

Plan to improve drinking water facility in Red areas



■ Experts at a workshop in Patna on Monday.

ABHISHEK/HT PHOTO

HT Correspondent

■ htletters@hindustantimes.com

PATNA: An action plan to improve drinking water facility and sanitation in seven of the 33 naxal-affected districts in the state will be in place by Wednesday. Gaya, Jehanabad, Arwal, Aurangabad, Rohtas, Nawada and Jamui are the districts that are currently in focus of the meet.

A three-day workshop sponsored by union ministry of rural development is currently underway in the city for this purpose under the joint aegis of Uttarakhand Academy of Administration (UAA) and the Public Health Engineering Department (PHED) of Bihar.

The workshop will identify and discuss the problems in the concerned districts, on the basis of which the action plan will be developed.

Administrative officials, engineers and several non-governmental organisations from the seven districts are attending it. In a state where official records show that only 36.5% individual households and 66% schools have sanitation facilities (read toilets) how important is to focus on a few naxal-hit districts? That too, when there has been no incident to prove that the naxals are against clean drinking water and sanitation in the villages

in the areas under their influence.

PHED principal secretary, Ravindra Pawar said, "This is a scheme of the government of India. The selected districts are among the 34 naxal-affected districts chosen across the country to implement the scheme. But, our own target regarding sanitation is to achieve 100% coverage of individual households in the state in the next five years. All the schools will be covered within the year."

"As far as problems related to drinking water are concerned, south Bihar districts are facing acute water crisis because the last two Monsoons brought very little rain. This led to less groundwater recharging, which aggravated the situation," added Pawar.

UAA deputy director Vinod Kumar Mishra said, "since our academy functions as a key resource centre for water and sanitation for the union government, we will also get to know more about these districts."

PHED chief engineers, AK Srivastava and Satyendra Kumar, superintending engineer, DP Singh, Centre's representative Atiya Anis along with M Thakkar of UNICEF were also among those present on the first day of the workshop.