resources in the Greater Chennai region encompassing the neighbouring districts of Thiruvallur and Kancheepuram. This plan should be tasked to a Special Officer, to be framed by officials in consultation with credentialed experts in research and academia, and public comments invited before it is finalised.

Given the large base of tanks and reservoirs in Greater Chennai — over 4,000 waterbodies of significance — prudent rainfall management can help it through withering summers and weak monsoons. A white paper with a full assessment of these wetlands and their storage potential should be a priority for the State's Sustainable Water Security Mission.

Deepening storage in the four major reservoirs must get priority. Such a project must quantify the increase in storage and set an early deadline of a year. These measures can harvest the bulk of the rain in a good year, and prove superior to the fire-fighting approach of installing expensive desalination plants and bringing small quantities by rail from another district. Tamil Nadu made rain[water harvesting](#) mandatory quite early, but failed to follow it up with an institutional mechanism to help citizens implement it. The

government should give monetary incentives to NGOs, as NITI Aayog proposed in its Water Index report, to encourage them to install systems and show quantifiable recharge outcomes. On the consumer side, devices and practices to reduce wastage should be promoted, especially on commercial premises. Droughts are bottlenecks for profit, and several actors have developed a vested interest in transferring water to the city at high cost. Long-term solutions can end this cycle.