Deficit rainfall in Karnataka

What is the issue?

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Deficit rainfall in the Cauvery catchment areas is likely to cause drought in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.

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What is the status quo of water deficiency in Karnataka?

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- The areas encompassing the Cauvery catchment, is currently witnessing the worst monsoon in the country.
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- Earlier this week, four major reservoirs in the Karnataka side of the Cauvery basin had a storage of just 43.18 tmc.
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- This is barely 40% of total capacity, and is even lesser than the 51 tmc recorded last year (a drought year).
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- Karnataka has already stated that water will not be released for Kharif crop sowing, this year.
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- Instead, preference has been given to drinking water needs, estimated to be 30 tmc till the next monsoon.
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What is the reason for this water deficit?

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- **Monsoon:** Off-shore troughs or depressions (areas of low pressure) in the southern Arabian Sea or the southern Bay of Bengal allow for accumulation of south- west monsoon clouds in south India.
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- The depressions were off the coast of Maharashtra and Gujarat, and rain-bearing monsoon too migrated there.
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- **Anthropogenic:** Large-scale deforestation in the Western Ghats, continued sand mining.
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- The inability to revive tributaries have led to declining health of the catchment area and river capacity.
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- **Cropping pattern:** water-intensive crops such as sugarcane and paddy, which dominate the agrarian landscape.
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- The proliferation of bore wells, which have had an impact on surface run-off.
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What is the status of water sharing with Tamilnadu?

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- Supreme Court which is hearing appeals by Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala challenging the 2007 Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal award.
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- The share of Cauvery had been determined as 270 tmc to Karnataka and 419 tmc to Tamil Nadu, among others.
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- In June and July, Karnataka was to release 44 tmc to abide by the award.
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- Only 7 tmc has been released so far, conflict over water-sharing is bound to rise again.
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- With lower water release from Karnataka, the main samba crop in Tamil Nadu will be under threat.
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Source: The Hindu

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