

**Press Information Bureau
Government of India
Ministry of Drinking Water & Sanitation**

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**Global Sanitation Ministers go on an inspirational ‘Gandhi Trail’
field visit to Gujarat**

***Looking to the past for inspiration on the world’s
sanitation future***

On the second day of the Mahatma Gandhi International Sanitation Convention, 116 foreign delegates including sanitation ministers visited select sites related to the life and work of Mahatma Gandhi on the “Gandhi Trail”. The delegation was led by the Minister of State for Drinking Water and Sanitation, Shri Ramesh Jigajinagi. The Mahatma Gandhi International Sanitation Convention is a four-day convention organized by the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation, and includes more than 160 international representatives from 68 countries. It was inaugurated by the Hon’ble President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind, yesterday in New Delhi.

The delegation first visited Punsari village, an example of the success of the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM). For the 5,100 residents, each home has a functional toilet with a water facility. Since it was declared open defecation free, not a single child has dropped out of school. The delegation showed keen interest in the twin pit toilet technology used in India, which is a low-cost, eco-friendly and easy to use toilet technology, suitable for large parts of rural India.

The visitors viewed the local health facility and took note that the infant and maternal mortality rates are zero. They also visited the school, anganwadi and interacted with villagers about the toilets they had built in their homes. They also undertook tree plantation, visited a micro compost pit and drainage as part of SLWM work in the village and said that they were inspired to see such high quality service delivery and behaviour change on the ground.

Later, the delegation visited Dandi Kutir at the Mahatma Mandir complex and paid homage to Mahatma Gandhi at the Sabarmati Ashram in Ahmedabad. They also attended a lunch hosted by the Governor of Gujarat, Shri Om Prakash Kohli.

Speaking about the visit, Ms. Siriwan Chandanachulaka, delegate from Thailand, noted that it was evident that the national- and state level political

investment in health and sanitation was paying off. “It is clear that the achievement is the result of hard work, community participation, and strong leadership. Everybody looks happy and healthy”, she said. Mr. Amidou Sani, delegate from Togo, said that he was sending observations and findings in real time directly to 400 colleagues back home from his experience of Gujarat.

The MGISC culminates on 2nd October with the launch of Mahatma Gandhi’s 150th birth year celebrations, also marking the beginning of the final year of the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) or Clean India Mission. The 2nd October session will be presided over by the Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi.

India is close to becoming open defecation free. The rural sanitation coverage of India has increased significantly, from 39% in October 2014 to 94.44% as of 30 September 2018. Nearly 86.5 million household toilets have been constructed under the Mission. 25 States/Union Territories, 509 districts, and 500,000 villages have declared themselves free from open defecation. The number of people practicing open defecation in rural India has gone down from 550 million in 2014, to less than 150 million till date.

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