

PRESS RELEASE
GOVERNMENT OF MEGHALAYA
PUBLIC HEALTH ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT

Hon'ble Minister Shri Marcuise N. Marak Launches State-Level Jal Utsav 2026 in Meghalaya

State-wide water festival aims to strengthen community ownership of drinking water systems under the Jal Jeevan Mission

SHILLONG, 20 July 2026: The State-Level Jal Utsav 2026 was launched today by the Hon'ble Minister of the Public Health Engineering Department, Shri Marcuise N. Marak, at the State Convention Hall, Shillong. The event was attended by Commissioner & Secretary, PHED, Shri Pravin Bakshi, IAS; Chief Engineer, PHED, Shri R. S. Nongbri; Chief Engineer (Environment & Sanitation), Shri D. D. Umdor; senior government officials, students, members of Village Water & Sanitation Committees (VWSCs), and PHED officers and staff.

Held under the theme "Celebrating Water, Securing Sources," Jal Utsav is built around the principles of Celebrate, Understand and Protect. Through Rajya Jal Utsav and Lok Jal Utsav, the campaign aims to celebrate Meghalaya's water heritage, promote conservation, and strengthen community ownership of drinking water systems.

Welcoming the gathering, Shri R. S. Nongbri said lasting water security depends not only on infrastructure but also on protecting springs, rivers and catchment areas. Commissioner & Secretary Shri Pravin Bakshi, IAS, introduced the campaign, while a VWSC representative highlighted the importance of community participation in sustaining rural water supply systems. Cultural performances by local artists reflected the spirit of the festival.

Shri Pravin Bakshi also unveiled the Department's annual calendar for Rajya Jal Utsav and Lok Jal Utsav, to be implemented from July 2026 until early 2027. State-level activities include water quality awareness through Field Test Kit demonstrations and laboratory visits, cultural programmes, a marathon, asset maintenance drives, mobilisation of Self-Help Groups and VWSCs, and competitions for schools and colleges. The campaign will conclude by recognising the state's best-performing districts, villages, VWSCs and "Jal Champions."

At the village level, Lok Jal Utsav will feature water budgeting, storytelling, film screenings, walks to traditional water bodies, river clean-up and plastic-free river campaigns, and Gram Sabha meetings on water governance. Shri Bakshi said the campaign's success would be measured by stronger community ownership, protection of water sources and the long-term sustainability of rural water supply systems.

The launch also featured the experience of the VWSC Secretary of Diengiong village, Mawpat C&RD Block, who shared how access to safe piped water has transformed everyday life. Before the Jal Jeevan Mission, women and girls travelled long distances to fetch water, often affecting children's education and daily livelihoods. Since achieving Har Ghar Jal status, the village has benefited from improved quality of life through the active partnership between the VWSC and PHED in protecting and maintaining its water supply system.

Addressing the gathering, Hon'ble Minister Shri Marcuise N. Marak described Jal Utsav as "a people's movement that encourages every citizen to value, protect and conserve water for present and future generations."

The Minister highlighted Meghalaya's achievements under the Jal Jeevan Mission since 2019, with rural tap water coverage increasing from 4,550 households (0.70%) to 5,47,077 households, covering 84.06% of rural households. He noted that 3,616 villages have achieved Har Ghar Jal status and credited engineers, field staff, district administrations, VWSCs and local communities for this progress.

With Jal Jeevan Mission 2.0 extended until December 2028, the Minister said the focus will now shift towards reliable service delivery, source sustainability and stronger community ownership. He highlighted three key initiatives supporting this vision—Sujalam Bharat, a digital platform for monitoring rural water systems; Jal Arpan Diwas, to strengthen community responsibility for water infrastructure; and Jal Utsav, which will encourage public participation in water conservation.

Concluding his address, Shri Marcuise N. Marak said Jal Utsav marks the beginning of a long-term movement towards a water-secure Meghalaya and called upon every district, village, institution and citizen to take part.

The programme concluded with a vote of thanks by Shri D. D. Umdor, Chief Engineer (Environment & Sanitation), who thanked all participants and appreciated the dedication of VWSCs in achieving Har Ghar Jal status. He expressed confidence that continued collaboration between communities and the Government would further strengthen sustainable water security across Meghalaya.