

Rural development secretaries vow to link lavatories to housing plans

Praise for Bihar sanitation model

OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Oct. 29: The Congress-led UPA government today showered praises on the Bihar government's efforts to eradicate the practice of open defecation and asked other states to implement the model.

At a meeting of state rural development secretaries, Union rural development minister Jairam Ramesh asked the states to follow the Bihar model to enhance the pace of construction of toilets in rural areas.

Most of the state rural development secretaries promised to link IAY scheme with toilet construction apart from

promoting sanitation facility for non-IAY beneficiaries.

"We have got commitments from major states. Around 85 lakh toilets would be built by the state governments in 2013-14. We will monitor the implementation and ensure that procedures will not stand in the way," the minister said.

Uttar Pradesh will build 18 lakh toilets followed by Andhra Pradesh (16 lakh), Bihar (10 lakh), Odisha (9 lakh), Maharashtra (7 lakh), Rajasthan (5 lakh), Madhya Pradesh (4.5 lakh), Bengal (3 lakh) and Jharkhand (2.5 lakh).

The Bihar government has taken a policy decision that no



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house would be sanctioned to beneficiaries under the government's Indira Awas Yojana (IAY) scheme without provision for toilets.

"This year, Bihar has taken a policy decision. No IAY house would be built without a toilet. So, we have recommended the Bihar model to all

states. Today, I met all the state government secretaries and asked them to follow the Bihar model, which ensures that no IAY house is built without a toilet," Ramesh said.

The praise came on a day Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar slammed the BJP's prime ministerial candidate, Narendra Modi at a Dal convention in Rajgir.

The Centre provides assistance of Rs 70,000 to deserving below poverty line households to have a *pucca* house. At present, sanctioning IAY houses to beneficiaries is conducted by panchayati raj officials of the state government.

The IAY scheme would provide houses to 30 lakh house-

holds this year, including 7.3 lakh in Bihar, 3.6 lakh in Uttar Pradesh, 2.3 lakh in Bengal and 1.6 lakh in Odisha.

Construction of toilets is being carried out under the Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan scheme of the Union ministry of drinking water and sanitation. The assistance given to a beneficiary is around Rs 10,000 to set up a toilet. Part of the assistance comes from the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA).

"I want to make a special mention of Bihar, which has not only converged MGNREGA and Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan schemes but also the IAY," the minister said.