Ministry of Jal Shakti

As A Follow-Up to The Departmental Summit on Water 2026, Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation Organised Virtual Conference on Convergence of JJM 2.0 With 16th Finance Grants for Rural water Supply and Strengthening of O&M Systems

Secretary, DDWS calls for stronger Panchayat-led planning, interdepartmental coordination and sustainable financing of rural water supply infrastructure

Posted On: 22 OCT 2026 4:40PM by PIB Delhi

The **Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation (DDWS), Ministry of Jal Shakti**, today organised the **fourth virtual conference with States and Union Territories** as part of a series of thematic consultations being held in follow-up to the **Departmental Summit on Water 2026 held on 1-2 September 2026**. The conference focused on strengthening convergence between **Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) 2.0** and 16th Finance Commission to advance source sustainability, water security and Gram Panchayat-led planning for sustainable rural drinking water service delivery.

The virtual conference brought together senior officials from State PHEDs/Rural Water Supply Departments, Panchayati Raj Departments and representatives from the Ministries of Panchayati Raj, Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India and National Informatics Centre. States rural water supply departments including Karnataka, Odisha and Madhya Pradesh shared best practices and field experiences on leveraging Finance Commission grants for strengthening rural water supply systems, improving O&M arrangements, enhancing community participation and strengthening local governance mechanisms.

Addressing in the conference, **Shri Ashok K.K. Meena, Secretary, DDWS**, stated that with the extension of JJM 2.0, the focus now shifts from infrastructure creation to ensuring functionality, sustainability and quality service delivery. He emphasised that the true measure of success lies not merely in asset creation but in ensuring that rural households continue to receive reliable and safe drinking water through well-maintained and financially sustainable systems.



Shri Meena underlined the pivotal role of **Gram Panchayats** in rural water governance and noted that the **73rd Constitutional Amendment** places drinking water and sanitation among the key responsibilities of local self-governments. He stressed that Gram Panchayats must take leadership in preparing comprehensive annual O&M plans, mobilising local resources, managing service delivery and ensuring accountability for water supply infrastructure created under JJM and other programmes.

Referring to the **16th Finance Commission framework**, he highlighted that tied grants provide a significant opportunity to strengthen the sustainability of drinking water and sanitation services at the grassroots level. He noted that of the total Rural Local Body (RLB) grants recommended by the 16th Finance Commission, a substantial share has been earmarked for water and sanitation-related activities. He emphasised that these grants should be utilised primarily for operation and maintenance, source sustainability, water quality management, service delivery improvements and strengthening local institutional capacity rather than creation of new infrastructure where existing assets require maintenance and support.

The Secretary focused on **three key pillars** of sustainable financing for rural water supply systems such as effective utilisation of Finance Commission grants, ii. convergence with other available programmes and iii. schemes, and progressive strengthening of user-charge collection mechanisms.

Referring to successful examples from several States, he encouraged States and Gram Panchayats to adopt sustainable revenue models that support recurring O&M expenditure and reduce dependence on a single funding source. He also stressed the growing role of Gram Panchayats in the management of sanitation and solid waste systems and highlighted the need for local bodies to plan comprehensively for both drinking water and sanitation services. He noted that adequate provisions must be made for repairs, leak management, pump maintenance, chlorination, water-quality surveillance, electricity expenditure and staffing arrangements required for uninterrupted service delivery.

Emphasising capacity building as a critical requirement, Shri Meena called upon States to utilise resources available under the **Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA)** and other programmes for training Panchayat representatives and local functionaries. He urged States to translate and disseminate Operation and Maintenance Manuals in local languages and ensure that Panchayats clearly understand the permissible activities, funding mechanisms and reporting requirements under the Finance Commission framework.

He called upon to strengthen coordination between Rural Water Supply Departments, Panchayati Raj Institutions and Rural Development Departments at the State, district and Gram Panchayat levels. He noted that the simultaneous implementation of **JJM 2.0**, **VB-G RAM G**, and the **16th Finance Commission cycle** provides a unique opportunity to institutionalise sustainable water governance through integrated planning and coordinated implementation.

Ms. Kritika Kulhari, Deputy Secretary, NJJM made a detailed presentation on the **16th Finance Commission Grants and utilisation of tied grants for water and sanitation**, outlining the grant structure, release conditions, reporting requirements, permissible activities and planning framework. Participants were informed that the total Rural Local Body allocation under the 16th Finance Commission exceeds ₹4.35 lakh crore, with nearly ₹1.74 lakh crore earmarked for water management and sanitation over the award period. The presentation highlighted that priority should be accorded to operation and maintenance of existing assets, lifecycle-based planning, preventive maintenance, community ownership and digital accountability through prescribed platforms.



