Drought : Effect of Climate Change

- Sanjeev Unhale, Secretary, Dilasa

Marathwada Region, which is mainly located in the main drainage of Godavari River is facing severe drought this year. Actually, the region is facing the recurrent droughts with constant variations of rains and prolonged gaps. However, the water scarcity this year, especially in Jalna, Aurangabad, Beed and Osmanabad districts is altogether different from the famine of 1972 because we have indiscriminately siphoned the ground water and made no efforts to recharge it. The instant ground water cannot be recharged by any package of the government. Although, hundreds of tankers are deployed, the major problem is related to the source of water. Many urban areas like Jalna and several townships are facing severe water scarcity this year. In some blocks like Kannad the water depletion gone down more than seven meters and many blocks like Phulambri, Gangapur, Soygaon, Aurangabad, Sillod, Vaijapur, Kannad, Paithan and other 25 blocks are facing severe situation as the water level gone down more than 3 meters. In contrast to this, 37 blocks which are drought prone in the region were facing the hydraulic imbalance only because of the fact that only these blocks have more inclined towards water sucking crop like sugarcane.

For centuries 7th June means first rainy day of monsoon in Maharashtra. But now it is merely an illusion. With the data of the last decade, it is crystal clear that 7th June shall not the first day of the monsoon. The first day of the monsoon could be last week of July or first week of August. With this changing time table of the monsoon, one could not imagine that the pulses crop like Moog, Udid and Groundnut having completely vanished from the area. Similarly, the cold waves with a dry fog which appears in every first week of the year had completely finished the crops like sunflower and safflower (Kardai) from our region. Only the constant variations and
prolonged gaps in the rains had made this difference. The variation and the gaps in the rains created havoc this year in the cotton belt with at least 60% reduction in the yield.

However, the government had never given serious thought to the climate change. Actually, nature is making farmers to accept the changes but instead of making merely targets, the agriculture department should come forward with the changing cropping pattern to cope with the raining pattern. Considering the scenario of last 15 years for adaptation to climate change, the farmers have voluntarily shifted from sorghum (Jawar) to cotton as cash crop and now with frustrating scenario in cotton they are shifting towards soybean. The farmers in the belt of 30 thousand hectares in Beed district shifted very smoothly towards soybean and in this grim situation also, they are the winners of the climate change with lucrative price they got for their crop.

Actually, intensive watershed development project can only save this region from unprecedented pattern of the rainfall. Presently, 8 watersheds in the region are overexploited and 19 watersheds are semi critical at this juncture. Actually, there are high yielding bore wells in the region. If these bore wells are fitted with dwell pump it will function like mini water supply scheme but there are more than 6839 non functioning bore well in the region. Actually, these defunct bore wells can be used for artificial recharging. Basically bore well are tapping deep aquifer and in the critical times these bore wells can be directly connected with deep aquifer, if these are used for artificial recharge. This recharge of the aquifer is possible within shortest time. Time had come to use this technology instantly. There are 19464 domestic dug wells in Marathwada Region. Most of the dug wells are not in use or used for dumping waste material. Many dug wells are polluted. There is a need to take intensive drive to clean all these domestic dug wells.
The acute scarcity of water in Marathwada Region became a battle ground for the ruling congress and NCP for harvesting the credit out of the situation. At one hand common people are facing the adverse effect of the depletion of ground water, while political parties are settling scores by staring each other under the deep water.

