

Union Minister of Jal Shakti, Shri C.R. Patil reviews the Jalaj initiative and charts a new path for river conservation and livelihood generation

Along with conservation, Jalaj aims at creating economic opportunities and enhancing community participation in river rejuvenation efforts: Shri C R Patil

Union minister lauds the innovative models developed under Jalaj and emphasizes the need to scale up successful practices across other major river basins

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Union Minister of Jal Shakti, Shri C.R. Patil, chaired a review meeting to assess the progress of the Wildlife Institute of India's livelihood-focused project JALAJ. The Jalaj program under the aegis of National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG), is a significant component of the Government's Arth Ganga vision — linking people to rivers through sustainable economic activities. Along with livelihood focus, the project aims at creating societal awareness towards aquatic biodiversity conservation.



Highlighting its pivotal role, the Union Minister emphasized that along with conservation, JALAJ aims at creating economic opportunities and enhancing community participation in river rejuvenation efforts. Jalaj has successfully connected river conservation with livelihood generation by promoting eco-tourism, sustainable farming, skill development, and artisanal production across the Ganga basin. The initiative aims at establish 75 Jalaj centers, with various models such as Dolphin Safaris, Homestays, Livelihood Centers, and Awareness & Sale Points etc. Jalaj has empowered over 5,000 members of the boating community and supported more than 2,400 women in 42 districts across nine states.



It emerged in the review that JALAJ aims at symbiotic linkage between river and communities and helps in educating people on values of conserved Ganga river. The review noted that Jalaj has conducted 263 training programs and mass outreach efforts through digital and print media, including YouTube channel. Shri C.R. Patil reviewed efforts to further enhance the livelihood potential of Jalaj and stressed its role as a bridge connecting communities to river ecosystems, making river conservation an economically rewarding endeavour. He appreciated the innovative models developed under Jalaj and emphasized the need to scale up successful practices across other major river basins like the Godavari, Periyar, Pampa and Barak whose ecological assessments were also reviewed in the meeting.



To further strengthen outreach and awareness, a dedicated Jalaj informative website was launched by Sh. C.R. Patil. The website serves as a comprehensive resource hub, offering detailed insights into various Jalaj models such as Homestays, Dolphin Safaris, Livelihood Training Centers, and Awareness and Sale Centers. It also showcases success stories on how the Jalaj initiative has empowered community members, particularly women, by linking them to marketing centers. The website displays a range of eco-friendly products crafted by Ganga Praharis and aims to create widespread awareness about threatened aquatic biodiversity, including the Ganga River Dolphin, crocodilians, freshwater turtles, and water birds.



Additionally, a Jalaj Products Catalogue was launched which has been developed, profiling sustainably produced goods prepared at Jalaj Production Centers, categorized into stationery items, home décor, apparels, body and skincare, and edibles. Furthermore, "SaanskritikLehren," a special feature under Jalaj, was released by Sh. C.R. Patil which highlights the cultural ecosystem service value of the Ganga River, emphasizing its deep connection with India's heritage, traditions, and the livelihoods of millions. Jalaj's success has been widely recognized. The Hon'ble President of India lauded it during Gaj Utsav 2023, and Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi mentioned Jalaj as a model for freshwater conservation in his "Mann Ki Baat" address and at ICCON 2023, Mysore.

The Jalaj initiative, by linking conservation efforts with livelihood generation, stands today as a shining example of how environmental protection and socio-economic development can go hand-in-hand — truly realizing the vision of Arth Ganga.

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