

CABINET APPROVES ATAL BHUJAL YOJANA

Relevant for: Geography | Topic: Distribution of key natural resources - Water Resources incl. Rivers & related issues in world & India

Cabinet

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The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has given its approval for the implementation of the Atal Bhujal Yojana (ATAL JAL), a Central Sector Scheme with a total outlay of Rs.6000 crore to be implemented over a period of 5 years (2020-21 to 2024-25).

The scheme aims to improve ground water management through community participation in identified priority areas in seven States, viz. Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. Implementation of the scheme is expected to benefit nearly 8350 Gram Panchayats in 78 districts in these States. ATAL JAL will promote panchayat led ground water management and behavioural change with primary focus on demand side management

Out of the total outlay of Rs. 6000 crore, 50% shall be in the form of World Bank loan, and be repaid by the Central Government. The remaining 50% shall be through Central Assistance from regular budgetary support. The entire World Bank's loan component and Central Assistance shall be passed on to the States as Grants.

ATAL JAL has two major components:

- A. **Institutional Strengthening and Capacity Building Component** for strengthening institutional arrangements for sustainable ground water management in the States including improving monitoring networks, capacity building, strengthening of Water User Associations, etc.
- B. **Incentive Component** for incentivising the States for achievements in improved groundwater management practices namely, data dissemination, preparation of water security plans, implementation of management interventions through convergence of ongoing schemes, adopting demand side management practices etc.

ATAL JAL will result in:

- i. Institutional strengthening for improving ground water monitoring networks and capacity building of stakeholders at different levels which will enhance ground water data storage, exchange, analysis and dissemination.
- ii. Improved and realistic water budgeting based on an improved database and preparation of community-led Water Security Plans at Panchayat level
- iii. Implementation of Water Security Plans through convergence of various ongoing/new schemes of the Government of India and State Governments to facilitate judicious and effective utilization of funds for sustainable ground water management.
- iv. Efficient use of available ground water resources with emphasis on demand side measures such as micro-irrigation, crop diversification, electricity feeder separation etc.

Impact:

- a. Source sustainability for Jal Jeevan Mission in the project area with active participation of local communities.
- b. Will contribute towards the goal of doubling the farmers' income.
- c. Will promote participatory ground water management.
- d. Improved water use efficiency on a mass scale and improved cropping pattern;
- e. Promotion of efficient and equitable use of ground water resources and behavioural change at the community level;

Background:

Ground water contributes to nearly 65% of total irrigated area of the country and nearly 85% of the rural drinking water supply. The limited ground water resources in the country are under threat due to the increasing demands of growing population, urbanization and industrialization. Intensive, and unregulated ground water pumping in many areas has caused rapid and widespread decline in ground water levels as well as reduction in the sustainability of ground water abstraction structures. The problem of reduction in ground water availability is further compounded by deteriorating ground water quality in some parts of the country. The increasing stress on ground water due to over- exploitation, contamination and associated environmental impacts threaten to endanger the food security of the nation, unless necessary preventive / remedial measures are taken on priority.

Ministry of Jal Shakti has taken a pioneering initiative for ensuring long term sustainability of ground water resources in the country through the Atal Bhujal Yojana (ATAL JAL) by adopting a mix of 'top down' and 'bottom up' approaches in identified ground water stressed blocks in seven states, representing a range of geomorphic, climatic and hydrogeologic and cultural settings. ATAL JAL has been designed with the principal objective of strengthening the institutional framework for participatory ground water management and bringing about behavioral changes at the community level for sustainable ground water resource management. The scheme envisages undertaking this through various interventions, including awareness programmes, capacity building, convergence of ongoing/new schemes and improved agricultural practices etc.

VRRK/SC/SH

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