

## Kashinagar becomes first 'open defecation-free' block

- Staff Reporter



'Mo Swachh Shauchalay':Community toilets and (right)a decorated new toilet at households at Kashinagar.— Photo: Special Arrangement



Kashinagar in Gajapati district became first 'open defecation free' revenue block in Odisha.

According to administration sources, Kashinagar block has 12,300 households, who live in 140 villages under 12 panchayats. Now every family of this block has a toilet of its own, apart from community toilets. Continuous awareness programmes have also made the inhabitants realise the benefits of sanitation and use of toilets. Odisha Chief Secretary G. C. Pati during his visit to Gajapati district on September 4, officially declared Kashinagar to be the first open air defecation free revenue block of the State.

Speaking to , Gajapati District Collector Mansi Nimbhal said now their target was to make the whole district 'open defecation free' by March 2016. Gajapati district has seven blocks including Kashinagar with 129 panchayats. The aim is to build around 1,50,000 new toilets so that the district becomes totally open defecation free. According to the Collector, the enthusiasm shown by people living in remote areas in Kashinagar block towards sanitation and use of toilets has hinted that people are conscious about health of their own and family. Interestingly, at several villages families have decorated their new toilets to give them a festive look.

Prabeen Kumar Bebartha, Pradhan Mantri Rural Development Fellow (PMRDF) in Gajapati district said, there were villages like Raimba and Arimbha in Kashinagar block that did not even have proper road connectivity. But interest of inhabitants of these two villages to have toilets to stop open defecation compelled the administration to take up road projects for these two villages.

In March 2015, Gajapati district administration had launched a mission mode campaign named 'Mo Swachh Shauchalay' (my clean toilet) campaign in the

district. The aim was to end open air defecation completely, which was a major cause of health problems in this tribal-dominated district where inhabitants live in remote villages. Under this project through Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) approach toilets are being constructed and used by households. This initiative has been taken up jointly by the Gajapati District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) and District Water and Sanitation Mission (DWSM). Panchayat samitis are the implementing agency while DWSM is acting as a monitoring unit.

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