

Government of India  
Ministry of Jal Shakti  
Department of Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation  
(National Water Mission)

\*\*\*\*\*

National Water Mission (NWM) has initiated a seminar series- 'Water Talk' - to promote dialogue and information sharing among participants on variety of water related topics. The 'Water Talk' is intended to create awareness, build capacities of stakeholders and to encourage people to become active participants in conservation and saving of water. NWM had already organized seven 'Water-Talks' on the topics - "Water for All", "Groundwater", "Water Conservation", "Ecology Inclusive Economy", "Agriculture, Groundwater and Energy nexus", "Water conservation at Hiware Bazaar in Maharashtra and Dewas in Madhya Pradesh", and "Innovation and Water" on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2019, 1<sup>st</sup> May 2019, 24<sup>th</sup> May 2019, 21<sup>st</sup> June 2019, 19<sup>th</sup> July 2019, 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2019 and 20<sup>th</sup> September 2019 respectively.

2. Eighth Water Talk in this series was held on 18<sup>th</sup> October, 2019. Shri Heera Lal, District Magistrate, Banda, UP delivered the Water Talk. Shri U. P. Singh, Secretary (DoWR, RD & GR) MoJS; officers from CWC, CGWB, NMCG, CSMRS, NWDA and D/oWR, RD & GR attended the programme.

3. Shri Heera Lal delivered the talk on '**Water Conservation in Banda District, UP**' and discussed the dynamics of the village system and its governance. He said that the water conservation campaign in Banda was turned into a people's movement. The idea was to establish a cost free water conserving formula. With the help of water experts, he trained people to dig pits in an area close to hand-pumps and taps. This helped in creating capacity for water recharge during rains. He further stated that he campaigned in all 8 blocks of the district and also organized training workshops on technical aspects of the activity. The concept of "water budgeting" was introduced in villages to make people understand the importance of water conservation and help track the consumption of water against the availability of water. A core team of senior officers was set up to monitor the implementation of the campaign. Regular meetings were conducted at the district, block and village level to educate people about the importance of water and motivate them to conserve water. Global water organisations noticed started visiting Banda to study the model of water conservation.

4. Shri Heera Lal narrated journey of making Banda a water-sensitive community by designing mechanisms and techniques to conserve water. He mentioned that villagers were encouraged to work collectively towards water conservation. He also mentioned that special efforts were made to involve women in the campaign as they are primary users of water. Shri Heera Lal then spoke about the usage of traditional appliances of storing water in utensils like 'lota', 'magga', 'balti' at homes. Similarly, "ponds" and "wells" were used as traditional water-storing systems in a village. He felt that these natural storing "containers" are being destroyed. During the movement, people of Banda were encouraged to revive ponds and wells. He reiterated that if we wish to secure our future we need to form a special bond of friendship with ponds and wells and not let them fade away from our lives. The motive was

to feed the importance of ponds and wells into the minds and hearts of people with a view to revive them in villages. He mentioned that the campaign was kick-started by making people light a “diya” in front of all wells and pay respect to the old traditional water containers. He stated that there will be no need to build dams if we are successful in reviving the culture of ponds and wells. He apprised that the slogan “Kuan talaab mein paani layange, Banda ko khushhaal banayenge” was used in the area. He mentioned that traditions and customs should be connected with the use of wells and ponds to generate awareness towards the importance of these two mediums in the lives of people. The tagline used in the campaign was “Paani ka punya kamao.”

6. Using mass awareness tools like handbills, caps, T-shirts etc., the campaign created a mass appeal. He stated that public events were organised to promote water conservation and preservation. To maintain uniformity, an SOP was designed for all the Gram Panchayats in the district. He directed that all Gram Panchayats must organise meetings (Chaupal) next to a public well in the morning. Pradhans & Sachivs of all 470 Panchayats were invited for a meeting organised on the topic of water conservation in the district.

7. Shri Heera Lal stated that Pradhans and sachivs were encouraged to direct MGNREGA funds to do water conservation work. Pradhans were directed to work on storage of water along with focusing on sewage and road construction. He also asked people to do “Shramdaan” and work towards increasing groundwater. Rich farmers were motivated to construct ponds in their own farm lands. Likewise 2000 ponds have already been constructed in the village till date.

8. As the rainy season began, the focus was shifted to rainwater harvesting. Apart from generating awareness, promoting the use of traditional water storage systems like ponds and wells, the goal was also to promote rainwater harvesting. He stated that all the above activities led to a considerable increase in ground water level of the district.

9. **Shri G. Asok Kumar, Mission Director, National Water Mission, DoWR, RD & GR**, Ministry of Jal Shakti while extending gratitude to Shri Heera Lal for his talk and appreciated the work done by him in Banda. He also expressed his gratitude to Secretary for supporting and motivating good work of his subordinates. He then invited Secretary, DoWR, RD & GR, Ministry of Jal Shakti to address the audience.

10. **Shri U.P Singh, Secretary, DoWR, RD & GR, Ministry of Jal Shakti** congratulated Shri Heera Lal for his exceptional work. Appreciating his efforts for encouraging public participation and reviving the traditional water system, he suggested that every district should follow the same approach to save water. He further urged people to cut down water wastage and maintain a healthy demand-supply chain. He also urged people to be more aware of the sustainability of water resources and use water judiciously.

11. The event ended with the audience posing questions to the panellists on the critical areas of water.

\*\*\*\*\*