Actually, there is no joint visit of congress NCP leaders in Marathwada. They are organizing parallel programmes. There were many expectations from the visit of the Union Agriculture Minister Mr. Sharad Pawar. However, Mr. Pawar after visiting the drought hit villages in Ambad block of Jalna district only assured that all possible assistance will be given generously from the centre provided the state should provide valid proposals. Instantly, on the very next day the Chief Minister, Mr. Prithviraj Chavan during its visit to Beed town made it clear that the state government had already send three letters to the Central Government for seeking the assistance. Now the questions lies as to whether the copy of the letter are provided to Mr. Pawar or both the parties are playing blain game in the name of the correspondence between state and centre. Despite the continuous follow-up of NCP very few MPs and MLAs turned towards the review meeting of Mr. Pawar at Aurangabad. Actually, it was right time to pressurize the Union Agriculture Minister to give some package for the deserted sweet lime and low yielded cotton hit farmers. In parallel, the State Agriculture Minister Mr. Radhakrishna Vikhepatil was on the extensive tour of Marathwada and on the same day he has announced the financial assistance of Rs.23000/- for the affected horticultural plants. Instantly, the Dy. Chief Minister Mr. Ajit Pawar announced the Panchanama (verification process) will be started while the
State Agriculture Minister expressed no need of such documents. With the increasing intensity of the drought Marathwada, especially Jalna became the drought tourism spot after the first mammoth meeting of the Shivsena Chief, Mr. Uddhav Thackery. Mr. Vishwajeet Kadam of Youth Congress started *Padyatra* in the area while NCP Youth Congress Leader initiated Drought Assistance Abhiyan. The big wigs like the Union Rural Development Minister, Mr. Jayram Ramesh and the Governor of the Maharashtra State have also planned their visits in this area.

NCP focused Jalna drought intensively because the party aspires to hijack Jalna Parliamentary Constituency to NCP in the place of Hingoli, which is traditional NCP constituency on the so called elective merit. In this visit, Mr. Pawar called Mr. Raosaheb Danve, BJP MP of Jalna to accompany in the visit. There are many political inferences of Pawar’s visit.

The politics of drought is percolating from top to bottom. Osmanabad town is facing acute water scarcity this year. It was alleged that the tankers were not provided in the areas of the cooperators of the opposition. After much hue and cry, they former minister Ranajagjeet Singh made efforts to pacify the opposition. Dr. Padamsingh Patil, MP and close aide of Mr. Pawar made all out effort to construct special water pipeline from Ujani in Solapur district, which is 126 km away from Osmanabad. The inauguration of this pipeline is scheduled in the last week of this month and NCP invited Mr. Sharad Pawar, while the Congress Minister, Mr. Madhukarrao Chavan announced that the Chief Minister, Mr. Prithviraj Chavan will be the Chief Guest. In Osmanabad ZP, the congress party is ruling with the help of BJP-Shivsena and NCP is seating in the opposition. There is some possibility of the re-union of Congress-NCP in ZP to maintain the so called image of the front.

More than 200 tankers are plying on road in Beed district. Despite the e-tendering system, the so called tanker lobby is operated by the political leaders and their
followers. As the water is not available within 25 kilometers, they are earning more money in the name of lead and lift. Many temporary pipelines have been hijacked by the nexus of contractors, leaders and engineers. The situation is so grim that administration is not in a position to raise any suspicion over the rounds of tankers and watering for the cattle camps. In Jalna, some corporators took the advantage of the situation and providing free water to maintain their vote bank. One can observed the water trading at its highest pitch in Jalna town. Tanker making business is in full swing while most of the auto rickshaws converted into small tankers and they are getting Rs.200/- for one round of water, which is much profitable. At every grocery shop there is booking for the water jas of 50 liters. But the commoners have to satisfy their thrust with the pouch of one rupee. Every family has to invest the budget of at least Rs.4000/- for potable and non-potable water. The situation is becoming severe every day and in turn adventitious for the petty politicians too.
Plan for effective use of alternate water sources in Marathwada

- Sanjeev Unhale, Secretary, Dilasa

The Divisional Commissioner of Marathwada Region Sanjeev Jaiswal has prepared a very novel action plan for tackling the serious problem of drinking water scarcity in the urban areas of Marathwada. This action plan is not a routine one but Mr. Jaiswal has applied his mind and has included many novel experiments like digging trenches to lift the saturated ground water from Terana and Khelna Irrigation Projects, digital tanker mapping, constructing independent water hydrants in the submerged area of the dams for filling the tankers, etc. In an exclusive interview Jaiswal enthusiastically highlighted salient features of the action plan.

