

Title : Statement regarding signing of Memorandum of Understanding on Ken-Betwa Link.

THE MINISTER OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DASMUNSI): I am making a statement regarding the Signing of Memorandum of Understanding on the Ken-Betwa Link.

The great son of India, former Union Irrigation Minister late Dr. K.L. Rao dreamt of linking the rivers of the country. However, it could not materialize. Late Prime Minister Bharat Ratna Shrimati Indira Gandhi Ji did not allow the dream of Dr. K.L. Rao to die. In 1980, under her leadership, the National Perspective Plan (NPP) was conceived envisaging transfer of water from surplus basins to deficit basins and in 1982, the Central Government through a Resolution constituted a society known as, National Water Development Agency (NWDA) to study the feasibility of the interlinking of rivers proposals suggested in the NPP. Late Prime Minister Shrimati Indira Gandhi Ji desired to identify the links both in the Himalayan and in the Peninsular zones and directed NWDA to take a leading role. NWDA began their task of identifying the links since late 1980s' and identified 30 links, 16 under Peninsular component and 14 under Himalayan component for preparation of feasibility reports in line with the proposal of NPP^[2].

Meanwhile, during a hearing in a PIL in the hon. Supreme Court during the tenure of the NDA Government on a different issue of Yamuna river's pollution, the *amicus curiae* requested the hon. Court to give a direction to the Central Government to consider the networking of rivers. The hon. Court directed to treat this issue as an independent PIL with cause title 'Networking of Rivers' and directed the Centre and the States to respond.

Accordingly, the NDA Government headed by the then hon. Prime Minister, Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayeeji, formed a Task Force, headed by hon.

* Placed in Library, See No. LT 2820/2005

Member of Lok Sabha, Shri Suresh Prabhu. The Task Force submitted their Report on time, but could not evolve consensus amongst the political leadership of the country together or for any link bilaterally. The UPA Government, in their Common Minimum Programme (CMP), gave special emphasis, based on discussion and decision, in a fully consultative manner to identify and confine the linking policy within the peninsular zone.

Accordingly, within the completion of first year of the UPA Government, we have finally concluded the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the two States after prolonged negotiations at various levels, i.e. Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh to have the Detailed Project Report (DPR) of Ken-Betwa link. Uttar Pradesh had some definite reservations on certain issues which they would like to address at the DPR stage. This is a historic decision and a step forward to fulfil the dream of the late Dr. K.L. Rao and the architect of the National Perspective Plan, the late Smt. Indira Gandhiji, through the sustained efforts of the UPA Government.

The Ken-Betwa Link proposal will benefit both the States in their districts, namely Chhatarpur, Tikamgarh, Panna, Raisen and Vidisha in MP and Hamirpur, Jhansi and Banda in UP, by way of increased and stabilized irrigation, consequent increase in the production of food and commercial crops, improved availability of drinking water, flood and drought mitigation and other increased economic activities like pisciculture, afforestation, tourism, generation of hydro power and ecological improvement programmes. This link will ensure overall development of the region.

I thank the engineers and technicians of the NWDA, which began its journey in 1982. I profoundly thank the hon. Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh for his sustained intervention and interest in this matter. It is needless to mention that to implement the Common Minimum Programme's one of the key issues, the initiative and support of the Chairperson of the National Advisory Council, Smt. Sonia Gandhi ji had motivated us to make the breakthrough. I also

like to thank the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, Shri Mulayam Singh Yadav and the Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh, Shri Babulal Gaur for their cooperation and consent for the Detailed Project Report, based on this Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) today, i.e. 25.8.2005.

We have signed it today, Sir.
