

**Press Information Bureau
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Ministry of Drinking Water & Sanitation**

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MDWS Intensifies Efforts with States to Implement 'Swachh Bharat' Mission

The Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation has accelerated its efforts on coordinating with States to achieve an open-defecation free status for all districts in the country. This is a part of the Ministry's activities under the Swachh Bharat Mission, a flagship programme of the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi. Through the programme, the government is aiming to achieve an Open-Defecation Free (ODF) India by October 2nd, 2019, the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi.

Under this accelerated effort, the Minister of State, Drinking Water and Sanitation Ministry, Shri Ram Kripal Yadav, launched the Water Week in Mohali, Punjab earlier this week. On the occasion, the Minister praised the work being done by Punjab State Government with people's involvement in ensuring an Open Defecation Free (ODF) Punjab. The Minister praised the State government for ensuring that its efforts were reaching the actual beneficiaries on the ground in a transparent manner. The Minister especially lauded the involvement of school children in the efforts – 11 lakh school children across 13000 schools have been reached out to in Punjab alone, and made 'Swachhta Doots'. Shri SS Rakhra, Minister of Rural Development and Panchayat, Punjab Government, was also present at the event.

In the third edition of a series of meetings that the Ministry is holding with State Governments to support implementation in the field, the Secretary, Shri Parameswaran Iyer, today met the Chief Minister of Telangana and Chief Secretaries of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, in Hyderabad. The Ministry also reached out to District Collectors of the two States via video conferencing to understand issues on the ground and to discover how the Union Government can help the States achieve the goal of an 'ODF India by 2019'.

The Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, Shri N Chandrababu Naidu, appreciated the Union Government's step of reaching out to support the States and expressed his government's commitment to making at least 3 districts in Andhra Pradesh ODF by the end of the year. He also said that he was keen to push for bulk water supply in the State. The Chief Secretary of Telangana, Dr Rajiv Sharma, in another meeting, also assured the Secretary of Telangana's commitment to have 3 ODF districts by the end of the year. The Secretary lauded this resolve of both States and assured the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh and Chief Secretary of Telangana of the Ministry's support in making this happen.

The senior officers and District Collectors of the two States held a vibrant and participative discussion with the Ministry, and shared ground level initiatives undertaken by them to realize the vision of the Swachh Bharat Mission. They also shared issues like dysfunctional toilets, delayed transfer of funds, and raised the need for capacity building support from the Centre. The Ministry took serious note of these issues and assured the Collectors that they will receive full support from the Centre in resolving them on high priority.

The Secretary emphasized at the meeting that while the government provides an incentive of Rs 12,000 for each

toilet constructed by a BPL family, Swachh Bharat Mission is not just about construction of toilets. It is about making our villages and toilets open-defecation free, he said, for which we need to trigger behaviour change in the people. He shared that, to this end, the Ministry is looking to develop a "Coalition of Partners", including participation from the public sector, private sector, and developmental agencies, to provide broad-based capacity building support to the States. He also emphasized that the 'district' is a critical unit of action in this programme, and encouraged the District Collectors to lead the programme proactively to ensure success. At present 10 districts in India are ODF and the idea is to scale up this number through the leadership of Collectors, he said, encouraging them to integrate Swachh Bharat Mission with other developmental programmes of the government.

It was also agreed that the focus of the programme should be reoriented more towards collective behaviour change. To this effect, it was also suggested that the Gram Panchayats and Self Help Groups at the village level should be more actively involved. It was also agreed that Andhra Pradesh and Telangana

Prior to this, over the past 2 weeks, meetings were also held with the State Governments of Gujarat and Bihar at the Chief minister and Chief Secretary level, and the Ministry received an extremely positive response from both the States as the issues of water and sanitation are priority areas for both the States, and critical components of their service delivery at the rural level.

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