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## State government sanctions Rs. 5 crore for drought relief

Special Correspondent

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VELLORE: The Tamil Nadu government has sanctioned a sum of Rs. five crore as the first instalment of drought relief to Vellore district, out of the Rs. 14 crore sought by the district administration, to enable the various local bodies to undertake immediate measures to tide over the drinking water scarcity in the light of the deficiency in rainfall and the consequent drying up of the drinking water sources in the Palar river, according to C. Rajendran, Collector of Vellore. Of this amount, Rs. three crore has been allotted to the panchayat unions, Rs.95 lakh to the municipalities, Rs.75 lakh to the town panchayats and Rs.30 lakh to the Vellore Corporation, he said.

Talking to newsmen after holding a meeting with the Block Development Officers (BDOs) of 20 panchayat unions, Commissioner of the Vellore Corporation, Commissioners of 13 municipalities and executive officers of 22 town panchayats in the district at the Collectorate here on Sunday, Mr. Rajendran said that the rainfall received by Vellore district this year was 32% less than the normal rainfall till this part of the year. Consequent to the government sanctioning an immediate interim drought relief amount of Rs. five crore, he conducted the meeting in order to identify the priority areas in the various local bodies requiring immediate attention in drought relief so that the grant could be disbursed to them based on their proposals. Among the 20 panchayat unions in Vellore district, Gudiyatham, K.V. Kuppam, Natrampalli, Kandhili, Tirupattur, Nemili and Jolarpet panchayat unions and parts of Alangayam panchayat

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union were badly affected by the drought. Of the 22 town panchayats, the town panchayats of Katpadi, Gandhinagar, Kazhinjur, Allapuram and Thorappadi were badly affected, while among the 13 municipalities in the district, the Tharapadavedu Third Grade Municipality was badly affected.

The Collector said that the BDOs, executive officers and commissioners of the affected panchayat unions, town panchayats and municipalities have been asked to identify the priority water scarcity areas and submit proposals for drought relief measures based on the immediate needs. They have also been asked to take steps on a war-footing, to execute the various works in order to overcome the drinking water problem and alleviate the sufferings of the people. He said that the Deputy Chief Minister M.K. Stalin had announced in the Assembly that if necessary, more funds would be sanctioned for drought relief to Vellore district. The officials have been asked to cut the drinking water supply to bulk consumers such as marriage halls, hotels and lodges, and divert the supply to the residential areas in all local bodies facing acute drinking water scarcity. They have also been asked to seize motors and disconnect the water connection of all consumers who were found to be resorting to the practice of illegal tapping of water using motors.

Mr. Rajendran said that the Sathuvachari Third Grade Municipality, which was having surplus supply, has agreed to supply 22 lakh litres per day (LLD) to the Vellore Corporation. The latter has agreed to supply 10 LLD to the Allapuram town panchayat, which in turn has agreed to supply three LLD to the Thorappadi town panchayat. The work on the sinking of additional wells under the Allapuram-Thorappadi Integrated Drinking Water Supply Scheme in the Palar River would be over in another one month and the supply to these town panchayats increased. Thanks to the gesture of Sathuvachari Municipality, Vellore Corporation and Allapuram town panchayat, it would be possible to increase the frequency of water supply in Thorappadi town panchayat from once in 25 days to once in 10 days, he said.

Earlier participating in the meeting, the Collector asked the Commissioner of Vellore Corporation P. Kubendran to reduce the duration of water supply from two hours to one hour so that the frequency of water supply could be increased from once a week or 10 days to once in four days. Similar instructions were also given to the authorities of the municipalities and town panchayats.