Realizing the fact that the present unprecedented water scarcity will equally hit the urban pockets with dense population of Marathwada Region which is clustered in 53 municipal councils and 4 Municipal Corporations, the Divisional Commissioner started planning since October 2012 and finalized an independent urban water supply plan of Rs.116 crores. Carving out time from the routine review meetings and visits of ministers, Mr.Jaiswal had hectic tours of critical places spread over entire Marathwada Region. After critical review of water scarcity it was observed that 4 municipal councils, viz. Sillod, Jalna, Osmanabad and Omerga are facing very severe water scarcity while 9 Municipal Councils had severe water scarcity, 16 had mild water scarcity and 24 councils had very mild severity of water scarcity. An attempt was made to identify and use neglected water sources and various alternatives were considered for providing drinking water to the urban areas. This basic strategy gave rise to many new and useful schemes.
A large trench was dug in the bed of Terana Dam and water was supplied to Osmanabad through pipeline. By spending a meager sum of Rs.15 lakhs about 4.5 crore litres of water was lifted and expenditure of crores of rupees on tankers was thereby saved. Similarly, by digging a big trench in Khelna project with a meager expenditure of Rs. 30 lakhs water supply was started to Sillod resulting into saving of about 1.5 crore rupees on tankers.

In order to bring convenience and economy in expenditure a digital map for every taluka is prepared and is updated daily. The details of number of tankers, routes of tankers, surface water storages, dry projects and large wells are available on these maps along with the action plan for lifting water in preferential order to face acute water shortage situation by the end of summer. This transparent plan is available to the entire machinery for taking proper action. A novel idea of filling tankers by laying temporary pipelines is being implemented. For the worst affected Jalna district water will be supplied to Jafrabad and Bhokardan Talukas from Khadapurna project, to Partur and Mantha talukas from lower Dudhna Project by gravity flow, and for remaining talukas lifting water from Jayakwadi and by erecting ‘tanker stations’ linked through temporary pipelines. If needed, a plan to supply water to Sillod from Khadakpurna is also ready. During his tour Sanjeev Jaiswal saw a big water hydrant at Chorakhali in Osmanabad district. This concept he applied to erect water stations for tankers at various places. On these lines it is proposed to erect water hydrants / stations to supply water to the four industrial estates situated at Paithan, Jalna, Waluj and Shendra. The Aurangabad Municipal Corporation has been requested to spare 1 TMC water for rural area and water stations are proposed at Paithan, Bidkin, Farola, Chitegaon and Nakshatrawadi. To tap alternate water sources a programme is being implemented to take wells in the submergence of irrigation projects. A big well was taken in the submergence area of Sina Kolegaon Project and water is supplied from it to Paranda town which was a tankerfed place since last one and half years.
It is proposed to give one rotation of 1.6 million cubic meters from Nandur-Madhameshwar pick up weir for Vaijapur and Gangapur Talukas despite strong opposition. It was observed that urban townships like Ambajogai, Kej, Dharur, Kalamb and Latur Corporation area are getting water from Manjara project. In order to reduce the heavy pressure and dependence on Manjara project, recently an independent scheme to supply water to Latur from Sai Nagzari is approved. In order to further reduce the dependence on Manjara Project, the water supply to Nilanga and Ausa is provided by making effective and optimum use of old water sources. This decision off-course evoked a large political uproar. The most serious problem in Marathwada however is supplying water to Ashti and the only alternative seems to be to lift water from Kukdi Project.

An independent water supply schemes is being implemented for supplying water to Omerga from Makani Project. This year water was not released from Jayakwadi in Zari project. This has created a problem situation in Municipal Councils like Manvat. To tackle this problem an independent water supply scheme to fill Iralad Weir from Lower Dudhana Project is being prepared.

