Low soil moisture: 47.2% of India under dry or drought conditions

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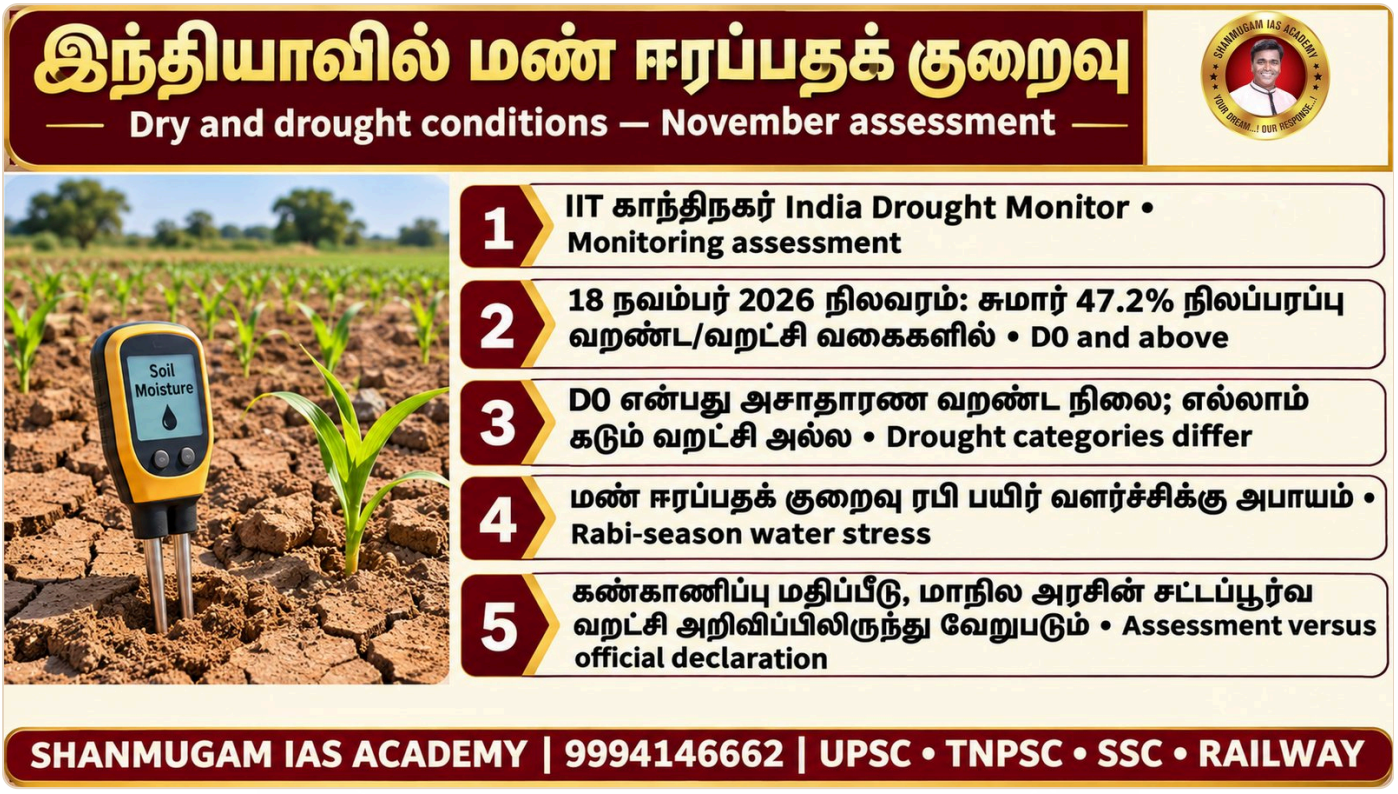

News

The India Drought Monitor run by IIT Gandhinagar shows 47.2% of India's area under dry or drought conditions (as of 18 Nov 2026, reported 23 Nov 2026). A forecast by IIT Bombay researchers for 9 Nov – 6 Dec shows unusually low soil moisture in parts of north-east India. The 2026 monsoon ended about 13% below the long-period average, the fourth-driest since 2001 (759.4 mm against a long-period average of 868.6 mm). Rabi sowing stood at 17.83 million hectares as of 13 Nov, against 20.10 million hectares a year earlier.

Key facts for the exam

Point	Details
Area under dry/drought	47.2% (18 Nov 2026)
Monsoon 2026	About 13% below normal
Rabi area sown	17.83 Mha (last year 20.10 Mha)
States declaring drought	Maharashtra, Karnataka, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Rajasthan (several districts each)

Background

- Types of drought: meteorological (low rainfall), hydrological (low rivers, reservoirs and groundwater), agricultural (low soil moisture for crops) and socio-economic.
- Rabi crops (wheat, mustard, gram) are sown in October–December and depend on soil moisture left by the monsoon and on winter rain. India's Manual for Drought Management (2016) guides drought declaration.

Tamil Nadu link: In January 2017 Tamil Nadu declared all its districts drought-hit after the north-east monsoon failed badly in 2016, one of the worst in about 140 years.

Frequently asked questions

What is this news about?

The India Drought Monitor run by IIT Gandhinagar shows 47.2% of India's area under dry or drought conditions (as of 18 Nov 2026, reported 23 Nov 2026). A forecast by IIT Bombay researchers for 9 Nov – 6 Dec shows unusually low soil moisture in parts of north-east India.

What are the key facts to remember for the exam?

Area under dry/drought: 47.2% (18 Nov 2026); Monsoon 2026: About 13% below normal; Rabi area sown: 17.83 Mha (last year 20.10 Mha); States declaring drought: Maharashtra, Karnataka, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Rajasthan (several districts each).

What is the background to this news?

Types of drought: meteorological (low rainfall), hydrological (low rivers, reservoirs and groundwater), agricultural (low soil moisture for crops) and socio-economic.

Practice questions (with answers)

1. Which institute runs the India Drought Monitor?

A) IIT Madras

B) IIT Gandhinagar

C) IMD, Pune

D) ICAR-CRIDA, Hyderabad

Answer: B – Explanation: It maps drought using soil moisture, rainfall and other data.

2. As of 18 Nov 2026, what share of India's area was under dry or drought conditions?

A) 47.2%

B) 13%

C) 62.5%

D) 27.4%

Answer: A – Explanation: The 2026 monsoon was about 13% below normal (fourth-driest since 2001). Rabi sowing was 17.83 Mha against 20.10 Mha a year earlier.

3. Drought caused by too little soil moisture for crops is called:

A) Agricultural drought

B) Socio-economic drought

C) Hydrological drought

D) Meteorological drought

Answer: A – Explanation: Meteorological drought = low rainfall; hydrological = low rivers, reservoirs and groundwater. The Manual for Drought Management (2016) guides declarations.

4. Which of the following is a rabi crop?

A) Soybean

B) Mustard

C) Cotton

D) Paddy (kuruvai)

Answer: B – Explanation: Rabi crops (wheat, mustard, gram) are sown in Oct–Dec and depend on soil moisture left by the monsoon; cotton and soybean are kharif crops.

5. When did Tamil Nadu declare all its districts drought-hit after the 2016 north-east monsoon failed?

A) December 2015

B) January 2019

C) January 2017

D) January 2013

Answer: C – Explanation: The 2016 north-east monsoon was one of the worst in about 140 years. December 2015 saw the great Chennai floods.