

## **PM to address 6000 women Sarpanches on International Women's Day**

**Swachh Shakti -2017** to highlight Women's leadership in Swachh Bharat Mission

The Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation, in association with the Government of Gujarat, is organizing a Women Champions Convention – called Swachh Shakti 2017 – on March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2017, International Women's Day, at Mahatma Mandir, Gandhinagar. 6,000 selected women sarpanches and grassroots workers from across the country have been invited and will be honoured for their outstanding contribution towards making Swachh Bharat a reality in rural India. The Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi will address and honour the women champions on this occasion.

Swachh Shakti Saptah has been celebrated from March 1<sup>st</sup> to March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2017 across the country, with various State and district level administrations organizing special events to honour and felicitate women champions who have done exceptional work in the field of Rural Sanitation. Several Union Ministers are taking part in the State level events to carry forward the message of Swachhta and to pay tribute to role of women.

On March 7<sup>th</sup>, 2017, women sarpanches from across the country will arrive in Gujarat, and will be taken around some districts on Thematic Study tours. On these study tours, they will watch developmental models in action around various themes, including Dairy Development, Water Conservation (WASMO model, drip irrigation), Self Help Groups, Food Processing, E-Gram / Digital Gram, Khadi and Agriculture Produce Markets. The visits will be followed by a Cultural Program at Sabarmati River Front on the evening of March 7<sup>th</sup>.

On March 8<sup>th</sup>, all participating sarpanches will gather at Mahatma Mandir, Gandhinagar, and view a digital exhibition designed around the theme "Role of Women Champions in Swachh Bharat". Major issues of Swachh Bharat have been imaginatively packaged with interactivity in an iconic films and exhibition gallery. This will be followed by an edutainment session around six themes, interspersed by cultural performances by local troupes from Gujarat, The themes are: Swachh Bharat, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Digital India, Rural Housing (Awaas), Skill India, and Garibi Se Mukti (Jan Dhan, insurance, micro-loans etc.)

The Prime Minister will arrive at the venue following this session, and, after a visit to the digital exhibition, will deliver his address to the 6000 sarpanches. He will also honour 10 women swachhagrahis who have done exceptional work for Swachh Bharat. The Speaker, Lok Sabha, Smt Sumitra Mahajan, the Union Minister of Drinking Water and Sanitation, Shri Narendra Singh Tomar, the Union Minister of Textiles, Smt Smriti Irani, and the Chief Minister of Gujarat, Shri Vijay Rupani, will also be present on the occasion, and address the women sarpanches.

Meanwhile, across the country, many States are holding public events to honour Women Swachhta Champions in their States as a part of Swachh Shakti 2017 on March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2017. Central Ministers are attending Swachhta celebrations and award ceremonies in different

States to provide a greater morale boost to the participants and awardees. Shri Thawar Chand Gehlot, Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment, will be visiting Rajnandgaon, Chhatisgarh; Shri Ramesh Jigajinagi, Minister of State, Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation, will visit Udupi, Karnataka; Shri Ajay Tamta, Minister of State for Textiles, will visit Jaipur, Rajasthan; and Shri Vainkiah Naidu, Minister I&B and Urban Povert Alleviation will visit Siddhipet, Telangana on the occasion. Also, Shri Parsottambhai Rupala, MP, Rajya Sabha, visited Gangtok, Sikkim, and Shri Ram Kripal Yadav, Minister of State for Rural Development, participated in a big Swachh Shakti Saptah function in Ranchi, Jharkhand on March 6th, 2017.

The Swachh Bharat Mission, launched on October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2014, by the Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, is aimed at achieving a clean and open defecation free (ODF) India. An ODF rural India will have far reaching benefits for all sections of society, especially women. Open defecation is an indignity that no woman in this country must have to bear. Creating an ODF society provides dignity, safety and security along with health benefits to millions of women. Inspiring leaders among women sarpanches have decided to champion the cause of sanitation in their respective villages across the country, by galvanizing the entire village to achieve an ODF status. With all-round efforts, 110 districts and 1.7 lakh villages have become ODF since Swachh Bharat Mission was launched.

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