

# Report: India among 17 nations facing extreme water stress

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**NEW DELHI:** India is among the 17 most water stressed countries in the world, according to World Resources Institute (WRI's) Aqueduct map released on Tuesday. The data indicates that ground and surface water resources are severely over-drawn in India.

Groundwater tables in some northern aquifers have also declined at a rate of more than 8 cm per year from 1990 to 2014, the data, from hydrological modeling, remote-sensing and published data sets, showed.

"Aqueduct's findings put this crisis in context: India ranks 13th in overall water stress and has more than three times the population of the other 17 extremely highly stressed countries combined," Rutger Williem Hofste and other members of WRI wrote on the findings. The most water stressed country is Qatar, followed by Israel, Lebanon, Iran and Jordan.

WRI has described the 17 highly water stressed countries to have "extremely high levels" of baseline water stress (ratio of total water withdrawals to available renewable surface and groundwater supplies) where irrigation, industries and municipalities withdraw more than 80% of their available sup-

ply. "Reservoirs in Chennai, India's sixth-largest city, are nearly dry right now. Last year, residents of Cape Town, South Africa narrowly avoided their own "Day Zero" water shut-off. In 2017, Rome rationed water to conserve scarce resources. The reasons for these crises go far deeper than drought," WRI researchers wrote. Aqueduct's spatial maps also indicate Punjab, Haryana, Delhi and parts of Uttar Pradesh are seeing rapid declines in groundwater table.

Tamil Nadu has the highest number of blocks (358) in the over-exploited category due to groundwater extraction, according to data released in the Lok Sabha by the Jal Shakti ministry. About 52% of wells being monitored in the country are recording declining groundwater levels, the data showed. Out of 6,584 blocks assessed, 1,034 are in the over-exploited category, 253 in the critical category, 681 in the semi-critical category, 96 in the saline category, and 4,520 in the safe category.

India Meteorological Department (IMD's) standard precipitation index (SPI) map for the May 30 to July 31 period shows several parts of east and peninsular India are still in extremely dry categories. SPI is an index used for drought monitoring and is negative for drought, and positive for wet conditions.