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Government of India
Ministry of Jal Shakti
Department of Water Resources, RD&GR
National Water Mission

Proceedings of the Thirty First (32nd) Water Talk held on 17th November, 2021

- National Water Mission (NWM) has been organizing a seminar series-'Water Talk' -to promote dialogue and information sharing among participants on a variety of water- related topics. The '**Water Talk**' is intended to create awareness, build capacities of stakeholders and encourage people to become active participants in the conservation and saving of water. NWM has so far organized 31 '**Water-Talks**' on a range of topics dominating the water sector.
- **Thirty Second (32nd) Water Talk** in this series was held on 17th November 2021 on a virtual platform organized by NWM with the support of Water Digest, the official media partner for the webinar. The talk was delivered by **Ms. Nidhi Pundhir, Director, HCL Foundation**, which is the CSR arm of HCL Technologies. Ms. Nidhi holds a Masters in Hospital & Health Administration from IIHMR University, Jaipur and an M. Phil. (Health Systems Management) from Birla Institute of Technology & Sciences, Pilani.
- She has set up unique and scalable institutional mechanisms that maximise the utilisation of Corporate Social Responsibility provisions towards achieving sustainable development, thus positively transforming lives of many. Ms. Nidhi is an international social development and management practitioner with specialization in Health Management. She has spent more than 22 years of her professional life in executing Human Rights of communities, their right to health, education, livelihoods and protection from violence. She has a deep understanding of poverty issues and brings on board realistic approaches towards poverty alleviation. For more than 2 decades of her developmental career, she has worked extensively on actualisation of child rights, including policy and implementation work on child protection. Nidhi has managed grants of significant size for institutional partners, foundations and Corporates. Some of the key portfolios she has held have been Global Advisor on Child Protection in Development with Plan International's International Headquarters - UK, with Director Programme Development with SOS Children's Villages Asia, with Plan International India as

National Advisor on Child Rights and Protection, and with 'Save the Children', UK as Programme Coordinator.

- **Shri G. Asok Kumar, Additional Secretary and Mission Director, NWM** and officials of NWM attended the webinar along with other participants. The talk was also live-streamed through Facebook and other social media platforms of various organizations under Ministry of Jal Shakti (MoJS).
- **Shri G. Asok Kumar, Additional Secretary & Mission Director, NWM** welcomed the participants to the **32nd** Talk of the 'Water Talk' series. He gave a brief overview of the 'Water Talk' initiative and mentioned how the switch from the physical to digital platform has amplified the reach of the talks both geographically & numerically with people participating from all across the world. He also mentioned that along with Water Talk, National Water Mission also took the initiative of organizing **Water Tech Talk and Water Biz Talk** which are being organized on second & Fourth Friday respectively of every month with people coming from academia and industries and informing us about the various progress which we have made in water sector. Hon'ble Prime Minister launched the '**Jal Shakti Abhiyan: Catch the Rain**' campaign on 22nd March 2021, on World Water Day, addressing 2.5 lakh Sarpanches, along with District Magistrates/ District Collectors from all the states. He also mentioned the seriousness of Central Govt. in taking steps towards water conservation and numerated that in the last five months approximately 34 lakhs water harvesting structures constructed, 36 Crore tree plantation taken place etc. He also impressed upon making JAL ANDOLAN, A JAN ANDOLAN and expected that the rain water harvesting structures made during the Jal Shakti Abhiyaan will be full and play a vital role in making India TANKER FREE. He has also impressed upon that 'Catch the Rain' Campaign is not over, only a part of it i.e., 'Catch the Rain: where it falls, when it falls' is being over on 30th November.
- The topic of the e-talk by **Ms. Nidhi Pundhir, Director, HCL Foundation** was "**Conserving The Critical Common- Water**". **Ms. Nidhi** has started her talk by mentioning that it will be on a pattern of problems in water sector and its possible solutions. Illustrating the state of water quality in India, she has mentioned that India is ranked 120 out of 122 countries in the global water quality Index.
- Further, she has mentioned that India is home to 17% of the world's population with 4% of fresh water availability and as per NITI Aayog data on Composite Water Management Index, 21 Major Cities of India are racing to reach Zero groundwater levels but still we don't have a law to ban boring. Also, 80% of groundwater is being used in agriculture, where treated water or recycled water may be used

instead of freshwater.

- She has also attracted the attention that in the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) only approximately 5% is presently being spent on Environment related issues and less than 1% may be being spend on water sector that is needed to be elevated.
- Dr. Shantanu Basu, an associate of Ms. Nidhi Pundhir at HCL foundation has also mentioned challenges for waterbodies as a common resource is Water Hyacinth due to imbalance of nutrients, Duckweed/Algae growth in ponds, Dumping of solid waste, Silt accumulation, illegal encroachments and Direct Sewage connection etc. He has further mentioned that HCL foundation is currently HCL Harit programme under which they are working on various aspects of greener environment including Reduction in CO₂ emission, Animal Welfare, Coastal & Marine Conservation, Afforestation, Environment Education, Water conservation etc. and shows the difference in pre-situation of the water bodies and Post situation- which is healthy and rejuvenated.
- Ms. Nidhi has further the efforts of conserving environment/water bodies and rejuvenation of water bodies as Conversion of water hyacinth of the water body into compost and use them, sludge found from de-silting is donated to nearby farmers as it is a good fertilizer, Construction of silt traps, Water Inlets & Outlets to reduce silt trespass directly into the water body, Making bird Island inside the rejuvenated water body, Fencing & Information Board Installation, Boundary plantation of trees and shrubs, Vetiver Grass plantation as per the requirements etc.
- Ms. Nidhi has elaborated such an effort to rejuvenate river Vaigai in Maduari in collaboration with DHAN foundation that around 51 acres of invasive Prosopis Juliflore patches were removed along 3.5 Km of river Vaigai resulting in free flow of water in it. She has informed that instead of focusing on mammoth projects each corporate may choose any river tributary near them and work on rejuvenating it because if the tributaries of a river are rejuvenated the river itself rejuvenated.
- The talk was followed by a session of questions and answers wherein members from the audience were invited to discuss their queries with the speaker. The webinar saw some interesting and unique questions from people across the country.
