

# '4,000 Gujarat villages freed from open defecation'

## Jayanti Ravi Claims Swachhta Will Raise GDP

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Ahmedabad:** Responding to PM Narendra Modi's clarion call to build a 'Swachh Bharat', his home state, Gujarat, has freed 4,000 villages from the practice of open defecation, claimed **Jayanti Ravi**, state rural development commissioner, on Tuesday. Ravi was speaking on the sidelines of a seminar held at the Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India (EDII), here on the topic, 'Business Opportunities in Swachh Bharat Mission.'



Ravi stressed that constructing toilets are easier than creating a mindset to accept and use toilets. She said that Gujarat should be made a hub of startups, which can simultaneously fill the goals of Swachh Bharat Mission, besides their entrepreneurial activities.

"Our growth rate or GDP can be 6.5% higher if we crack this problem of open defecation. It affects everything, including education and health, which are interconnected with person's efficiency and productivity. This is also linked with the poverty factor," she said.

Speaking about business opportunities in the Swachh Bharat Mission, S B Dangayach, managing director, Sintex Industries Ltd, said there is a plethora of business opportunities in treating sewage water.

"We need to adapt India-centric ways, and integrate knowledge and technology to deal with cleanliness-related problems. India has the technology to generate biogas from cattle

## SHG women to build toilets in villages

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**Ahmedabad:** In a first, Gujarat has roped in women from self-help groups (SHGs) across the state to construct soak pit toilets in villages. This can provide employment to the women while making villages free of the practice of open defecation.

Anjan Makim, director of Rural Self Employment Training Institute (RSETI). Gujarat, said that women of SHGs in around 2,500 villages have been trained to construct toilets. "The women are given training to construct soak pit toilets, which are monitored by engineers under Swachh Bharat Mission project. Besides, those women will also be trained to convince villagers to build toilets in their households," Makim said.

The women will also show villagers how to keep their toilets clean, even without the use of chemicals or phenyl components, he said. Makim said the new initiative was begun around a month back,



with pacts signed between village sarpanches and the state agency. If a sarpanch gives his nod to building of toilets in his village by SHG women, he will be declared as iconic sarpanch, he said.

The SHG women are paid Rs 12,000 for construction of each toilet by the state government, apart from the daily wages, added Makim. He said that the procedure is transparent and with doesn't involve NGOs or contractors for building toilets, while the remuneration can go directly to SHG women.

"By such an initiative, Gujarat can become open-defecation free state by end of this year, and the model can be also replicated across the nation," added Makim.

and bio waste. This may help us to deal with energy-related issues," Dangayach said. Dr Sunil Shukla, director of EDII, said that Swachh Bharat Mission could be taken forward by creating socially relevant and responsible businesses.