Shri Vipul Ujwal, Director, Ministry of Panchayati Raj, made a detailed presentation on **GPDP planning, release modalities and utilisation of Finance Commission Grants for rural water supply O&M**. He emphasised that sustainable service delivery requires integration of three critical elements - **Requirements, Resources and Responsibilities (RRR)**. He explained how Gram Panchayats should identify service gaps, estimate annual O&M requirements, assess available financial resources and integrate these priorities into the Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP). He

further highlighted the growing importance of Own Source Revenue (OSR), user-charge collection and performance-based grants in strengthening Panchayat finances and ensuring sustainable service delivery.

The conference also featured a technical presentation by **NIC, Ministry of Panchayati Raj**, on the **eGramSwaraj portal and its reporting modules**. The session explained how Gram Panchayats can integrate planning, implementation, geo-tagging, expenditure reporting, asset management and monitoring through the digital platform. The presentation highlighted the integration of eGramSwaraj with the Public Financial Management System (PFMS) and various departmental databases, enabling improved transparency, accountability and real-time monitoring of Finance Commission-funded activities.

During the State experience-sharing session, **Karnataka** presented its integrated approach to rural water supply management through innovations such as **Jala Sankalana**, **JalaAasthi** and **Jeevajala**, which combine GIS-based asset management, real-time monitoring, community participation and evidence-based O&M planning. The State highlighted its experience in water budgeting, volumetric tariff collection, preventive maintenance and strengthening community ownership of drinking water systems. Further the state shared its experience of institutional convergence under the Rural Development and Panchayat Raj framework, where Rural Water Supply, Panchayati Raj and Rural Development functions operate in close coordination and highlighted how this integrated administrative structure has enabled better planning and utilisation of Finance Commission grants, strengthened Gram Panchayat participation in operation and maintenance planning, water budgeting and tariff collection, and improved coordination between technical departments and local self-governments. Karnataka emphasised that sustained community engagement, clear delineation of responsibilities and convergence of financial resources have been central to strengthening the long-term sustainability of rural drinking water services.

Odisha shared its institutional model built around close convergence among Rural Development, Panchayati Raj and Drinking Water departments. The State presented its **integrated O&M framework**, bottom-up budgeting process, digital monitoring systems, local mechanic training programmes and technology-driven interventions such as solarisation, automation and IoT-based monitoring systems aimed at ensuring long-term sustainability of drinking water services. The State highlighted how coordinated planning, bottom-up budgeting and convergence of Finance Commission grants, State resources and community contributions have helped strengthen operation and maintenance systems. Odisha also underscored the importance of Gram Panchayat participation, local capacity building, digital monitoring and clearly defined accountability mechanisms in ensuring reliable service delivery and sustainable management of rural water supply infrastructure.

Madhya Pradesh highlighted its recently notified **O&M Rules, 2026**, which enable Gram Panchayats to utilise multiple funding streams for water supply and sanitation activities. The State showcased simplified procurement processes, district-level WASH

technical committees, structured training programmes, digital systems for user-charge collection and extensive efforts to build technical capacity among Panchayat representatives and engineers. The State highlighted how multiple funding streams, including Finance Commission grants, State grants, user charges and other local resources, are being brought together to support sustainable operation and maintenance.



In his concluding remarks, **Shri Kamal Kishore Soan, AS&MD, NJJM** reiterated that Finance Commission grants should be viewed as an opportunity to institutionalise sustainable rural water governance and strengthen Panchayat ownership of water supply systems. He urged States to complete pending compliance requirements, strengthen GPDP-based planning, improve user-charge collection mechanisms, and ensure effective utilisation of both 15th and 16th Finance Commission grants for sustaining rural water supply infrastructure.

Shri Soan also called upon States to organise intensive training and capacity-building programmes for Panchayat representatives, Panchayat Secretaries, Sarpanches and technical personnel over the coming months and ensure timely resolution of eGramSwaraj login and reporting issues. He informed participants that two regional conferences are planned in November 2026 to review preparedness, address implementation challenges and strengthen convergence among departments responsible for drinking water, sanitation, Panchayati Raj and Rural Development.

The conference concluded with a shared commitment by the Centre and States/UTs to strengthen Panchayat-led planning, improve financial sustainability, enhance interdepartmental convergence and ensure that the substantial investments made under Jal Jeevan Mission translate into reliable, continuous and sustainable drinking water and sanitation services for rural households across the country.

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