

**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA,
SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND
AT THE INAUGURAL SESSION OF THE INDIA WATER WEEK -
2019**

New Delhi, September 24, 2019

1. I am happy to inaugurate the 6th India Water Week-2019 being attended by a large number of delegates and stakeholders from within the country and across the globe. I am sure that all of you will engage in meaningful discussion and help find effective ideas and innovative solutions to address water-related issues in India.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

2. I pose a question to all of you. Can we imagine life without water? We all will say 'No'. Our Vedas have highlighted its importance. I quote a few words from Yajurveda:

आपो हिष्ठा मयो भुवः,
स्था न ऊर्जे दधातन.....
यो वः शिवतमो रसः।

Broadly, it translates to: Water is the life-giver on earth. It is a great source of energy. It is the most beneficial elixir.

3. Over the ages, great civilizations and cities flourished alongside mighty rivers. Be it the Indus Valley, Egyptian, or Chinese Civilizations or be it Varanasi, Madurai, Paris, or Moscow, they all grew next to rivers. Where there was water, humanity thrived and survived. In the present times, we humans search for water as distant as the moon. At the same time, we have been negligent in preserving water resources on our own planet. When a child is born, the parents start planning for his or her future. We start saving for their future needs of education and so on. But do we ever think that our

child would need fresh and clean water for his or her survival? We owe it to our future generations to make water conservation a priority. Many efforts for this cause are underway across the world. India Water Week too is one such notable effort.

4. The theme of this edition of India Water Week is 'Water Cooperation – Coping with 21st Century Challenges'. Indeed, cooperation between different stakeholders is critical, if we are to face the challenges concerning water effectively. Water issues are too multi-faceted and complex to be solved by only the government or just one nation. All nations and their water communities have to come together to help build a water sustainable future for all.
5. Research suggests that about 40 per cent of the world's population lives in water-stressed areas. Climate change and related environmental concerns have made provision of safe and clean drinking water even more challenging. Despite the challenges, I am happy to note that the Government of India has made provision of safe and clean drinking water to citizens one of its primary goals.
6. To ensure better water governance and improved sanitary conditions, the Government merged several departments related to water and sanitation into a new integrated Ministry of Jal Shakti. Now, this Ministry will provide a single-window system for all water-related issues, ensuring speedier and effective solutions.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

7. I also appreciate the Government for envisaging the Jal Jeevan Mission, which plans to supply water to every rural household by 2024. This is a bold and ambitious Mission as presently only about 18 per cent of rural households in India get piped water supply. This Mission will focus on integrated demand and supply side management of water at the local

level. It will create infrastructure for rainwater harvesting, ground-water recharge and management of household wastewater. I am confident that with widespread people's participation, the Government will be able to achieve the Mission's goal.

8. Water is a key resource for our farmers and for sustainable agriculture. The Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana which was launched in 2015, is a major initiative for this sector. This nation-wide scheme is being implemented to increase the irrigated area in the country. Consistent with our water conservation goals, the scheme also envisages adoption of precision-irrigation and water saving technologies to ensure "More Crop-Per Drop". We often talk of reducing our "carbon-footprint". It is time we talk of reducing our "water-footprint" as well. Our farmers, corporate leaders and government bodies need to actively consider the "water-footprint" of different crops and industries. We need to encourage agricultural and industrial practices that have the least water-footprint.
9. Managing and mapping ground-water resources is also an important aspect of water governance. The widespread use of boring machines has led to unregulated and excessive exploitation of ground-water. We have to value our ground-water and be responsible. Moreover, we need to document our ground-water resources. I am told that under our National Aquifer Mapping Program, we have so far, mapped over a million square kilo meters, while another 1.5 million will be mapped by March 2021.
10. We have to ensure that our precious rainwater does not get wasted. We need to store and capture our rainwater by utilizing our existing reservoirs, dams, other water bodies and by adopting water harvesting measures in our homes and neighbourhoods. Water scarcity and drought situation faced by many of our states can be greatly mitigated with effective rainwater harvesting.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

11. India is blessed with a number of rivers. These rivers form an integral part of our lives and culture. We worship them and we hold them in high regard. Yet, today our rivers are polluted. It is time we come together to rejuvenate them.

12. Here, I must appreciate the Government of India for launching 'National Mission for Clean Ganga'. This mission entails numerous projects to ensure the continuous and unpolluted flow of the Ganga. I grew up in Kanpur and have fond memories associated with river Ganga, which we regard as our mother. I am personally attached to the vision of a Clean Ganga. While attending an event last year, I was elated to witness both citizens and organisations pledging themselves to this cause. Making Ganga and our other rivers clean cannot be a mission of the Government alone. It has to be our collective endeavour and our collective promise.

13. As citizens we must contribute to this cause. For instance, we recently celebrated Ganesh Chaturthi and Navratras are a few days away. We need to ensure that the idols of deities immersed in the rivers are made of environment-friendly materials. It will help keep the rivers clean and ensure the safety of marine life.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

14. A few days from now, on 2nd October we will be celebrating the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. It will also mark the official completion of the Swachha Bharat Abhiyan. Over the past five years, Swachha Bharat Abhiyan saw participation of people from all strata of society as well as organisations, who took responsibility and made it their personal mission. I was pleased to felicitate few such Swachhta crusaders earlier this month in this very hall, as part of the Swachh Mahaotsav 2019. Today, we have achieved almost full sanitation coverage and the country is on the verge

of becoming open defecation free. We all need to show the same dedication and commitment towards Jal Shakti Abhiyan.

15. The Central and State Governments are already collaborating on water conservation activities in the most water stressed blocks and districts of the country. Focused interventions for rain water harvesting and water conservation, including the restoration and renovation of traditional water bodies are being planned. I also acknowledge the several NGOs working for water conservation across the country. And there are numerous techno-entrepreneurs who are developing and implementing innovative technology solutions for improving our water management. I am sure that the Jal Shakti Ministry would build partnerships and work with all stakeholders to make the pursuit of assured water availability to each citizen, a Jan Andolan.

16. While we seek solutions to address different water-related issues, we should not lose sight of our age-old methods of conserving water. A blending of our traditional knowledge with modern technologies and techniques can help us become a water secure nation. Let us pledge to achieve our water-related goals with robust cooperation among all our states, public and private organisations and our people.

17. I wish all of you and the India Water Week - 2019 all success.

Thank You!
Jai Hind!