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Q8

What are the salient features of the Jal Shakti Abhiyan launched by the Government of India for water conservation and water security?

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2020 · GS III · 10 marks · Environment and Conservation

Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

Core demand of the question

- What are the salient features of the Jal Shakti Abhiyan launched by the Government of India for water conservation and water security?
- Keep the explanation within a 10-mark length

Revision summary

Jal Shakti Abhiyan is a 2019 mission-mode conservation campaign, not a new Act.

It sat under the new Ministry of Jal Shakti and targeted **water-stressed districts**.

- **Five pillars:** harvest, traditional tank revival, reuse-recharge, watersheds, afforestation.

It converges MGNREGA labour with district teams and Jal Shakti Kendras.

Jal Jeevan Mission taps are related policy, not the same instrument.

Introduction

Jal Shakti Abhiyan is a **time-bound, mission-mode water conservation campaign**, not a new water statute. Launched in 2019 after the Ministry of Jal Shakti was created, it pushed districts to harvest, recharge, and reuse water with existing schemes rather than wait for a single mega dam.

Body

Institutional frame

- The **Ministry of Jal Shakti** (2019) merged water resources with drinking water and sanitation so conservation and tap water sat in one political shop.
- The Abhiyan is a **campaign with central teams in districts**, using collectors, MGNREGA, and line departments, closer to a drive than to a standalone Act.
- First phase focused on **water-stressed districts** (initially on the order of 250-plus districts), especially in the pre-monsoon and monsoon window.

Five intervention pillars

- **Water conservation and rainwater harvesting:** check dams, rooftop harvest, farm ponds.
- **Renovation of traditional water bodies:** tanks, katas, ahars, temple tanks - repair rather than only new concrete.
- **Reuse and recharge:** treated wastewater where possible; **borewell recharge** and aquifer interventions.

- **Watershed development:** ridge-to-valley works already familiar from IWMP-type programmes.
- **Intensive afforestation:** catchment trees as a water, not only a forest, measure.

Water security extras

- **Jal Shakti Kendras** as district knowledge and coordination points.
- Convergence with **MGNREGA** labour, **Atal Bhujal Yojana** (groundwater, selected states), and later **Jal Jeevan Mission** household tap connections - related but distinct: JJM is piped drinking water, the Abhiyan is conservation behaviour and structures.
- Thrust on **block-level water budgeting** and public participation (catch the rain, not only a ministry press note).

Limits

- A campaign can build structures that fail without maintenance, groundwater regulation, and cropping change.
- It does not by itself repeal free power for pumps, which still mines aquifers in Punjab and elsewhere.

Flow diagram

Jal Shakti Abhiyan 2019 -> Harvest and tanks
 Jal Shakti Abhiyan 2019 -> Recharge reuse
 Jal Shakti Abhiyan 2019 -> Watershed trees
 Jal Shakti Abhiyan 2019 -> Stressed districts
 Harvest and tanks -> Water security
 Recharge reuse -> Water security

Conclusion

Jal Shakti Abhiyan's salient features are mission-mode district drives, five conservation pillars, stressed-district focus, and convergence with MGNREGA and the new Jal Shakti ministry. It is water security as campaign and recharge, not a replacement for pricing, cropping, and the 2006-era water laws.

Facts & figures

Ministry of Jal Shakti, 2019

Merger of Water Resources and Drinking Water & Sanitation; political home of the Abhiyan.

Five interventions

Harvesting, traditional bodies, reuse/recharge, watersheds, afforestation - the official campaign menu.

Water-stressed districts

First-round geographic focus of the Abhiyan rather than an all-India uniform project list.

MGNREGA convergence

Labour and funds for water works used as the muscle of the campaign.

Jal Jeevan Mission

Separate 2019 piped-water mission; conservation Abhiyan is meant to protect the source those taps need.

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