

## Water woes

Global water use has grown at twice the rate of population growth over the past century. The head of the Food and Agriculture Organization has said that two out of three human beings face severe water scarcity for at least part of the year. Climate change will further complicate matters. Cape Town has come perilously close to being the first major city to run out of water.

These sobering facts deserve attention on World Water Day. India has ample reason to worry. We already have less water per person than large developing nations such as China and Brazil, well before our population has peaked. Perverse policies have not helped either. The provision of free electricity has led to the overuse of groundwater. In many Indian cities with water scarcity, the poor pay more than privileged citizens for water. The solutions have to be a combination of social, economic and technological responses. India cannot maintain either economic growth or social stability unless extreme water stress is avoided—a difficult but not impossible task, going by the Israeli experience.

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