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Bihar govt seeks MSP for makhana, flags 'bad shape' of research centre

Bihar Agriculture Minister Mangal Pandey raised the issues during his meeting with Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan in New Delhi on July 11, it is learnt.

Written by **Harikishan Sharma** [Follow](#)

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Centre in Darbhanga has only 10 staff against 42 posts, no full-time director.

The Bihar government has urged the Centre to declare the **Minimum Support Price (MSP)** for makhana, an aquatic crop cultivated across 10 districts in the state, The Indian Express has learnt. The state has also flagged “lack” of manpower at the Darbhanga-based Indian Council of Agricultural Research — National Research Centre (ICAR-NRC) for **Makhana** and told the Centre it was in “bad shape”.

Bihar Agriculture Minister Mangal Pandey raised the issues during his meeting with **Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan** in New Delhi on July 11, it is learnt.

Chouhan is learnt to have assured Pandey that he would “look into” the **MSP** demand. He also directed officials to ensure the Makhana Centre in **Darbhanga** is made “fully functional” and the shifting of its administrative headquarters from **Ludhiana** to Patna be “explored urgently.”

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About 85 per cent of the country’s makhana production comes from Bihar, where about 10 lakh people are directly or indirectly involved in its cultivation and

production process. Most of the farmers who cultivate the GI-tagged makhana — in Darbhanga, Saharsa, [Madhepura](#), [Supaul](#), [Purnia](#), [Katihar](#), [Araria](#), [Kishangarhi](#), [Madhubani](#) and [Sitamarhi](#) districts of the state — come from poor background.

Bihar's MSP demand is significant as it comes as state Assembly polls are due next year. In the recent Lok Sabha elections in Bihar, the NDA, of which Chief Minister [Nitish Kumar](#)'s JDU is a part, won 31 of the 40 seats but its vote share dipped significantly.

With 12 MPs, the JDU's significance in the NDA has grown after the BJP fell short of a majority of its own in the recent Lok Sabha polls.

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On the ICAR-[NRC](#) for Makhana in Darbhanga, Pandey is learnt to have told the Union Agriculture Minister that it needed to be “upgraded” and its “administrative headquarters” changed to Patna. He particularly raised the issue of lack of manpower.

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According to sources, the Darbhanga-based ICAR-NRC for Makhana has only 10 employees against a sanctioned strength of 42. There's no administrative staff and a full-time director was never appointed, they added.

According to the Agriculture Ministry, the ICAR-NRC for Makhana, Darbhanga, was sanctioned by the Department of Agricultural Research & Education, Government

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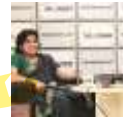
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of India, as a new scheme during the IX Five Year Plan period (1997–2002) for Conservation, Research & Development of the makhana crop.

It started functioning from February 2002. However, in 2005, the NRC for Makhana was merged and brought under the administrative control of ICAR-Research Complex for Eastern Region (RCER), Patna. With this move, the “national” tag of the NRC for Makhana was revoked.

In May 2023, the Central government restored the status of Research Centre for Makhana, Darbhanga to “National Research Centre for Makhana, Darbhanga” and added other aquatic crops including fish in its mandate.

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However, the NRC for Makhana was transferred under the administrative control of the ICAR's Agricultural Engineering Division and attached to the Ludhiana-based ICAR-Central Institute of Post Harvest Engineering & Technology.

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Harikishan Sharma, Senior Assistant Editor at The Indian Express' National Bureau, specializes in reporting on governance, policy, and data. He covers the Prime Minister ... [Read More](#)

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