



Politicians play blame game as PMC postpones decision on water cuts

Expect Verdict Today, Says Civic Chief

Radheshyam.Jadhav @timesgroup.com

Pune: It has been 11 days since the irrigation department asked the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC) to impose immediate water cuts to avoid severe crisis in the future. But the politicians and the civic authorities are passing the buck on each other as no one wants to take an unpopular decision.

Guardian minister Girish Bapat wants the PMC to take a call, but the PMC administration is waiting for a go ahead from mayor Dattatraya Dhanakwade, who is out of country.

On August 22, the irrigation department made a detailed presentation before the canal committee, which is headed by Bapat, and urged it to take an immediate call on cutting the city's supply. However, Bapat and other elected members deferred a decision without giving any substantial reason.

Dhanakwade's supporters in the ruling NCP said that no decision should be taken in the mayor's absence.

But deputy mayor Aba Bagul of the Congress had a different view. "The administration should not wait till the mayor returns. The situation is worsening and if we continue to delay (water cuts), the city may have to suffer in the next few months. I have made a written appeal to the municipal commissioner to impose cuts immediately," said Bagul, who asked the civic administration to take proactive steps to tide over

the crisis. "The administration need not wait for anyone's orders. Also, the political class must show some seriousness on this issue," said Bagul.

Ironically, Congress leaders in the PMC are against Bagul's suggestions. They said the deputy mayor was taking the initiative only to gain "credit" and "publicity". But Bagul denied the charge and said his detractors should have come forward to offer a solution.

The ruling NCP is not ready to take the blame. "The guardian minister is at the helm of affairs. Girish Bapat should have taken a call on the matter immediately after the irrigation department warned of an impending water crisis. During his tenure as guardian minister, Ajit Pawar made quick decisions. As a result, the city managed to

overcome a similar water crisis in the past," said NCP city chief and Rajya Sabha MP Vandana Chavan.

Chavan said the mayor has already submitted a letter to Bapat asking him to decide on implementing water cuts. The PMC will abide by Bapat's decision, she added.

"In my opinion, Bapat is not serious about the crisis and his dilly-dallying approach will cost the city heavily in the months to come," the NCP city chief added.

Meeting today

Pune municipal commissioner Kunal Kumar told media persons on Wednesday that he was planning to call a meeting of civic officials and elected members to decide on the contentious issue. "The meeting will be called on late Wednesday night or on Thursday. We will discuss the present storage situation in reservoirs and decide on water cuts," said Kumar.

Flying squad to check misuse of water, take action against offenders

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Pune: The civic administration has formed a flying squad to check water leakages in the city and take action against citizens, who are found wasting water. Water connections will be disconnected if anyone is found to misuse water, said PMC officials.

Civic officials said that the four dams — Khadakwasla, Temghar, Varasgaon and Panshet — have a stock of around 14 TMC. It is less than half of the cumulative capacity of the dams, which is more than 29 TMC. The announcement of water cuts is expected in a day or two. The city will get once-a-day supply.

The city gets around 1,250 MLD water every day. After implementing cuts, the city will get 1,100 MLD water. On an average, the city's monthly consumption is around 1.25 TMC, which will be reduced to 1 TMC. The city was getting 800 MLD water when alternate-day supply was in place.

During the rain-deficient June last year, the PMC had imposed once-a-day water supply. The water cuts were increased in July when the situation worsened.

WATER CUTS TODAY

Water supply in most parts of the city will be affected on Thursday due to repair work. Supply will resume late Friday morning with low pressure, a press statement issued by the PMC said

■ **Warje/SNDT water works** | Bhusari Colony, Shastrinagar, Bavdhan, Bhugaon Road, Sus Road, Baner, Balewadi, Pashan, Warje highway, Karve Road, Erandawane, Deccan, Jaibhavaninagar, Sutardara, Dahanukar Colony, Gandhi Bhavan, Mahatma Society, Warje, Model Colony, Law College Road, Gokhale Nagar, Bhonsale Nagar, Aundh, Bopodi and Khadki

■ **Wadgaon water works** | Sinhadgaon Road, Hingne, Wadgaon, Dhayari, Dhankawdi, Katraj, Anandnagar, Ambegaon Pathar, Santoshnagar, Kondhwa Budruk and Dattannagar areas