The Divisional Commissioner, Sanjeev Jaiswal and his team has applied administrative capabilities, engineering techniques, rigorous economy & financial norms, participatory approach of involving all stakeholders to come out with this ideal urban water supply plan for Marathwada. Optimum utilization of all available alternate water sources, minimizing water loss through evaporation by diversified use of water stored in reservoirs, restricting unauthorized use for irrigation, provision up to 3000 tankers from the present 900 tankers are some of the important features of this urban water supply plan. This sincere, pains taking attempt by Sanjeev Jaiswal being the ‘first of its kind’ will not only be useful for Marathwada but also a pilot for other regions.
Article -4

Cattle Camps: Scheme or Scam?

- Sanjeev Unhale, Secretary, Dilasa

After much hue and cry and agitation of the people, Sunil Kendrekar joined as Beed Collector. However, most of people have not understood as to why the District NCP leaders made all out efforts to transfer Mr. Kendrekar in the acute drought situation. Actually, Mr. Kendrekar played very instrumental role in closing down the fodder camps in the state and reducing the subsidy on the cattle camp from Rs. 80/- per animal to merely Rs.60.

Basically, Ashti block in Beed district is major milk producing block with considerably good number of cows. When he arrived at Beed, the fodder camps were in full swing. One bundle of fodder was costing Rs.40/- as per sanctioned rate in the tender, which was very high compared to market rate. One day, he caught one truck of ‘Kadaba’ fodder and after inquiry it was told that they have started home service for the farmer. However, there was not any supporting record nor any valid process of weighing. The District Collector ordered sudden checking, video shooting of the process and internal audit. Meanwhile, similar complaints were coming from all corners of the state and ultimately on 15 August 2012 the fodder camps were closed. Then the same leaders started animal camps. Despite strong follow-up, 12.44 crores were disbursed for fodder camp while 24.62 crores were given for animal camps which were owned by influential political leaders.

In cattle camp also the counting of animals remained very fraudulent. If you start counting from one side, the animals from the same side were mixed in such a manner that would increase the total count. There were many problems in 15 kg per animal food and higher the number bigger is the profit. The District Collector insisted for the
system to line up the animals in head to head manner, videography and many more things. Irritated with this system, which was hampering their vested interests; the political leaders sharply reacted as far as Beed district is concerned. The ground reality is that the village level organizations are not capable to cope-up with the economics of the animal camps.

However, it should be admitted that the condition of 90 lakh animals in the drought hit area is very grave. Out of the total number, 42.26 lakh are large animals, 29.98 lakhs small animals while 13 lakh are sheep and goats. The daily fodder requirement is 339.90 lakh metric tones.

In the rapid round of Jalna district and interaction with the people at the animal camps of Hivarala and Dhopteshwar, it was revealed that the situation of village level voluntary organization is very miserable. Actually, fodder is not available in Jalna district and they are fetching the fodder from Ahmednagar district. Water is not available for the animals. At many places there is a grave need of tankers for the animal camps. Water is not available in the periphery of 10 kms. Animals require more water every day compared to human beings. Considering the large number of the animals, the voluntary organizations are not coming forward with low rates of the government and increasing burden of people accompanying the animals. In this situation, Kuber group of Jalna started very novel animal camp of 700 animals in Ahankar Devulgaon. The animals of every farmer have been given code number and adequate water and food provided along with the veterinary services. No relative of owner of animals is allowed to stay at the camp. One can come and observe their animals. This novel venture was initiated without any government help. Such camps are excellent examples of the age old tradition of Bhootdaya i.e. affinity towards animals and earnest attempt to save their lives. The urge and commitment towards Godhan is manifested in such camps.
Considering the situation, it seems that the voluntary agencies, industrial groups, Rotary and Lions clubs and other institutions should come forward in this pious work of organizing animal camps. Lesser the intervention of the leaders, higher will be the effect of such camps. If someone studies, the economics of the camps with the input of fodder and water and output in terms of gober, milk, etc., it seems that the animal camps of less than 500 animals are not viable. With the increasing gravity of the drought, the number of the animal camps will also increase. Considering the ‘scam’ experience of Beed and ground realities and problems as a ‘scheme’ in Jalna, there is a need to evolve and implement systematically the policy of animal camps without any political interventions.
Article -5

