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## Water Supply in Chennai

Chennai faces significant challenges in water supply, with municipal sources meeting only about half the city's needs. Water availability varies across neighborhoods, with areas closer to storage points receiving more water. The burden of shortages primarily affects the poor, while wealthier residents cope through private means such as borewells, water tankers, and bottled water. Access to safe drinking water also depends on affordability, leading to inequalities in water quality and quantity.

Time Period / Year	Event / Change	Importance
2007	Andhra Pradesh High Court recognized right to safe drinking water as Fundamental Right	Mandated government responsibility to provide safe water to all citizens

Recent years	Expansion of private water tankers in Chennai	Fills municipal water shortages but raises concerns about equitable access and groundwater depletion
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## Exam Questions

**Q1:** What are the main sources of water for households in Chennai?

**Answer:** Municipal water supply, private borewells, water tankers, and bottled water.

**Q2:** Why do different areas in Chennai receive varying amounts of water?

**Answer:** Areas closer to water storage points receive more water, while distant colonies get less due to distribution limitations.

## Water as a Fundamental Right

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Water is essential for life and health. The Indian Constitution recognizes the right to water as part of the Right to Life under Article 21, entitling every person to sufficient, safe, accessible, and affordable water. Courts have upheld this right, directing authorities to ensure water supply even in cases of contamination or shortage.

“... right to water entitles everyone to sufficient, safe, acceptable, physically accessible and affordable water for personal and domestic use”

— United Nations (2002)

## Exam Questions

**Q1:** Under which constitutional provision is the right to water recognized in India?

**Answer:** Article 21, the Right to Life.

**Q2:** What are the characteristics of the right to water?

**Answer:** Sufficient quantity, safety, physical accessibility, and affordability.

## Public Facilities and Government Responsibility

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Public facilities such as water, healthcare, sanitation, electricity, and education are essential for meeting basic needs. The government bears the primary responsibility to provide these facilities equitably and affordably. Private companies may participate but the government must regulate and ensure universal access. Public facilities benefit many people and are crucial for social welfare and development.

### Exam Questions

**Q1:** Why must the government be responsible for providing public facilities?

**Answer:** Because public facilities serve basic needs and may not be profitable for private companies, and the government ensures equitable access for all citizens.

**Q2:** Can private companies provide public facilities? What is the government's role then?

**Answer:** Yes, private companies can provide some facilities, but the government must regulate and ensure affordability and universal access.

## Water Shortage, Inequality, and Private Supply

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Water shortages in Chennai and other Indian cities have led to increased reliance on private water suppliers. This has resulted in inequalities where the poor receive less water and often of lower quality. Private water extraction from rural areas has caused groundwater depletion, affecting agriculture and drinking water in villages. The disparity in water consumption ranges from less than 20 litres per person in slums to over 1,600 litres in luxury hotels.

## Exam Questions

**Q1:** What are the consequences of private water supply in Chennai?

**Answer:** Increased water prices, unequal access, groundwater depletion, and hardship for the poor.

**Q2:** How does water consumption vary among different social groups in Chennai?

**Answer:** Slum dwellers use less than 20 litres per person per day, while wealthy residents may use up to 1,600 litres.

## Sanitation and Health

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Sanitation facilities are crucial for preventing waterborne diseases. In India, only about 53% of households have access to sanitation. Organizations like Sulabh have worked to improve sanitation for the poor by constructing community and household toilets. Proper sanitation reduces disease spread and improves public health, especially for vulnerable groups.

## Exam Questions

**Q1:** Why is sanitation important for health?

**Answer:** It prevents contamination and spread of waterborne diseases like cholera and dysentery.

**Q2:** What role has Sulabh played in improving sanitation?

**Answer:** Constructed community toilet blocks and household toilets, improving access for poor communities.

## Electricity and Public Transport

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Electricity access has improved significantly, with rural electrification reaching 96% by 2022. Public transport, including buses and suburban railways, is vital for urban mobility but faces challenges like overcrowding and insufficient infrastructure. Efficient public transport supports economic activity and reduces congestion.

