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EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

Water Security for a Viksit Bharat

 **THE HINDU**18 June 2026 · **ENVIRONMENT** · **GS2** · **GS3**

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Water Security for a Viksit Bharat

 **The Hindu** 18 June 2026 **GS2** **GS3**

Source: ujyari.com — researched, fact-checked & UPSC-mapped



INTERVIEW ANGLE

"India has built crores of water-recharge structures and tap connections. Why does per-capita water availability keep falling, and what would you do about demand?"

Source: [Original editorial](#)  [The Hindu](#)

 **Every fact web-verified against primary sources** (<https://ujyari.com/how-we-verify/>)

WHY THIS MATTERS NOW

Water has moved to the centre of India's development agenda. Through Jal Jeevan Mission's drive for household tap connections, Namami Gange's river restoration, and the Jal Sanchay Jan Bhagidari movement that has built around 1.55 crore recharge structures, the government has framed water as foundational to the Viksit Bharat goal. The achievements are substantial. But with per-capita water availability still declining and groundwater under severe stress, the case grows for treating water security as core infrastructure rather than a sectoral afterthought, and for matching supply expansion with serious demand management.

THE CRUX IN 60 WORDS

India's water missions, Jal Jeevan, Namami Gange and Jal Sanchay Jan Bhagidari with about 1.55 crore recharge structures, have expanded access and recharge impressively. Yet per-capita availability keeps falling and groundwater is over-extracted, mainly by agriculture. A Viksit Bharat needs water treated as foundational infrastructure, with supply gains matched by demand management, crop change and groundwater discipline.

THE ISSUE, DECODED

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ELEMENT	WHAT IT IS	WHY IT MATTERS
Jal Jeevan Mission	Drive for functional household tap connections	Expanded safe water access at large scale
Namami Gange	Integrated Ganga rejuvenation programme	Links water quality and river health to development
Jal Sanchay Jan Bhagidari	Participatory water-conservation movement	About 1.55 crore recharge structures built with community ownership
Demand and groundwater	Agricultural over-extraction and falling per-capita availability	The unresolved threat that supply-side gains alone cannot fix

THE ANALYSIS: SUPPLY BUILT, DEMAND NEGLECTED

- ❶ **The supply side has delivered.** Tap connections, recharge structures and river restoration represent genuine, large-scale progress.
- ❷ **Availability is still falling.** Rising population and consumption mean per-capita water availability declines despite the investment, pushing India toward water stress.
- ❸ **Agriculture is the swing factor.** The bulk of water goes to farming, much of it for water-intensive crops supported by subsidised power that drives groundwater depletion.
- ❹ **Aquifers cancel the gains.** Where extraction outpaces recharge, the silent loss of groundwater undoes much of the visible supply-side success.

DATA AND INSTITUTIONS VAULT

launched 2019, aims at functional household tap connections (Har Ghar Jal).

flagship integrated Ganga conservation mission under the National Mission for Clean Ganga.

participatory water-conservation drive; around 1.55 crore recharge structures.

scheme for participatory groundwater management in stressed areas.

per-capita annual availability below 1,700 cubic metres indicates water stress; below 1,000 indicates scarcity.

THE DEBATE

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The argument for supply focus: With enormous investment in tap connections and recharge already committed, the disciplined course is to complete those targets and consolidate access before expanding the agenda.

The argument for demand focus: Without curbing over-extraction and shifting cropping patterns, supply-side gains will keep leaking away. Building more structures over a falling water table treats the symptom, not the disease.

The balanced verdict: The two are complementary, not competing. Supply work should continue, but the binding constraint has shifted to demand. The decisive next step is to discipline how water is used, especially in agriculture, so that the supply already created is not quietly drained away.

HOW TO THINK ABOUT THIS (TRANSFERABLE SKILL)

When a problem persists despite heavy investment, suspect that the effort is concentrated on the wrong margin. India has invested on the supply margin while the binding constraint sits on the demand margin. The transferable skill is locating the true bottleneck before scaling spending, because money on the wrong margin buys activity, not outcomes.