■ **Parvati water works** | All the 'Peth' areas, Dattawadi, Rajendranagar, Lokmanyanager, Deccan, Shivajinagar, Swargate, Parvati Darshan, Mukundnagar, Parvati village, Sahakarnagar, Satara Road, Bibewadi, Taljai, Katraj, Dhankawdi and Indiranagar

■ **Cantonment water works** | Pune Cantonment, Pune station, Koregaon Park, Tadiwala Road, Race course, Kondhwa, Hadapsar, Mundhwa, Yerawada, Vishrantwadi, Kalyaninagar, Wadgaonsheri, Chandannagar, Solapur Road, Gondhale Nagar and Satavwadi

■ **New Holkar water works** | Ahmednagar Road areas, Vimannagar, Dhanori, Kalas, Khadki and Vidyanagar



To report wastage

- (020)2550 1383 or (020)2550 1386
- SNDT (020)2550 1675
- Swargate (020)2550 8150, (020)2550 8163, (020)2550 8189
- Bund garden (020)2612 1453
- Cantonment (020)2550 6070

Guardian minister calls for careful use of resource

While the NCP wants guardian minister Girish Bapat to decide on imposing water cuts, Bapat shot back saying the PMC should take a call in the matter. "The availability of drinking water in Pune's reservoirs is much better

when compared with the situation in other parts of the state, but citizens will still have to make judicious use of water. The Pune Municipal Corporation has been asked to impose water cuts," said Bapat.

Speaking to TOI on Wednesday, Bapat said, "Dams providing water to city are holding about 14-15

TMC water. This quota is sufficient to meet the city's drinking water needs for a year. But this does not mean that we can continue with the existing twice a day supply. I have asked the municipal commissioner to call a meeting of concerned officers and elected members to decide on the matter."

Bapat said that a cut in supply is unavoidable. "The PMC will decide on providing once a day or alternate day supply. Now, there is no question of providing dam water for irrigation. As per the state's water policy, the first priority is given for drinking," he said, denying the charges leveled against him by the NCP chief.

GPS tracking of tankers awaits monitoring staff

Prasad Kulkarni @timesgroup.com

Pune: The Pune Municipal Corporation's (PMC) plan to track water tankers using the global positioning system (GPS) to prevent diversion of drinking water for commercial purposes is yet to take off, as the civic body has not appointed the staff required to monitor the tankers.

Civic activists have been calling for GPS-fitted tankers since 2012, when water cuts owing to an erratic monsoon led to a surge in demand for drinking water tankers, especially from the city's fringe areas. Activists have said that in the absence of a monitoring system, the corporation has no way of finding out whether water tankers meant for common citizens are being misused.

This year, too, the city is starting at prolonged water cuts because of deficient rainfall, and demand for water tankers is bound to rise.

"We had directed all tanker owners to install GPS in their tankers, without which they would not be allowed to operate. Most of the tanker owners have followed the orders. Now, the process of appointing staff to man the tanker-filling points is under way. These employees will also monitor the tankers and will have to be trained to handle the GPS mechanism," V G Kulkarni, head of the PMC's water department, told TOI.

PMC has around 80 water tankers, including those operated by private contractors appointed to supplement the corporation's own fleet. "The civic body owns 16 water tankers, all of which have GPS," Kulkarni said.

Activists have demanded that the work of hiring the staff be expedited. "This year's poor rainfall will lead to more demand for tankers.



Almost all tanker owners have fitted their vehicles with GPS

Tracking system for garbage trucks soon

The civic administration plans to install a tracking system in all vehicles used by the solid waste management department to monitor the time garbage is collected and disposed. In the second phase of the project, vehicles used by other civic departments will also be fitted with GPS.

The administration had set aside Rs 1 crore for this. Apart from 16 water tankers, the PMC has 997 vehicles in separate depots, which are used by the solid waste management, health, water supply and other departments. The solid waste management department has 475 garbage-lifting vehicles. Vehicles of political leaders and senior officials are also maintained at these depots.

Citizens and activists have repeatedly complained about wasteful use of PMC-owned vehicles that have been allocated to civic departments, officials and people's representatives.

GPS monitoring should start with immediate effect," said Vivek Velankar, founder of a citizens' group Sajag Nagrik Manch. The organisation had earlier also complained that four of the seven tanker-filling stations did not have proper metering systems. Kulkarni, however, has said that the metering system has now been upgraded.

This immersion, NCL's solution for Ganesh idols has its appeal

Meenakshi.Rohatgi @timesgroup.com

Pune: In a lean monsoon season, austerity measures in using water for immersion of Ganesh idols, are in order.

