



# Committee of Secretaries to be set up soon to tackle The issue of Groundwater Depletion: says Uma Bharti

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Union Minister for Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation Sushri Uma Bharati has urged people to plant more trees while addressing the 'critical' issue of groundwater depletion. The Minister was speaking during a 'Ganga Chaupal' at Narora in Uttar Pradesh today on the occasion of 'World Environment Day'. Sushri Bharti asked the people to plant trees like Palash and Ashoka that contributes in recharging groundwater. "You sow sacred plants and trees like Tulsi, Pipal and Neem in India. I would urge you to grow indigenous plants like Palash and Ashoka as well as they help in raising groundwater levels, an issue that has come as a huge challenge in India and which can be resolved in an economic and eco-friendly manner without spending crores of rupees," she added while addressing the gathering.

She said a committee would be formed soon comprising Rural Development Secretary, Water Resource Secretary and Environment Secretary to tackle the issue of groundwater depletion. The Minister also asked people to refrain from using plastic/polythene bags to reduce pollution. "The use of plastic material is a major cause of pollution to river Ganga and should be stopped," she said.

Sushri Bharti said that she wants to start a Jan Andolan where she would require retired senior citizens, students, youngsters, and house wives to volunteer in conserving water, adopt rain water harvesting and to keep the ghats clean. "Mass participation is the key to development and change," she said.

The Minister is currently on a three week Ganga Nirikshan Abhiyan from Gangasagar to Gangotri to personally monitor the progress of Namami Gange programme. The Minister has reached Narora in UP and will proceed to Haridwar today via Bhairgu Ashram and Najibabad.

Total replenishable groundwater resource in the Ganga basin is 170.99 billion cubic metres (BCM). Ganga basin alone accounts for nearly 40 % of the country's total replenishable groundwater resource of the country which is 433 BCM. Net ground water availability is 398 BCM. The annual groundwater draft (a reasonable release of discharge) is 245 BCM (as on 31st March 2017) and out of total 6607 assessed units (blocks, mandals, districts) as many as 1071 units are 'over-exploited', 217 units are 'critical', 697 units are 'semi-critical' and 4530 are 'safe'. Apart from these, there are 92 assessment units which were found to be completely saline.

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