DIAGRAM-IN-WORDS

Supply schemes (taps + recharge) -> more access -> but rising demand + groundwater over-extraction -> falling per-capita availability

The corrective loop: supply + demand management + crop change + groundwater regulation -> stable per-capita availability -> durable water security

THE WAY FORWARD

- 1 **Make demand management central**, with rational pricing of water and power to curb wasteful use.
- 2 **Drive crop diversification** away from paddy and sugarcane in water-scarce regions toward less thirsty crops.
- 3 **Regulate groundwater extraction** through metering, recharge mandates and strengthened participatory management.
- 4 **Scale reuse of treated wastewater** for agriculture and industry to ease pressure on fresh sources.

5 **Ensure scheme convergence** (<https://ujiyari.com/vocab/convergence/>) **and community**

ownership so water programmes reinforce one another and recharge structures are maintained for the long term.

THE TAKEAWAY BOX

Use in GS2 and GS3 answers on water governance, schemes, federal delivery and sustainable development (<https://ujiyari.com/terms/sustainable-development/>).

“A Viksit Bharat needs not just water delivered, but water that endures.”

Jal Jeevan Mission (2019), Namami Gange, Atal Bhujal Yojana, the 1.55 crore recharge-structures figure, the 1,700 cubic metre water-stress benchmark.

Intergenerational (<https://ujiyari.com/vocab/intergenerational/>) equity in resource use and the responsibility to manage a commons that markets alone do not protect.

Connects to past GS questions on water resources, river interlinking and groundwater management.

Atal Bhujal Yojana, river interlinking debates, the agriculture-water nexus (<https://ujiyari.com/vocab/nexus/>) and climate resilience.

Sources: *The Hindu* (<https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/>), **PIB** (<https://pib.gov.in/>)

Source: Water Security for a Viksit Bharat — Ujiyari.com | Free UPSC & State PCS Editorial Analysis

KEY ARGUMENTS AT A GLANCE

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Water security must be treated as core development infrastructure for a Viksit Bharat, but supply-side schemes alone cannot succeed without groundwater recovery and demand management.

✓ SUPPORTING

- Missions such as Jal Jeevan, Namami Gange and Jal Sanchay Jan Bhagidari, with around 1.55 crore recharge structures, have expanded access and recharge at scale.
- Despite this, per-capita water availability keeps declining as population and consumption rise, pushing India toward water stress.
- Groundwater over-extraction, especially for agriculture, undermines supply-side gains and threatens long-term security.

⚠ COUNTER

Some argue that with massive investment in tap connections and recharge already underway, the priority should be completing supply targets rather than diverting attention to demand.

→ WAY FORWARD

Pair supply expansion with aggressive demand management, crop diversification away from water-intensive crops, groundwater regulation, reuse of treated water and convergence across schemes.


MAINS ANSWER FRAMEWORK

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QUESTION

"Water security is foundational infrastructure for a developed India, yet supply-side gains are being undone by demand-side neglect." Critically examine. (250 words)

INTRODUCTION

A developed India, a Viksit Bharat, cannot rest on water-insecure foundations. Government missions have made water a national priority, from Jal Jeevan Mission's tap connections to Namami Gange's river restoration and the roughly 1.55 crore recharge structures built under participatory programmes. The achievement is real, but so is the warning that supply alone will not deliver security.

BODY

India's water effort has been overwhelmingly supply-focused, and on that front the gains are substantial: rural tap connections at scale, large-scale rainwater harvesting under Jal Sanchay Jan Bhagidari, and river rejuvenation through Namami Gange. Yet per-capita water availability continues to fall as population and consumption grow, and the country drifts toward water stress.

The core unresolved problem is demand. Agriculture consumes the bulk of India's water, much of it for water-intensive crops grown with subsidised power that encourages groundwater over-extraction.

Aquifers in large parts of the country are being drawn down faster than they recharge, quietly cancelling out the supply-side progress. Treating water as foundational development infrastructure therefore means more than building structures; it means managing how water is used.

That requires crop diversification away from paddy and sugarcane in water-scarce regions, rational pricing of water and power, regulation of groundwater extraction, large-scale reuse of treated wastewater, and genuine convergence across the many water schemes so they reinforce rather than duplicate. Participation matters too: community ownership, the spirit of jan bhagidari, is what makes recharge structures last.

CONCLUSION

The next phase of India's water story must shift from counting connections to securing the resource. A Viksit Bharat needs not just water delivered, but water that endures, which is impossible without disciplining demand.


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