

Union Govt Has Allocated Rs 32,000 Crore in 2025-26 Under VB-GRAMG (MANREGA) for Water Conservation & Revival of Dark Zones Across India: Union Jal Shakti Minister CR Patil

MP Satnam Singh Sandhu Raises Issue of Punjab's Groundwater Depletion and Contamination in Parliament

Punjab is Facing 'Water Emergency' with 19 Districts in Dark Zone for Groundwater, says MP Satnam Singh Sandhu in Parliament

'62% of Punjab's Groundwater Has India's Highest Levels of Uranium Which Could Cause Cancer', says MP Satnam Singh Sandhu in Parliament

100% Completion of Har Ghar Jal Yojana in Punjab Has Ensured Water Supply to Every Household, says MP Satnam Singh Sandhu

New Delhi, 9 March -- Union government has allocated Rs 32,000 Crore during the current financial year for water conservation and revival of 'Dark Zones' in the country under the Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (VB-GRAMG) scheme, previously known as MGNREGA, the Union Jal Shakti Minister CR Patil said in reply to a question asked by Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha) Satnam Singh Sandhu during the on-going Budget Session of Parliament.

Rising the issue Punjab's groundwater depletion and contamination in Parliament during 'Question Hour', MP Satnam Singh Sandhu said the state is facing water emergency as 19 districts of Punjab fall under the dark zone (over- exploited) for groundwater and over 62 % of groundwater samples in Punjab exceed the safe limit for uranium which is the highest contamination intensity recorded across the country.

In a supplementary question to Union Jal Shakti Minister CR Patil in Rajya Sabha, MP Satnam Singh Sandhu said, "Punjab is facing a water emergency. Due to paddy cultivation in Punjab, 19 districts are in dark zone and more than 62% of the groundwater in the state has uranium levels which are higher than anywhere else in the country. This uranium content is high, and there is a potential for cancer,".

Thanking the Prime Minister Narendra Modi for completing the 100% Har Ghar Jal Yojana in Punjab, ensuring water supply to every household, MP Sandhu asked whether Punjab will be included under the Atal Bhujal Yojana or a special scheme could be introduced or special plans could be implemented to revive Punjab's dark zones, as the state is facing a groundwater emergency.

MP Sandhu said while 19 out of Punjab's 23 districts are now in dark zone due to over-exploitation ground water', Punjab's extraction rate is 156.36% which is the highest in India as the national average is 60%.

"The National Green Tribunal (NGT) monitoring committee stated that Punjab's groundwater table could drop below 300 meters by 2039, completely drying up our state's water resources. Furthermore, a report from the Central Ground Water Board indicates that 62.5% of Punjab's groundwater samples have uranium levels above safe limits, posing a major health crisis. Under the visionary leadership of PM Modi, water security has been made a national priority for the first time through ambitious schemes like the 'Jal Jeevan Mission' and the 'Atal Bhujal Yojana'," he added.

Responding to MP Sandhu's question, Union Jal Shakti Minister CR Patil said though Atal Bhujal Yojana has been discontinued now but funds are being provided to all the states for revival of Dark Zones under the VB-GRAMG as per the direction of the PM Modi.

"After discontinuation of the Atal Bhujal Yojana, this work (water conservation) is being done on a large scale because this scheme had a budgetary provision of Rs 6,000 crore but now Rs 32,000 Crore has been allocated in the current financial year for the water conservation under the(VB-GRAMG), previously known as MGNREGA," the Union Minister said adding under water-stressed regions are now designated as priority areas, enabling enhanced allocations.

He said under VB-GRAMG, it's compulsory to allocate a minimum share of project costs in each category to water conservation, water harvesting, and other water related works with at least 65% funds are allocated to Dark Zones and critical rural blocks, 40% in semi-critical blocks, and 30% remaining blocks.

Patil further said, “PM Modi had said the water conservation should be turned into a mass movement with the participation of the people. So under it, 44 lakh structures have been made in the country with the co-operation and participation of the people. People have contributed for making the water conservation structures even with their own money,”

“PM Modi has launched the Karmabhoomi se Matrabhoomi” (from workplace to motherland) initiative to encourage NRIs and migrants to support water conservation in their native Indian villages. Following PM Modi’s campaign, many people have supported this initiative and 44 lakh water conservation structures have been built in the country and the target is to create 1 crore such structures,” the Union Minister added.

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