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GOAL OF BRINGING PIPED DRINKING WATER TO EVERY HOUSEHOLD WILL BE A REVOLUTIONARY STEP: UNION JAL SHAKTI MINISTER

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Ministry of Jal Shakti

Goal of bringing piped drinking water to every household will be a revolutionary step: Union Jal Shakti Minister

India will surely become Open Defecation Free by 2nd October 2019: Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat

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“The four pillars of water security are water conservation, judicious use of water, water reuse and use of technology. There is a need for Jan Charcha as well as Jan Andolan to achieve this goal. We are moving rapidly on interlinking of rivers. The goal of bringing piped drinking water to every household will be a revolutionary step for the nation. We will surely make India open-defecation free by 2nd October, 2019. Before 2021 Kumbh, Ganga will be clean from Gangotri to Haridwar. Together, we can make India a water-secure nation”. This was stated by the Union Minister for Jal Shakti, Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, while addressing a gathering of domestic and international investors. The Minister was delivering the keynote address on the topic “Challenges in Indian Waters: Past, Present and Aspirations for a Better Future", at the 15th Annual Global Investor Conference today, being organized by Motilal Oswal Group in Mumbai.

Following are some excerpts from the Minister’s address:

“The time has come for us to teach future generations of the need to conserve water like we save money.

The nation gets 3,000 billion cubic metres (bcm) of water every year through rainfall and through other means such as from glaciers; out of this, we are able to collect only 8%. Total capacity of our reservoirs is 250 bcm, while total water bearing capacity over the surface is around 320 bcm. The largest water reservoir is our earth itself. We fill ground water aquifers at the rate of 458 bcm per year, while we extract around 650 bcm of water from the earth. India is the country which withdraws the largest quantity of underground water.

In our country, agriculture is the largest consumer of water. 89% is being used by agriculture, out of which 65% is being withdrawn from under the ground. Industry too obtains around 80% of water from underground sources. Our biggest challenge today is how we can conserve ground water.

Water was a subject which was being dealt by almost nine Ministries; the work of these various

Ministries has been integrated and brought under the Ministry of Jal Shakti. The Prime Minister talked about the importance of water conservation in his Mann Ki Baat episode on 30th June, 2019. Through his address to the nation, the PM ushered in a transformation in the public discourse and thought process of the society, replacing talk of water crisis and threat of drought with a conversation on the importance and need for water conservation and water security.

18% of world population and around 20% of world's livestock population are in India, while only 4% of world's potable water is in India. Moreover, among 170 countries, India ranks in bottom 10 or 11 in Water Quality Index. A very big challenge is in front of us.

Israel came up with the technique of drip irrigation by looking at the desert for solutions to the problem of water security. Israel is now a water-secure nation and a water-exporting nation too. It should give us food for thought as to why India does not come up with such solutions, despite getting much more rainfall than Israel does.

There has been erratic episodes of rainfall in recent times and given our inability to conserve water, our challenge is water management. Even a poor country like Cambodia is a water-secure nation due to efforts of Sharmila Oswal.

Nations which have become water-secure have adopted four principles of water management. **One: conservation of water.** We are blessed with 1068 mm rainfall. We need to work towards conserving maximum water.

The second aspect is judicious use of water. India's agriculture is among the least efficient users of water in the world. On an average, 5,600 litres of water is consumed in producing 1 kg of rice, while China does the same using 355 litres. Combining rice and wheat, we are the largest producer of food grains in the world. 2 crore tons of surplus rice is produced every year, after its use for domestic consumption and exports. Can we accept this, that 11,200 crore cubic metres of water is being wasted every year?

In Maharashtra, 80 percent of irrigation water is consumed in sugarcane production. We have to think whether we have to produce so much sugarcane. I compliment the state government for taking the decision to make drip irrigation compulsory for sugarcane production.

We are committed to double farmers' income by the year 2022, but at the same time, we need to encourage our farmers to become more responsible, through steps such as crop diversification and judicious use of water and electricity. Punjab has started incentivizing farmers who save electricity. Besides agriculture, industry and households too should use water judiciously.

The third pillar is reuse of water. Israel reuses 80% of water, while Sweden reuses around 40%. Speaking of India, even our treatment capacity is less than 30%. Industry should take the responsibility to reuse and recycle water. The ideal way is to use treated water flowing through canals in farms, however, the whole world is doing the opposite, taking and using clean water from the ground and discharging dirty water in rivers. Negav desert of Israel is an example of transformation; the desert feeds the whole of Europe with treated water and has today become the Europe's vegetable bowl. Transformation is possible; for instance, the HPCL Mathura refinery used to consume 2 crore litres of water per day from the Yamuna river; on being asked to reuse and recycle, the refinery has started to use treated water, thereby saving 2 crore litres of water per day.

Use of technology is the fourth pillar. All the above are possible through use of technology. We have to reduce the proportion of non-revenue water - i.e. water which is produced but not billed as it does not reach the destination. The percentage of non-

revenue water in india is more than 40%, this has to be reduced.

We have to fight a war against the culture of using RO water purifiers. We collected samples from Delhi and tasted and all of them were found to be better than European drinking water. RO water is used because people do not have trust in the system. We do not need RO machines, one UV filter is sufficient for treating small contamination. Doctors too need to speak about consequences of consuming RO water.

Need Jal Andolan as well as Jan Charcha

We have to keep aside one day and one hour every week for discussing and contributing to water conservation. The Prime Minister wrote to 2.5 lakh sarpanchs in 12 languages, asking them to discuss ways to save water by holding a Gram Sabha exclusively on this subject. The PM's invocation was met with a very positive response.

There are various success stories on water conservation and augmentation of water security. Rajasthan's water table has gone up by 5 feet, due to the concerted efforts of various stakeholders in the state. All of us need to become a part of the movement towards water security. We need to save water for our future. Hivre Bajar in Maharashtra is also a similar example.

We are moving rapidly on interlinking of rivers, which is indeed necessary. 31 links have been identified and work is being taken up on them. There is a need for support from states; consensus has been arrived among some states, work is on to obtain a broader consensus.

The PM spoke on the goal of bringing piped drinking water to all households. This will be a revolutionary step for the nation. The Centre and the states will together spend 3.5 lakh crore rupees to take drinking water to every home. This initiative will play a big role in making India a 5 trillion dollar economy. Source sustainability, water distribution and optimum reuse of water will lead to water sustainability.

We have already achieved 99.28% of the goal of making India open-defecation free by 2nd October 2019, the 150th birth anniversary of the father of the nation. We will surely achieve the goal of making India 100% ODF by the target date of 2nd October, 2019.

Before 2021 Kumbh, Ganga will be clean from Gangotri to Haridwar and in next two years, it will

be so till West Bengal. The complete basin of Ganga will be cleaned. Each one of us has to resolve to keep each river clean. This cannot be done by the government alone.

Aquifer mapping is being done. The target is to address the legacy problems by 2024.

If we work together, we can make India a water-secure nation. We have to adopt a water body and resolve to clean it. It is not so costly either."

DJM/MC/RDS/PK

Read this release in: Marathi

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