Combating Scarcity by empowered
Aurangabad Commissionerate: Need of the time
- Sanjeev Unhale, Secretary, Dilasa

Though Government of Maharashtra has already announced more than half of 8000 villages of Marathwada as scarcity hit villages, the water scarcity in Aurangabad, Jalna, Beed and Osmanabad districts is day by day becoming critical and grave. People are becoming restless because there is no water, no fodder and no gainful employment. This unrest was manifested in total Beed district Bandh when the Beed District Collector, Mr. Sunil Kendrekar was transferred intentionally because of vested interests of politicians. While in Jalna district ruling congress party MLA held fast, dharana, rasta roko and as a result the Government approved to provide electric connection for the Jalna-Jayakwadi Water Supply Scheme. People in Jalna were so much agitated that it became an all party agitation though it was initiated by congress MLA.

For Maharashtra droughts are not new. In the last 135 years the state has faced five droughts in 1877, 1899, 1918, 1972 and the present one of 2012-2013. However, the present drought is worst and with maximum severity. People do not want inspection tours and visits of Ministers and other VIPs. They want immediate remedial measures to combat the present grave situation. Lot of discussions and meetings and analysis of data and information has taken place. But indifferent attitude of the government and the people at large coupled with absence of proper water planning has resulted with hardly any meaningful outcome.

Sweet Lime plantation on 50000 hectares in Aurangabad and Jalna districts of Marathwada has been acclaimed as the number one in the country and has been
prestigious icon for Marathwada. For want of water thousands of sweet lime trees are wilting. No doubt panchanama’s will be done by the revenue officers as per their convenience and few thousand rupees will be distributed to the affected farmers. Instead of this hotch-potch and typical government like approach there is urgent need to see that the remaining sweet lime plantations survive by providing water through tankers and reducing the evapo-transpiration by sprinkling Kevoline chemical. This needs to be done by Agricultural Department.

Government should immediately acquire and reserve whatever little water is available in the wells otherwise the same will vanish with indiscriminate use. ‘We will provide water by railway’ is good breaking news given by the government to the media but has hardly any feasibility and viability. Contrarily, the proposal submitted by the Aurangabad Divisional Commissioner of constructing hydrants for filling tankers with ease and least wastage of water coupled with additional supplementary pipelines is quite novel, useful and effective. In fact the Aurangabad Divisional Commissioner has come out with a comprehensive plan of providing water to the urban areas of Marathwada which includes Municipal Councils and four Municipal Corporations.

On this background, unfortunately the entire decision making is centralized in Mantralaya at Mumbai. The decisions on the proposals submitted by the field officers are some-how postponed on some trivial technical grounds by the badebabus sitting in the air-conditioned chambers. Indifferent attitude, typical government red-tapism and competition among political parties & leaders as to ‘who should get the credit’ are the factors mainly responsible for making this drought as not only aasmani but also sultani. Some typical Government Resolutions (GRs) issued by different Departments of the Government of Maharashtra are contradictory to one another. The concern departments are Water Supply, Revenue and Rehabilitation. As per GR issued by the Revenue Department the powers have been delegated to the commissioner of A-class
corporations as far as the deployment of tankers is concerned. While the GR issued by the Water Supply Department requires that the field officers should submit the proposal duly recommended to the Government for the approval. One Government Resolution (GR) states that to tackle water scarcity situation in urban areas only once urgent scheme can be taken-up. But in Marathwada a major chunk of urban population is facing severe water scarcity as such how only one scheme is enough to tackle the problem? Another GR says that for deepening the well there is a provision of Rs.20000/- to tackle the water scarcity. Now the cost of digging a well has touched Rs. 4 lakhs what can a farmer do with a paltry sum of Rs.20000/-. Another GR says that for supplementary water supply you can take up to 2 kilometer pipeline and spend Rs.10 lakhs on the same. In districts like Beed & Jalna the sources of water are so less and far off that with the restrictions imposed in the GR nothing can be done. In the nutshell, Combating Scarcity by empowered Aurangabad Commissionerate is the need of the time.