Shimla in the throes of a water crisis
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More than half a dozen districts and Himachal Pradesh’s capital Shimla are facing a severe drinking water crisis these days.

Due to deficient precipitation during winter, the major water sources have either gone fully or partially dry. And despite a number of small and big rivers flowing through the State, successive governments have done nothing to lift water from these perennial sources.

VVIP areas
Facing one of the worst crises, residents of the capital are getting drinking water supply after four to five days in the majority of localities. It is only the VVIP areas that are getting either regular or every alternate day supply from the Bharatiya Janata Party-controlled municipal corporation.

But hundreds of city hotels, which are packed to capacity because of the peak summer tourist season, are facing no water scarcity amid allegations of diversion in pipe lines with the connivance of the lower-level municipal staff.

Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Jai Ram Thakur had also called a meeting with the Irrigation and Public Health staff and the municipal authorities and directed them to send tankers to the main town and its suburbs where there is acute shortage of drinking water. The State government has also released a toll-free number for the general public for registering their complaints.

Poor management
That High Court has also taken cognisance of the drinking water shortage and directed the Assistant Solicitor General to file an affidavit on the status of water augmentation schemes pending with the Centre and steps being taken regarding the delay in implementation. The court observed that there was no scarcity of water in the hill State, but it was poor management that was responsible for the drinking water shortage year after year.

The State Committee of CPI (M) has also criticised the “mismanagement” by the incumbent BJP-led municipal corporation in delivering drinking water to the town. Former Mayor of CPI(M) Sanjay Chauhan said the town had never suffered such a situation in the past five years when the municipal corporation was controlled by the Left leaders and water was never diverted to the posh localities or commercial hotels at the cost of ordinary residents of the town.