People who take thousands of idols to the rivers that run through the city and Pimpri Chinchwad and to other water bodies can choose to go with Pune Municipal Corporation and National Chemical Laboratory's (NCL) 'green alternative'

The 'Jal-Abhishek', a liquid solution the NCL has come up with, can dissolve idols made of Plaster of Paris (PoP), leaving a re-usable fertilizer and sludge.

This may save the city's water bodies from being polluted further and save the water in the reservoirs which are just half full.

"Normally, people immerse idols after the festival in flowing water, but when this is not available, idols are immersed in stagnant water and disintegration does not take place and pollutants accumulate," said Mohan Dongare, former NCL scientist and director of research and development at Moji Engineering.

The solution helps dis-

IN THE LOOP

The Dagdusheth Halwai Ganapati Trust has formed a group called Ganesh Vyaspeeth along with other mandals and is spreading awareness among 1,000 mandals. The cost of the pilot project used to demonstrate how Jal Abhishek works was Rs 1.5 lakh. The pilot plant could dissolve five small idols at a time. Engineering and design was done by Moji engineering, technical know-how led by NCL and research and funding assistance by Cummins corporate responsibility arm

solve around 200 small PoP idols in three hours. The raw materials are cheap and water is used in lesser quantities, said Dongare.

"A 20% solution of ammonium bicarbonate will be used for one kg of ammonium bicarbonate, five litres of water will be added which can dissolve one kg of PoP idol to form ammonium sulphate — a fertilizer and calcium carbonate," he explained.

The project was started last year, but the results were visible this August when various mandals were shown demonstrations.

"The idols, the paint and



The new method may also help cut down on dam water discharge into the river

nirmalya (floral offerings) pollute water bodies and additional water has to be used to wash them off," added an MPCB official.

Vivek Velankar, president Sajag Nagrik Manch, said every year, almost 2TMC water has to be released from Khadakwasla dam for immersion. Instead, this could be used for two months for drinking water needs.

He said the initiative had come just when people have begun to understand the value of water. "Perceptions have to change. The immersion at our place is in a bucket and the idol is put away for

use for the next year," he added.

Col (ret) Shashikant Dalvi, a rainwater harvesting expert, said, "Reservoirs are now filled with silt. Also, the rains may withdraw by September 15. As such every drop counts. Big Ganapati mandals should take the initiative and evangelize this concept so that people realize their role in saving water and the environment."

Dalvi added that though this 'dissolving' method through Jal Abhishek may have slow acceptance, people should be encouraged to move to 'shadu' or clay idols from PoP which forms much of the city's idols every year.

The Dagdusheth Halwai Ganapati Mandal is taking the technique to the people. "We are working with other mandals and holding workshops with schools to spread the message. The acceptance will increase and maybe next year or the year after, immersion will require very less water," said Mahesh Suryawanshi, treasurer of the trust.

Since most PoP idols which are immersed are smaller, home idols, the message has to reach common people, he added. A banner at the Mandal during the festival will take it to the people.

MANS will switch to watchdog role

Radheshyam.Jadhav @timesgroup.com

Pune: From campaigning for 20 years against immersing Ganesh idols in rivers, to its role as a pressure group now, Maharashtra Andhashraddha Nirmulan Samiti has done much to save water bodies.

Along the way, the samiti's founder Narendra Dabholkar has been criticized by people who claimed he was "interfering" with religion. Religious groups have opposed the samiti with the argument that the city has abundant water and there was little to worry about its availability or pollution.

Today, when a drought is looming large over the state and every drop of water counts, MANS members will act as watchdogs.

"Our members will stand at 'visarjan ghats' coaxing people to donate the idols to them instead of immersing

TAKING DABHOLKAR'S LEGACY FORWARD

not collect idols. Instead, we will watch if the local bodies follow these directives," said MANS executive president Avinash Patil.

The samiti will write to municipal commissioners to ensure that civic bodies ar-

range for small temporary tanks for immersion and encourage idol donations. The day Dabholkar was shot dead on August 20, 2013, he was going to announce a slew of measures for an environment-friendly Ganeshotsav.

"The local bodies must

save the water bodies from pollution. We will continue to appeal to people not to immerse the idols in water bodies that are drinking sources. Instead, they should donate or immerse them in makeshift tanks constructed by the civic bodies," said Avinash Patil.

