

CENTRAL WATER COMMISSION
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The News Clippings on water Resources Development and allied subjects are enclosed for perusal of Chairman, CWC ,and Member (WP&P/D&R/RM) CWC .The soft copies of clippings have also been uploaded on the CWC website

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Centre to tap MGNREGA funds to make Saraswati flow again

Committee tasked with scouting palaeo-channels across the country to revive ancient rivers H-9.5

JACOB KOSHY
NEW DELHI

The Centre plans to tap rural employment guarantee funds to recharge remnants of ancient rivers – including the mythical Saraswati – in a bid to boost groundwater reserves.

Union Water Resources Minister Uma Bharti, told *The Hindu* in an interview last week that a committee of secretaries – from the Water, Environment and Rural Development

ministries – had been constituted to see how the ₹48,000 crore MGNREGS (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme) fund could be harnessed. “Reviving such palaeo-channels may not be useful for irrigation but it could improve groundwater storage,” said Ms. Bharti.

Paleo-channels
Palaeo-channels are old rivers that have dried up and



Uma Bharti

filled with sediment. Last October, a committee of hydrologists, geologists and

archaeologists – as part of study commissioned by the Water Resources Ministry – reported evidence on the course of the Saraswati, mentioned in the Rigveda and Hindu mythology.

K.S. Valdiya of the Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research (JNCASR), who led the team, concluded that the Sutlej river “represented the western branch of the Saraswati.”

The Markanda and the

Sarsuti (now called the Ton-Yamuna rivers) watered the eastern branch of the river. The branches met in Shatrana, 25 kilometres south of Patiala and “flowed as a large river” emptying into the Rann of Kutch, the report said.

Across the country
Building on this, a committee was tasked with scouting palaeo-channels across the country. Wherever these channels

were located, the soil was generally soft and therefore, it was easy to direct surface waters towards them and raise the water table, Ms. Bharti added.

K.B. Biswas, Chairman, Central Groundwater Board said his department had been proposing the use of MGNREGA funds for aquifer recharge. . “There is greater interest to build percolation tanks and ponds that will contribute to groundwater recharge,” he said.

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Prepare for monsoon failure, calamities: Centre to states

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, 8 MAY

The Centre has written to all state governments on Monday to prepare themselves in case of emergency arising out of monsoon failure or natural calamities in the country.

The advisory was issued in view of the prevailing drought like situation in some parts of the country and acute shortage of water in some states. Union agriculture minister Radha Mohan personally wrote to all the chief ministers and also allowed them to earmark 25 per cent of funds under centrally sponsored schemes as flexi-funds and use it for mitigation of natural calamities.

While Indian Meteorological Department has projected a satisfactory rainfall of 96



per cent for the coming monsoon, Centre told states not to take any chance and be prepared for any eventuality. The minister directed them to review and monitor the District Agricultural Contingency Plans and ensure establishment and activation of Drought Management Centre and regularly monitor drought Mitigation programme.

9T-9.5

In a letter written to all chief ministers, Radha Mohan Singh asked states to closely monitor the implementation of schemes under District Irrigation Plans of the Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana and status of progress of water conservation related works under MGNREGS and watershed management.

He told states to further speed up the progress in the restoration of irrigation infrastructure, desilting of canals, repair of tube-wells and faulty pumps. The agriculture minister, while asking CMs to review the state of preparedness in managing weather related contingency, also suggested them to expand the coverage of the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana.