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Title: Discussion on points arising out of the answer given by the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Water Resources on 08.07.09 to Starred Question No.61 regarding "Inter-linking of Rivers".

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now, it is 5.30 p.m. and we shall take up Half-an-Hour Discussion and Dr. K.S. Rao to raise a discussion on points arising out of the answer given by the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Water Resources on 08.07.2009 to Starred Question No.61 regarding "Inter-linking of Rivers".

DR. K.S. RAO (ELURU): When the question on the inter-linking of rivers had come up, the hon. Minister had responded to it on 08.07.09 in a positive manner. But when I requested him that there must be a discussion substantially on this issue and requested him for an Half-an-Hour Discussion, he agreed to it. I am very happy and thankful to him for the same.

Sir, today water is a very important issue. One of the reasons why our leader, Shrimati Sonia Gandhi has provided Rs.41000 crore for NREGA is to provide work for the people living in the rural areas and who get work only seasonally, namely, for three months or four months and then they suffer even for living for the rest of the period. This is because people of those areas are farm labourers and even the farmers, they have got the skills for generations only in raising agricultural products and not in other professions unlike developed countries. So, it has become inevitable to spend that much money for their minimum living and not that they would become affluent. My opinion in this regard is that the best way of providing employment in rural areas is to provide water and water is available in plenty. But only thing is that it is not tapped and the water is going to the sea from many of the major rivers. Madam, I am very happy that you are here today. Krishna Godavari basin is one of the rice bowls of the country. We are supplying rice to the entire country and also fish to half of the country only because of availability of water. Bihar, West Bengal, North-East, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh and several other States are being supplied with fish because of water. I would give an example here regarding the position of river. The surplus water of river Krishna that used to go to the sea was 2513 TMC which can cultivate 2.50 crore acres of land. Since Andhra Pradesh was the first State to construct dams across the rivers starting from Nagarjuna Sagar and even other major dams, we are cultivating major land. When Deve Gowdaji was the Prime Minister, he took the initiative of sending special funds from the Government of India to Karnataka by which they constructed dams like Almatti and Narayanpur on the upstream of the river. Thereby, 2500 TMC water that used to go as waste to the sea, came down to 65 TMC of water. It has further come down to only 2 TMC of water. In the year 2002-03, only 2 TMC of water has gone from the entire Krishna river to the sea. In that year 13 lakh acres of farm land in Krishna delta where the crop has grown has become dry because of lack of water. The entire delta which was being cultivated for the last 135 years is in chaos.

The entire farming community lost their mind and could not understand as to what was in store for them in future. The other river which is flowing in the State of Andhra Pradesh is Godavari. Even today, 3,000 TMC of water of Godavari is going to the sea which otherwise by utilisation, a minimum farm area of three crore acre could have been cultivated. That means we are not utilising the water that is going to the sea. To have proper utilisation, what was proposed? It was not proposed today. In 1865 the concept of inter-linking of rivers was proposed by Mr. Arthur Cotton. Subsequently, Shri K.L.Rao, the then Minister of Irrigation had requested the Parliament for inter-linking of the rivers. I do not say that the Government should overnight connect Ganges to Krishna, or Brahmaputra to Godavari, but a humble beginning in this direction can be made. After the regional rivers, be it in the North or be it in the South, are connected with a very meagre cost we can generate wealth of lakhs of thousands of crores of rupees, not just one crore.

The other day I was listening to Shri Ananth Kumar Hegde requesting the Central Government for compensation worth Rs. 14,000 crore because of damage caused by floods last month in the State of Karnataka. The Government of Andhra Pradesh has asked for a sum of Rs. 11,500 crore for damages caused due to floods this year. The Government of India may not be able to provide that much of money, but the damage is there. It is not only crop failure, there are losses to human lives and also cattle. There is also damage to the existing infrastructure and all these damages are only because of excess water. On one side there is flood and on the other side there is drought. Even in a drought situation, the people, particularly the poor people look to the Government for support and the Government once again has to provide thousands of crores of rupees as relief for the drought affected people. Why is this unnecessary expenditure? If the Government can tame the rivers; connect the two rivers and divert water which is in excess in a particular river, which is going waste, then we can avoid both flood and drought. There will not be a fight between State Governments in asking the Central Government to give relief for these calamities of flood. One State asking for Rs. 14,000 crore as relief, the other State asking for Rs. 11,500 crore relief and the Central Government can provide only something like Rs. 500 crore or Rs. 1,000 crore. It is not possible to provide for the entire amount. It is not practically feasible. Instead, if the same money which is being spent on providing relief to the drought and flood affected people every year, if at one time this money is invested for inter-linking the rivers, then the

benefits accruing out of it would be enormous. For example, the Polavaram project is being taken up in the State of Andhra Pradesh. It is one of the best projects in the country. With about an investment of Rs. 20,000 crore, it will generate wealth worth Rs. 10,000 crore every year. Even a big industrialist cannot generate this much wealth. People are not aware of the benefits of some of the irrigation projects. When suddenly it is proposed that inter-linking of rivers will cost Rs. 5,70,000 crore, everyone gets puzzled and start asking questions about wherefrom this money will come and consequently the project is shelved. But it is not that.

I am very happy that even as a Leader of the Opposition, our Leader Smt. Sonia Gandhi supported that proposition in the year 2002. We have to think for the welfare of the people, particularly of people living in the rural areas. It is not only the farmers who will benefit out of this. When there will be enough crop, the labour will benefit. They will not need to migrate to other towns. They can live comfortably in the village itself. The Government would not be needed to provide them with employment. He will get employment on his own. Demand will go up. His wages will go up. This project involves the linking of Godavari and Krishna rivers. By linking these two rivers, the benefit would be that 80 TMC of water will get transferred to the Krishna river. I may inform this House that in the year 2002 when water did not flow down-stream in Krishna, the farmers of the State lost crop worth Rs. 13 lakhs.

Today, by diverting that 80 TMC of water from Godavari to Krishna, one crop cultivated in 30 lakh acres is saved. That means, in a year, it will come to thousands of crores of rupees. The amount of benefits has been already assessed by the engineers and not by me. By interlinking of rivers in this country, the following benefits will be there

Navigation upto a length of 15,000 kilometres can be done by waterways. Today, the biggest drain of foreign exchange in this country is due to oil import. Why is it due to oil import? It is because of the expenditure of transport mainly. A lot of it can be avoided if waterways are made. We will be saving a lot of foreign exchange, a lot of expenditure and will be providing employment to several people.

As regards power, by constructing dams due to interlinking of rivers, 34,000 megawatts of power can be generated which once again are not being used. It is not of a cumulative nature. If today's water goes to the sea, you cannot produce power next year. It cannot be cumulative. Thus, every year, we are losing 34, 000 megawatts of power which is worth thousands of crores of rupees.

By linking of rivers, ground water source will come up. Today, the Government of Andhra Pradesh is giving free power to farmers due to which we are spending Rs. 6000 crores. Similarly, if other State Governments were to do it, how many thousands of crores of rupees will have to be spent for taking out water from underground? In the last couple of years, when underground water was being used, the water level had gone down from 100 feet to 500 feet and as a result, the power consumption has gone up. By interlinking of rivers, the water table will come up. When the water table comes up, we can save 40,000 megawatts of power. We do not need to generate it. The country is suffering now due to want of power. We can save that 40,000 megawatts. It is deemed as if we have started a new project for that 40,000 megawatts.

Similarly, regarding employment, everyone of us is aware that 65 per cent of the people are living in villages. Most of the people who are unable to find work will find work by interlinking of rivers.

I have been highlighting in this Parliament since almost 20 years that today's importance is skill development. Unless our people are skilled, wealth cannot be generated. I gave statistics about it. If the skills of the people of this country were to be developed, we can generate 12 lakh crores worth of extra wealth in this country. Statistics reveal that the revenue earned is 12 per cent. That means, the revenue to the Government will also go up by several crores of rupees every year.

I want to impress all my colleagues in the Parliament above party lines. We do not need to get perturbed on it. At a time, when there was no globalisation, it was a difficult proposition to get Rs. 5 lakh crores as a loan. Today, Rs. 5 lakh crores is nothing. We can get even Rs. 50 lakh crores as soft loan from outside. We can create an asset in this country. Why do we call America as a developed country? It is because of the roads, buildings and infrastructure. So, we call it a rich country. We can create the same assets in our country also. Why is China on par today when it was much less than India 15 years back?

When I went to China as a member of the delegation of the AICC in 1991, I did not find even a car on the roads of China. There were only bicycles. I feel insulted when I read in the newspapers that China today is going to be a super power. I gave a report as a member of the AICC delegation to China that China is going to be a super power in the 21st century. Today, everybody agrees with it.

India has got much better resources. If any other developed country is to come up, it is only because of the generative ideas of that countrymen who are living there. If the same talents and intelligence were put to use in our country, even we

can excel every country including America within no time. We need motivation and will power. We have to think in a proper way and take up some of these projects, like inter-linking of rivers. We need not strain and break our head to increase the GDP to six or seven per cent. If you take up the inter-linking of rivers, then the growth rate will reach thirteen per cent.

Mr. Chairman, I am thankful to you for allowing me to speak. Though there are a lot of points to speak in favour of inter-linking of rivers, I want to make only one point in this context. My humble request to the Prime Minister and Madam Sonia Gandhi is to take up this project of Polavaram, which is also inter-linking of river, as a national project. It satisfies all the parameters and norms of the Government of India. Thank you very much.

SHRI B. MAHTAB : I would like to thank Dr. K.S. Rao for raising this issue in this House by giving a notice for Half-An-Hour Discussion. I do not know whether Dr. K.S. Rao is in any way related to Dr. K.L. Rao. I do not know whether all Raos are related to each other or not.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Shri Mahtab, make it very short because there are other hon. Members who want to speak.

SHRI B. MAHTAB : It is relating to inter-linking of rivers.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Shri Mahtab, you do not try to inter-link the Members. Please be short because other hon. Members also want to ask questions.

SHRI B. MAHTAB : Inter-linking of rivers is a long-pending issue in our country. I am just inter-linking Dr. K.S. Rao with Dr. K.L. Rao who was the Minister of Water Resources under three Prime Ministers. He was the Minister of Water Resources and an eminent engineer of not only this country but also of this world. He served as a colleague of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, as a colleague of Lal Bahadur Shastri and was also Minister of Water Resources and Irrigation under Mrs. Indira Gandhi. It was his idea to inter-link the rivers.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. Minister is supposed to reply. Please conclude within two minutes. So, you ask only questions. No speech is allowed.

SHRI B. MAHTAB : I would come straight to the questions. I have no objection nor do our State has any objection, which we have repeatedly put forth in this House earlier regarding the Polavaram project. But we do have objection in case it is constructed without taking consent of the neighbouring States, like Orissa, Maharashtra and Chhatisgarh. Once inter-linking of rivers is agreed upon, on a riparian river, consent of all the States involved should be taken. It is not only linking Godavari and Krishna. It is not only linking Krishna with another river which flows in Andhra Pradesh. It also affects the areas of Orissa. Large tracts of tribal areas are getting submerged. The case is pending before the Supreme Court. Yet, the Government of Andhra Pradesh is going ahead with that project. I think all the photographs are being placed before the apex court for consideration. This is a utopian idea. It is a bare and naked truth. Connecting the Peninsular rivers with Himalayan rivers is a utopian idea. All Peninsular rivers are rain-fed. Unless you connect them with Himalayan rivers, which are perennial rivers, there is no possibility of bringing water to the Peninsula rivers.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. Member, please conclude. I told you to ask only questions. The rule does not permit speech. We cannot go beyond the rules. That is why I told you to ask only questions.

SHRI B. MAHTAB : I am asking questions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. Members, please sit down.

SHRI B. MAHTAB : In the other House, in the month of July this year, the hon. Minister had answered that there are 16 peninsular rivers for which the development components are before the Government for consideration. There are 14 Himalayan Rivers' development components which are for consideration. Out of these, except one, that is the Ken-Betwa Link, which has been provided, the DPR has been completed, all others, I think around 12 river links, have only feasibility report including the Pollavaram Project. How long will this Government take to have the feasibility report of the project? You should take into consideration the project report. Then only can we proceed....(*Interruptions*)

MR. CHAIRMAN : If the hon. Minister agrees, I will ask a few Members to put questions.

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL):
Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Actually, the only question is that rules do not permit but since the matter being important, as a special case, I am permitting only six Members.

Shri Shailendra Kumar. Just ask the question.

श्री शैलेन्द्र कुमार : सभापति जी, डा. के.एस. राव ने नियम आधे घंटे की चर्चा के अंतर्गत देश की नदियों को जोड़ने संबंधी प्रश्न रखा है और आपने मुझे बोलने का अवसर दिया, उसके लिये मैं आपका आभारी हूँ। सदन में इस विषय पर कई बार चर्चा हो चुकी है। यह बात सत्य है कि अभी हम लोगों ने बाढ़ और सुखाड़ पर चर्चा की है। जैसे एन.डी.ए. गवर्नमेंट के समय...*(व्यवधान)*

MR. CHAIRMAN: Come to the point now.

श्री शैलेन्द्र कुमार : मैं वही पूछ रहा हूँ। नदियों को आपस में जोड़ने से यह लाभ होगा कि जो भूमि का जल स्तर नीचे जा रहा है, उससे निजात मिलेगी। उत्तर प्रदेश के तत्कालीन मुख्य मंत्री श्री मुलायम सिंह यादव ने मध्य प्रदेश और उत्तर प्रदेश के बीच एक समझौता किया था...*(व्यवधान)*

MR. CHAIRMAN: Shri K.S. Rao has mentioned it. Now, come to the point.

श्री शैलेन्द्र कुमार : केन और बेतवा नदियों के बारे में क्या प्रगति हुई है जो उत्तर प्रदेश और मध्य प्रदेश की सरकारों के बीच समझौता हुआ था, मैं यह जानना चाहता हूँ?

SHRIMATI BIJOYA CHAKRAVARTY (GUWAHATI): I am grateful to you, Sir, for allowing me to put the question. My point is that this House agrees to my view that river linking is very much essential and very much necessary for the country. So, I want to put the questions to the hon. Minister. This project started in 1980. It has been taken ahead by the NDA Government headed by Shri Vajpayee. Anyway, I do not want to politicize all these things.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please come to your question.

SHRIMATI BIJOYA CHAKRAVARTY : My questions are these. First, what is the step taken by the Government on the report of the Task Force submitted by the then Chairman Shri Suresh Prabhu regarding inter-river linking? Two, the Central Government is making a positive move by removing stagnancy of 30 years to start the river linking again. Three, what step the Government is taking to mitigate the problem in this endeavour of river linking?...*(Interruptions)* It is most important. It is evident from the hon. Minister's statement that the Central Government is going to assess the feasibility of the river linking project. I would like to know whether there is any time-bound project...*(Interruptions)*

MR. CHAIRMAN: Nothing will go on record.

*(Interruptions) अक्षर ! **

SHRIMATI BIJOYA CHAKRAVARTY : I have one last question to put.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Nothing will go on record. Next, Shri K.C. Venugopal.

*(Interruptions) अक्षर ! **

SHRIMATI BIJOYA CHAKRAVARTY : My last question is this.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I have not allowed you. You have mentioned your points. You have asked three questions. No more question is permitted.

SHRI K.C. VENUGOPAL (ALAPPUZHA): Respected Chairman, thank you for giving me a chance.

I would like to raise some very serious apprehensions regarding the Pampa-Achankoil-Vypar linkage. ...*(Interruptions)* The Kerala Legislative Assembly has unanimously taken a decision to withdraw the Pampa-Achankoil-Vypar Linkage itself. Because of that, Kerala has not enough water for drinking purpose itself. We, therefore, demand that the Pampa-Achankoil-Vypar project itself should be withdrawn...*(Interruptions)* The feasibility study itself has been done without the knowledge of the Kerala Government. That is the main problem. We never accept that. The entire Kerala Assembly has and all the political parties have already taken a unanimous decision and they are all against this project. This is a project which would badly affect the Kuttanad wet lands. Therefore, I demand that the Pampa-Achankoil-Vypar linkage should be withdrawn.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please take your seat. You made your point. Now, Shri Anto Antony. You ask the question. Otherwise, I am going to the next Member.

SHRI ANTO ANTONY (PATHANAMATHITTA): Respected Chairman, the unscientific inter-linking of rivers will be disastrous to the nation because it will seriously affect the livelihood of millions of farmers settled on the river banks. For instance, in Kerala, the Pampa-Achankoil-Vypar river linkage will make Kuttanad, the granary of Kerala, arid. There are one lakh

fishermen and five lakh inhabitants seriously affected by the inter-linking programme. Hence I strongly renounce interlinking of inter-State rivers, namely, Achankoil, Vypar (Interruptions)

SHRI KODIKKUNNIL SURESH (MAVELIKKARA): Sir, we all associate with him.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Very good; all are associating with him.

SHRI ARJUN CHARAN SETHI (BHADRAK): Mr. Chairman, Sir, I will be very short in asking a question. Does the Ministry or the Government lay importance to having interlinking of rivers? If so, when the detailed feasibility report is already available with the Government of India and also signed by the concerned State, particularly for Ken-Betwa and Parvati-Kali Sindh, for both these links, the consensus has been arrived at, what progress have they made in getting these projects implemented? It is because, at least six years have passed and no progress has been made. I would like to know whether they have given importance to these projects.

SHRI J.M. AARON RASHID (THENI): Mr. Chairman, Sir, thank you for giving me this opportunity. In Andhra Pradesh, 3000 TMC of water is going waste, and in Kerala, 2500 TMC of water is going waste.

SHRI A. SAMPATH (ATTINGAL): Mr. Chairman, Sir, not even a single drop of water from Kerala is going waste....(Interruptions)

SHRI J.M. AARON RASHID : So, Sir, through you, I would request the hon. Minister...(Interruptions)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now hon. Minister.

Please sit down.

...(Interruptions)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Nothing will go on record except the hon. Minister's statement.

(Interruptions) * *

MR. CHAIRMAN: Nothing will go on record.

The hon. Minister.

(Interruptions) * *

SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL : Mr. Chairman, Sir, I thank Dr. K.S. Rao for initiating this discussion today and also all the other hon. Members who participated in this brief discussion. I am sure their viewpoints, which to quite an extent are known to us already, would certainly benefit the Government in pursuing this matter.

Let me at the very outset make it very clear that the National Common Minimum Programme of the UPA in 2004 indicated that it will make a comprehensive assessment of the feasibility of linking of rivers starting from the South-bound rivers, and the assessment will be done in a fully consultative manner.

The task force had been set up earlier. We have considered all the matters, the six points, which were before the task force. We have given due consideration to every recommendation and we value the good work put in by our former colleague Mr. Prabhu in this regard. I would only like to just allay the fears of the hon. Members like my illustrious predecessor Mr. Arjun Sethi that when there were only two projects that the task force had talked of, we have put five projects in the priority list, which only shows that this Government does want to pursue this matter in the right earnest. But one thing we must all appreciate is that it is a matter which is of a long gestation period. We just cannot plan and then see the execution of any linkage taking place within a very short span of time.

As I have just said, the desire of this Government is, as was also expressed by various State Governments at the various meetings held in this regard, that it has got to be a win-win situation for all the States. I would also take that liberty to

express that viewpoint here; that is more of my personal one; I have been talking to lot many friends; we hear the expression of pious intentions about the interlinking of rivers.

18.00 hrs.

When it comes to the specifics, Sir, we have had a little glimpse of that here right now. But nevertheless, as I said, we would work for a win-win situation because there is no denying the fact that there are certain areas, there are certain basins which are surplus and where the water goes waste; there are certain areas which are deficit and, therefore, there is the need as a nation for us to see that they also have enough water, which, of course, is a very scarce natural resource.
...(Interruptions)

SHRIMATI BIJOYA CHAKRAVARTY : Mr. Chairman, Sir, I would like to put one question. ...(Interruptions)

SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL: I can assure you that I will try to answer your question. â€¦ (Interruptions)

MR. CHAIRMAN : Please sit down. I am not allowing you to put your question. Nothing will go on record. Please sit down.

(Interruptions) â€¦ *

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. Minister, please take your seat for just a minute.

Now, it is six o' clock. I extend the time of the House till the reply of the hon. Minister is over. I hope, the House will agree with me.

SEVERAL HON. MEMBERS: Yes, Sir.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right, the time of the House is extended till the reply of the hon. Minister is completed.

Now, I would request the hon. Minister to continue his reply.

SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL: Because of the paucity of time, I would straightaway like to come to various points raised by hon. Members. One point, which is very important, relates to Ken Betwa.

Sir, as I said, there are five projects out of the 14 ones which we had taken up in the peninsular component. Those five projects have been selected as the priority ones. Ken Betwa is a project in which the Government of Madhya Pradesh very recently suggested an alternative proposal for a component of the project during August 2009. I am not referring to the entire history of the correspondence between the concerned State Governments. This was in August 2009. The Government has suggested an alternative proposal for a component of the project. The Government of Uttar Pradesh has sent some comments during November, 2009. These suggestions are being examined. This link project would entail a cost of Rs.7,615 crore at the 2008 prices. ...(Interruptions)

SHRI ARJUN CHARAN SETHI : Earlier they have signed that agreement. ...(Interruptions)

SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL: Yes. I am sure that you know as much as I do and maybe even more than I do. Here, the responsibility primarily lies with the State Governments. I am sure that the House would agree with me that this Government should not do anything which is not acceptable to the State Governments. Therefore, the responsibility squarely falls on the State Governments to come up with a mutually agreed DPR. Here, maybe some amendments would be required and thereafter the work begin. So, all through this period, whether it is preparation of the Feasibility Report; whether it is assisting the State Governments in the preparation of DPRs, this Government is doing its utmost. You could find objection to that but we do feel it important to keep spending some money on that part also to enable the capacity building as also to enable the State Governments to prepare those Reports which are then considered whether they are feasible and viable, and then are cleared from Techno Economic point of view as also from the ecological and environment point of view. The environment impact assessment, the Environment management plan, and all those things have to be gone through. After all those clearances have been obtained; thereafter only further work begins.

All that I can say is that in the Government, since it has taken up this project work relating to inter-linking of the rivers, we are keen to see that the work on some of these projects begin early because as the time elapses, there are cost over-runs

which we would certainly want to avoid.

Sir, Polavaram is a very contentious issue. All that I would like to say again is that we have to go by the principle that I have just stated, which guides this Government. Keeping that in mind, I would only like to remind the hon. Member, Shri B. Mahtab that in fact it was all the concerned State Governments including the Governments of Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, which had agreed on 2nd of April, 1980 as a part of the Godavari Water Disputes Tribunal Award for the project and also of the embankments.

Now, that was the concern expressed by Orissa and then the part of Madhya Pradesh, which is now Chhattisgarh, that no flooding should take place in their area. For that, there was a decision that embankments were proposed to prevent submergence. That is the concern. Meanwhile, the Government of Andhra Pradesh on its own had taken up the Polavaram Project. Perhaps, for the time being, they are wanting to use 80 TMC only for transferring water to the deficient Krishna basin, which would not in anyway affect the national perspective plan otherwise.

