

Reform-Linked MoU signed with Sikkim under Jal Jeevan Mission 2.0

Centre-State partnership advances reforms for sustainable rural water delivery for an accountable and community-driven water governance

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In a significant stride towards strengthening rural water supply infrastructure and ensuring long-term sustainability under Jal Jeevan Mission 2.0, the Department of Drinking Water & Sanitation (DDWS), Ministry of Jal Shakti, signed a reform-linked Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the State of Sikkim today.

The reform-linked MoU mandates a Gram Panchayat-led, service-based and community-centred model of rural water governance, aligned with the objectives of Jal Jeevan Mission 2.0. It seeks to ensure that every rural household receives drinking water in adequate quantity and prescribed quality on a regular basis through strengthened community participation (*Jan Bhagidari*) and structural reforms for the sustainable operation and maintenance of rural water supply systems, thereby enhancing the living standards of rural communities, contributing to long-term water security aligned with the national vision of *Viksit Bharat @2047*.



The MoU was signed in the presence of the **Union Minister of Jal Shakti, Shri C.R. Patil**, and the **Chief Minister of Sikkim, Shri Prem Singh Tamang**.

Senior officials from DDWS, including Shri Ashok K. K. Meena, Secretary, DDWS, Shri Kamal Kishore Soan, Additional Secretary & Mission Director, National Jal Jeevan Mission (NJJM), Shri D Senthil Pandiyan, Joint Secretary, and Director were present during the MoU signing.

The MoU with Sikkim was signed in the presence of Union Minister of Jal Shakti, Shri C. R. Patil, Chief Minister of Sikkim, Shri **Prem Singh Tamang**, Shri **Ashwini Kumar Chand**, ADGP cum Pr. Resident Commissioner, Govt. of Sikkim, along with **Shri Anil Raj Rai**, Secretary, RDD, Government of Sikkim.

The MoU was exchanged between Shri D Senthil Pandiyan, Joint Secretary, NJJM, and Shri **Ashwini Kumar Chand**, ADGP cum Pr. Resident Commissioner, Govt. of Sikkim.



Addressing the gathering, **Union Minister of Jal Shakti, Shri C. R. Patil** said that Jal Jeevan Mission, launched under the leadership of the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, has transformed rural drinking water supply across the country and reduced the ordeal of fetching water especially by women and girls. Under JJM 2.0, now the focus is on sustaining the infrastructures created under the Mission, functionality of tap connections, water quality, source sustainability, O&M, community ownership and regular monitoring as key priorities.

He appreciated the State for the progress achieved under JJM and emphasised strengthening district-level planning through the preparation of District Improvement Plans based on Gram Panchayat-level water service assessments. He said that these plans should help identify service gaps, improve scheme performance, strengthen monitoring and ensure better service delivery at the district level.

The Minister urged the State to notify O&M policy by including all 19 essential points for sustainable service delivery and also requested to complete Sujal Gram ID and Sujalam Bharat ID creation in a time-bound manner.

He added that the State should continue to work within the approved guidelines and existing framework of the mission, with a focus on sustainable, community-owned and reliable water supply services across rural habitations.



In his address, **Shri Prem Singh Tamang, Chief Minister of Sikkim** expressed gratitude to the Ministry of Jal Shakti for its continued support under Jal Jeevan Mission and highlighted the transformative impact of the Mission in a geographically challenging, disaster-prone Himalayan state like Sikkim. Referring to the vision of Prime Minister for ensuring safe drinking water in every rural household, he noted that the Mission has significantly improved the quality of life of rural communities across the State.

He stated that Sikkim has remained committed to the objectives of JJM since its inception and has achieved coverage despite difficult terrain, dispersed habitations and high infrastructure development costs. The State undertook extensive upgradation, expansion and modernisation of rural water supply infrastructure in accordance with the Mission guidelines issued in 2019.

Reaffirming the State Government's commitment to sustaining these gains, the Chief Minister emphasised the importance of strengthening rural water supply systems and ensuring long-term service delivery. He reiterated Sikkim's commitment to working closely with the Government of India to realise the shared goal of providing safe, reliable and sustainable drinking water services to every rural household.

He further highlighted State's commitment to sustainable source sustainability measures under CAMPA project and VB-G RAM G. He said the MoU will further strengthen efforts to expand functional tap water connections, especially in remote and rural areas.

In his opening remarks, **Shri Ashok K. K. Meena, Secretary, DDWS** underscored that the MoU prioritises not just infrastructure setup of pipelines, but sustainable services managed at the grassroots level. He emphasised decentralisation and community ownership, with Gram Panchayats and Village Water & Sanitation Committees (VWSCs) being empowered to manage and operate in-village water supply systems. While stating the importance of the MoU signing with the State, Shri Meena highlighted that the MoU is a shared commitment between the State which ensures the upholding of JJM 2.0 guidelines in order to provide safe, secure and sustainable drinking water to the rural households.

Emphasising the importance of institutional mechanisms for sustainable water service delivery, the Secretary stressed that District Water and Sanitation Mission (DWSM) meetings should be conducted regularly by all District Collectors. He noted that timely meetings would facilitate the preparation of Village Action Plans and support the certification of Panchayats as capable institutions for managing rural

water supply systems. The Secretary underlined that district administrations would play a crucial role in monitoring implementation, conducting periodic reviews, and extending necessary support to Gram Panchayats whenever required.

He also mentioned that this step is an initiative which aligns with the fulfillment of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's *Har Ghar Nirantar Nal Se Jal* vision.

ND/AK

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