



Union Minister Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan and Jal Shakti Minister Shri Chandrakant Raghunath Patil launch National Initiative on Water Security

“Under MGNREGA, a fixed portion of funds will now be mandatorily spent on water conservation works” – Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan

“In ‘over-exploited’ and ‘critical’ rural blocks, 65% of MGNREGA funds will be allocated for water-related works” – Shri Chouhan

“In ‘semi-critical’ rural blocks, 40% of MGNREGA funds must be spent on water conservation” – Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan

At least 30% of funds will be used for water-related activities even in blocks without water scarcity

“Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has always given priority to water conservation; it is a subject that is close to his heart” – Shri Chouhan

“Better water conservation measures can raise groundwater levels and rejuvenate rivers” – Shri Chouhan

“Water is life. If there is water, there is a tomorrow and a today. Without water, nothing is possible” – Shri Chouhan

“The National Water Security Initiative will benefit future generations, livestock, wildlife, environment, and agriculture” – Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan

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Union Minister for Rural Development, and Agriculture & Farmers’ Welfare, Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan and Union Jal Shakti Minister Shri Chandrakant Raghunath Patil today jointly launched the ‘National Initiative on Water Security’ at Krishi Bhawan, New Delhi. Union Minister of State for Rural Development Shri Kamlesh Paswan, Rural Development Secretary Shri Shailesh Singh, and senior officials from both ministries were present at the occasion, while representatives from rural blocks and district magistrates across the country participated virtually.



Speaking at the launch, Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan said that under the guidance of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, the Ministry of Rural Development has made water security a national priority under MGNREGA. Amendments have been made in the Schedule of the Mahatma Gandhi NREGA Act, 2005, to give precedence to water-related works in water-stressed rural blocks. This historic step ensures that a minimum expenditure on water conservation and harvesting activities will now be mandatory in rural blocks.



Addressing the media later, the Union Minister said that groundwater levels are continuously depleting and water has become one of the biggest global challenges. He noted that Prime Minister Modi has been committed to water conservation since his tenure as the Chief Minister of Gujarat and has led numerous initiatives to underline its importance. The Prime Minister has given the nation direction through campaigns like 'Catch the Rain', rainwater harvesting, and the construction of 'Amrit Sarovars'.



Reiterating the importance of water, Shri Chouhan said: “Water is life. If there is water, there is a tomorrow and a today. Without water, nothing is possible.” He added that the Prime Minister had instructed in a meeting of the Council of Ministers that a fixed portion of MGNREGA funds must be earmarked for water conservation. Following this directive, it has now been mandated that:

- In ‘over-exploited’ blocks, 65% of MGNREGA funds will be used for water-related works.
- In ‘semi-critical’ blocks, 40% of MGNREGA funds will be spent on water conservation.
- Even in blocks without water scarcity, at least 30% of funds will go towards water-related works.

Shri Chouhan said that nationwide, MGNREGA resources will now be channelled with priority into water conservation, boosting groundwater recharge and accelerating conservation drives. This policy decision ensures that resources are directed to the areas of greatest need, shifting the approach from reactive to preventive and long-term water management.

Union Jal Shakti Minister Shri C.R. Patil also highlighted the importance of the initiative, saying: “Prime Minister Narendra Modi has always given water conservation the highest priority. Under his visionary leadership, the Council of Ministers has taken a very important and historic decision. As per the Prime Minister’s guidance, Rural Development Minister Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan has now allocated, from the ₹88,000 crore MGNREGA budget, 65% for ‘dark zone’ districts, 40% for ‘semi-critical’ districts, and 30% for other districts towards rainwater harvesting. This decision will prove vital for water security and rural development. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi and Rural Development Minister Shri Shivraj Singh Chouhan for this historic step.”

Background

This policy change builds on significant achievements in rural development and water conservation under MGNREGA over the past 11 years (since 2014). During this period, MGNREGA has become the world’s largest social welfare programme, with an expenditure of about ₹8.4 lakh crore and the generation of over 3,000 crore person-days of employment. Notably, women’s participation has risen from 48% in 2014 to 58% in 2025.

Under the scheme, more than 1.25 crore water conservation assets such as farm ponds, check dams, and community tanks have been created. These efforts have yielded tangible results, reducing the number of water-stressed rural blocks. In addition, under ‘Mission Amrit Sarovar’, more than 68,000 reservoirs have been constructed or rejuvenated in the first phase alone.

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