Sir, there is a proposal by the Government of Andhra Pradesh with the Government of India for declaring that project as a national project. Here again, before I go a step further, I would like to reiterate that the project stood cleared already, long back. Now, since it fulfilled all the guidelines, which are there for declaring a project to be a national project, there is no reason why the Government of India can deny them that.

SHRI B. MAHTAB : Why has our right been curtailed?

SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL: That matter would again be discussed between the States. The present proposition is only that. That is not the point at the moment. You have your right; when the matter has been raised by you in a particular court, the orders of the court would be binding on both the States. Till then, is it in the national interest that you put the project to a stop, and therefore, waste all the investment that has been incurred thereon?

Therefore, Sir, we have considered that point; and after finding that the proposal is within the parameters of the guidelines for declaring a project to be a national project, a Cabinet note has been prepared and sent for Inter-Ministerial consultation. After that, whatever necessary step needs to be taken, will be taken.

SHRI ARJUN CHARAN SETHI : Before that would there be any forum for consultation?

SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL: I would again welcome that. I would be too happy to, in fact, have all the Chief Ministers again together for any discussion on that matter. But I want to allay all the fears, which my hon. friends from Orissa and Chhattisgarh may have. This declaration -- when it takes place as a national project -- would not affect their existing rights in any way.

Sir, our hon. friends from Kerala in unison rose against one of the projects, namely, Pamba-Achankoil Vypar link. A Resolution was passed, I agree, by the Kerala Assembly way back in August, 2003 against this link. Obviously, as I have said, if one such State does not agree, and as the things stand today, we cannot force it on anyone. We have constraint of resources still have picked up this scheme.

As some hon. Members want and my senior colleague, Mrs. Chakravarty, in fact, asked: "What are you doing? Why are you taking so much time? There is the Report of the Task Force. How much time are you going to take?" It was done after a very elaborate exercise, spread over decades. Way back in 1980, the Government at that time, framed the National Perspective Plan. Then, the NWDA was set up in 1982. Since then, it is the interest and desire of this Government to take these matters forward. But somewhere or the other, we found some impediments, which might be, of course, reasonable ones from their viewpoint. There were some objections raised by some State Government, which somehow stymied the project for the time being. Therefore, this is one of the 14 projects for which a lot of work was carried out.

Somehow now, because of the stand taken by the Kerala Assembly about this Pamba-Achankoil-Vypar link, which would have created an additional 0.91 hectare of irrigation potential as Dr. Rao said, since there is an objection to that particular link, for the time being, this is not one of those five priority links.

Presently, I would like to confine, for the purpose of today's discussion, to these five and also I would be giving a little more information that has been sought for. Here, I would endeavour to read....(*Interruptions*)

SHRI ARJUN CHARAN SETHI : Which are those five projects?

SHRI B. MAHTAB : Are they Peninsular projects?

SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL: All those five are Peninsular projects. ...(*Interruptions*) Let me make that point also very clear. Presently, a fear was expressed by Shri B. Mahtab that it is a utopian idea, as he said, to link the Himalayan rivers with the Peninsular ones. Nothing of that sort is being done at the moment. It involves a huge cost. We have divided the entire exercise into two components. First is the Himalayan component and second is the Peninsular component. These two components, as such, going by the present figures, would entail an expenditure of over Rs.4.4 lakh crore. Sir, no such kind of money is available as such with us. When a project is finally taken up, every State wants the Government of India to declare such big projects to be national projects, which means, the Government of India will have to share 90 per cent of the cost irrespective of the fact as to what is the financial position of a particular State. The Government of India will have to bear this cost.

These are five projects at the moment, namely Kodavari (Polavaram)- Krishna (Vijayawada) Link, Parbati-Kalisindhi -Chambal link.

SHRI ARJUN CHARAN SETHI : It was done by the earlier Government.

SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL: I give you the credit for doing good work. I said Mr. Prabhu did a remarkable work when, for reasons best known to some of you, he was taken off the Council of Ministers. But he was given a good job to do and he did do a good job for us...(*Interruptions*)

MR. CHAIRMAN : Mr. Minister, please address the Chair. Please stop cross-talk.

SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL: Damanganga- Pinjal and Par-Tapi are the other two ones where the States of Maharashtra and Gujarat have come together. I congratulate both the States. They have expressed their desire to go in for a Memorandum of Understanding. They have agreed to the terms of the Memorandum of Understanding though that has to be formally signed between the two States but because of the immediacy, because of the urgency of the work, we have started the DPR preparation for those two projects. Both the Governments of Maharashtra and Gujarat have agreed for these two links, namely, Damanganga-Pinjal Link and Par-Tapi-Narmada Link. I hope that the DPR, Detailed Project Report, would be prepared by the end of next year and we do look forward to good news.

SHRI J.M. AARON RASHID : Krishna-Kuzhithurai river from Andhra Pradesh to Tamil Nadu is a vital link.

SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL: Sir, I will supply the entire information about the 14 links and also the details to the hon. Members about the inter-basin water transfer link scheme of Peninsular component. There are two in the Himalayan component. Since it has some international implications also, my senior colleague, the Minister of External Affairs is here - the House would agree that because those are sensitive matters, we have to take the neighbouring countries on board. Therefore, not much purpose would be served in pursuing those matters. Therefore, we should concentrate our energies firstly on these five ones and we can achieve result in these five ones which will be at a cost of Rs.33,000 crore. It would take about nine to 10 years still. I am trying to be practical when I say it. Preliminary work is going on. Even if we step up the work, it would still take that much time. Sir, you have to plan for the future when you talk of the inter-linking of rivers.

Regarding inter-linking of rivers, I want to allay all fears that our hon. Members may have in this House or anyone outside also. Various stipulations are the *sine qua non* for taking up a project, that is, the clearances from the environmental angle and clearances from the rehabilitation and resettlement angle. I have seen in some of the projects that R&R and also the environmental angle account for about one-third of the total cost. So, it is not at the cost of one thing that another project would be set up. It is for the larger interests of the country that the inter-linking scheme is there.

All that I would again like to say is that this Government would want to take all the State Governments on board.

We want this to go forward. But then the ball would always be in the court of the State Governments. In certain cases some of the hon. Chief Ministers, in one case the hon. Chief Minister of Rajasthan has just written to me, that they are sorting out certain matters; very expeditiously they are wanting to pursue. That is the way we would like to go forward in this matter.

As and when a proposal matures, the DPR is there, all other clearances are obtained, investment clearance is obtained, that 10 per cent of the project cost is provided for in the respective State Government budgets, this Government is always willing to take it up. Let me once again say that this Government will not force any link on any State Government.

I am happy Mr. Rao did not refer to those points. He is always wanting a regulatory body to be set up for this. I would say, no such body is required because as the law stands today, as the provisions of the Constitution stand today and all that action that has been taken under various enactments, there is enough scope; there is a good, solid mechanism to take care of all the works. All that progress that has been made, initially it is difficult; as you move forward the work might progress at a good pace. Initially the pre-feasibility study reports, then the feasibility study reports, after getting the States together to sign a memorandum of understanding for the DPR, preparation of the DPR – all these things take up a lot of time. After that the work can begin. We can only hope that we will move forward in this.

I am sorry, may be Didi may get annoyed with me. It may take time for me to read and answer to each point. I will try to talk to her later and try to answer all those questions which she has raised. Thank you very much.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Thank you.

The House stands adjourned to meet tomorrow, the 3rd December, 2009 at 11 a.m.

18.17 hrs.

The Lok Sabha then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock

on Thursday, December 3, 2009/Agrahayana 12, 1931 (Saka).

* English translation of the speech originally delivered in Bengali.

* English translation of the speech originally delivered in Malayalam.

* Not recorded

* Not recorded

* Not recorded