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Caution on water release for drinking purpose

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MADURAI: The commencement of irrigation season has put Public Works Department officials in a tight spot in releasing water from the Periyar dam to replenish the Vaigai dam for meeting the drinking water needs of Madurai city.

The Corporation has managed alternate day of water supply in the city throughout the summer with water drawn at regular intervals from Periyar dam. However, the PWD has stopped discharging water from Periyar dam since June 1 as the irrigation season for the first crop of the double crop area of Cumbum Valley began.

Out of the 192 mcft of water in Vaigai dam, the 90-mcft is the useful storage. Corporation Chief Engineer, K. Sakthivel said that the present storage could last till June 27.

Meanwhile, the local body on Friday renewed its demand to augment storage in Vaigai dam with Periyar water. But, the PWD officials are waiting for the Government nod to discharge water. "We have to release water for irrigation on or after June 1 as and when the level reaches 112 feet. The ryots may object to the water release (for drinking purpose) at present saying that it would jeopardise their interest. We have to get Government's clearance," a PWD engineer said.

Besides, the PWD officials are wary of immediate release as they fear that adequate quantum of water might not reach Vaigai reservoir after passing through the dry riverbed from Periyar dam.