### Exam Questions

**Q1:** What is the importance of rural electrification?

**Answer:** It improves quality of life, education, health, and economic opportunities.

**Q2:** What challenges do public transport systems face in Indian cities?

**Answer:** Overcrowding, insufficient vehicles, and infrastructure limitations.

## Sustainable Development Goals Related to Water and Cities

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The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) include Goal 6: Clean Water and Sanitation, and Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities. These goals emphasize universal access to clean water, sanitation, and sustainable urban development to improve health, equity, and environmental protection.

## Exam Questions

**Q1:** What does SDG Goal 6 focus on?

**Answer:** Ensuring availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.

**Q2:** Why is sustainable urban development important?

**Answer:** To create inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable cities that provide good living conditions for all residents.

## Government Budget and Financing Public Facilities

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The government finances public facilities through tax revenues and borrowing. The Union Budget allocates funds to various sectors including interest payments, state shares, central schemes, defense, subsidies, and pensions. Taxes such as GST, income tax, and corporation tax are major revenue sources. Efficient use of funds is essential to provide and maintain public facilities.

## Exam Questions

**Q1:** What are the main sources of government revenue?

**Answer:** Taxes (GST, income tax, corporation tax), borrowings, and non-tax revenues.

**Q2:** Why is government spending important for public facilities?

**Answer:** It funds the development and maintenance of essential services like water, education, and health.

## Conclusion

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Public facilities are essential for meeting basic needs and are recognized as part of the Right to Life in the Indian Constitution. The government has the responsibility to ensure equitable access to these facilities. Despite progress, shortages and inequalities persist, especially affecting the poor. Sustainable solutions require government commitment, regulation, and public participation to ensure universal access and conservation of resources.

## Solved Examples

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**Example 1:** Explain why water supply is unequal in Chennai.

**Solution:** Water supply is unequal due to proximity to storage points, infrastructure limitations, and socio-economic disparities. Wealthier areas have better access and can afford private sources, while poorer areas face shortages.

**Example 2:** Describe the role of the government in providing public facilities.

**Solution:** The government funds, regulates, and ensures equitable access to public facilities like water, sanitation, education, and health, as private companies may not serve all citizens affordably.

## Practice Set

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## Easy

- What is meant by universal access to water?
- Name two public facilities other than water.

## Moderate

- Explain how private water supply affects poor communities.
- Why is sanitation important for public health?

## Challenging

- Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of privatizing water supply.
- How can sustainable development goals help improve urban water and sanitation?

## Answer Key

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- **Universal access to water** means everyone has physical access and can afford sufficient, safe water.
- **Other public facilities** include healthcare, education, electricity, and sanitation.
- **Private water supply** often raises prices and limits access for the poor, increasing inequality.
- **Sanitation** prevents disease spread by safely disposing of human waste.
- **Privatizing water supply** can improve efficiency but may reduce affordability and access for the poor.
- **SDGs** promote universal access, sustainability, and equity in water and sanitation services.

## Quick Reference

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- **Right to Water:** Part of Right to Life under Article 21.

- **Public Facilities:** Essential services provided by government for all.
- **Water Shortage:** Unequal distribution affects poor disproportionately.
- **Sanitation:** Key to preventing waterborne diseases.
- **Government Role:** Funding, regulation, and ensuring equity.
- **SDGs:** Global goals for clean water, sanitation, and sustainable cities.

## Glossary

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- **Sanitation:** Facilities for safe disposal of human waste to prevent contamination.
- **Company:** Business entity, private or government-owned.
- **Universal Access:** Everyone can physically access and afford a good or service.
- **Basic Needs:** Essential requirements like food, water, shelter, sanitation, healthcare, and education.
- **Fundamental Right:** Rights guaranteed by the Constitution to all citizens.
- **Municipal Water Supply:** Water provided by city authorities through pipelines.
- **Water Tanker:** Vehicle used to transport and supply water where pipelines are insufficient.
- **Right to Life:** Constitutional right ensuring dignified living conditions.