Ganesh idols made from Plaster of Paris do not degrade easily. The colours contain toxic chemicals like lead and mercury. The dumping of Ganesh idols block the flow of water which leads to stagnation and breeding of mosquitoes and other harmful pests, the organisation said.

Ready to meet FTII students, says Rathore

Rupali.Shukla @timesgroup.com

Pune: Minister of state for information and broadcasting (I&B) Rajyavardhan Rathore has conveyed to FTII director Prashant Pathrabhe that he is willing to meet the students who have been on strike for the last 83 days to resolve the issue. The minister last met some student representatives on July 3 in New Delhi.

The students on Tuesday had written to Rathore seeking fresh talks to end the impasse.

"The students have been told to revise their demands. Rathore has not said whether he will come to the FTII campus or student representatives will be called to Delhi," a source in the FTII administration said.

Pathrabhe, who is in Delhi to meet I&B officials, did not take calls but his office confirmed that Rathore was interested in meeting the students.

"The director informed us on Tuesday evening that the minister has agreed to meet us. But we have got no written intimation," said FTII students' association president Harishankar Nachimuthu.

Meanwhile, the S M Khan-led delegation has submitted its report on the FTII to the I&B ministry, but the latter refused to give details of the findings.

"The delegation submitted the report on Tuesday night. The ministry officials and Rathore will look at the report. We cannot divulge the recommendations made by the delegation at this point of time as the findings will have a wider impact," a ministry source said.

The three-member delegation had visited FTII on August 21 to assess the

'Calculating per student expenditure is impossible'

Chief accounting officer at the FTII Ujjawala Dhekne on Wednesday said though the institute follows the Government Accounting Rules, 1990, there is no way the administration or the ministry can calculate the expenditure incurred on each student.

"The ministry calculated the expenses according to the grants they give and divided it by the number of students. That's their perspective. But there is no set rule to calculate the expenditure," she said.

The I&B ministry had earlier said it incurs Rs 12 lakh on each student at the institute.

ground reality and talk to the agitating students and other stakeholders to find solutions to resolve the issue.

Following the visit, the delegation sought three extensions to prepare its report.

A delegation member said they have done their job and it was up to the ministry to share the details of the report.

"We have been patiently waiting for the findings of the report for the last 10 days," FTII students' representative Vikas Urs said.

"The ministry should consider that our time is precious and each passing day is just adding to our pain and anguish. The administration has also denied giving us a copy of the minutes or the video recordings of our meeting with the three-member delegation. There needs to be some transparency."

Students' films denied screening

Continued from Page 1

Sharma, along with other filmmakers, was curating the FTII films package too.

Sharma said this is for the first time that the FD has cancelled the screening of films made by FTII students. "FD even screens films which do not have the censor board's certificate," she said.

The screenings have now been shifted to a private auditorium in Prabhadevi in Mumbai.

Three short films made by the FTII students, based on their agitation, were to be screened at the FD on Friday. A five-minute documentary on the agitation, 'Strike: Day 70', based on a song, was also screened. The documentary has been made by filmmaker Anand Patwardhan and Simantini Dhuru.

Students said cancelling the screening just confirms their fears about governmental control. "FD is a hub where cinema is discussed and learnt. We have not been told about the reasons for not screening our films. For years, FTII films have been screened at the FD and now the government is controlling that too. The films which were to be screened on Friday were just students' perspectives and did not even speak directly about the strike," said FTII alumnus Yashasvi Mishra.

UPSC student commits suicide

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Pune: A 22-year-old student from Beed district who was preparing for the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) examination in the city allegedly hanged himself from the ceiling of his room in Dattawadi area on Wednesday afternoon.

The Dattawadi police have identified the deceased as Vishal Bhagwat Munde. Police said prima facie investigations have revealed Munde ended his life as he could not bear the pressure of the examination.

"We did not find any note on him or in his room," said an officer from the Dattawadi police station.

The police said Munde had come to the city around four months ago to prepare



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for UPSC exam. He was staying in a rented room in Gurukrupa society in Dattawadi with three others.

"On Wednesday morning, Munde and his friends went to a study centre. Munde returned to his room around 11.30am for lunch. After some time, when his friends came to the room, they found him hanging from the ceiling," the police officer said.

The police officer said Munde was rushed to a nearby hospital, where he was declared dead.

One of Munde's roommates said Munde is survived by his parents and a younger brother. "His father is an autorickshaw driver. Munde had completed his graduation and BE. He wanted to become the district collector," the roommate said.