



# After RTI and RTE, now right to drinking water

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**NEW DELHI:** After right to education and information, citizens will soon get right to clean drinking water and sanitation.

In a new draft National Water Policy, the water resources ministry has suggested that the access to safe drinking water and sanitation be regarded as a right.

Around one-third of the Indians don't have access to clean drinking water and more than half of the country's population to clean sanitation.

## WATER RESOURCE MINISTRY PROPOSES RIGHT TO CLEAN WATER IN A NEW NATIONAL DRAFT POLICY

Only 42.2% people in Jharkhand and 38% in Manipur have access to clean drinking water whereas in Punjab, Delhi, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand have nearly 90% coverage.

According to a World Bank estimate, the poor quality of

drinking water causes 21% of diseases in India and this creates a burden of around ₹300 crore every year. This is despite the country spending ₹1,48,000 crore to provide drinking water since 1990s. The new policy will force the state governments to ensure safe drinking water access to all in the next few years.

To achieve the goal, the ministry has proposed a national water framework, which will help each state to come up with essential legislation on water governance. The state legislations will have to provide nec-

essary authority to lower tiers of the government to deal with the local water situation, the draft states.

It also states that the local government institutions will ensure access to a minimum quantity of potable water that will be available within the reach of each household. But it will come with a price for everyone; water user associations will have the power to charge tariff.

"Water needs to be managed as a community resource, by the state, under public trust doctrine to achieve food security, livelihood...", the draft says.

### NO WATERING DOWN

#### Households having access to drinking water

##### Top 5 states

Punjab	97.6%
DELHI	97.2%
Maharashtra	90.2%
Himachal	88.6%
Uttarakhand	86.7%

##### Bottom 5 states

Mizoram	36%
Manipur	38%
Jharkhand	42.2%
Assam	58.8%
J&K	65.2%

#### Other facts

- India has world's 17% population, but only 4% of water
- India is a water stressed nation because of rising population and urbanization