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Title: Regarding interlinking of rivers in the country.

SHRI K.N. RAMACHANDRAN (SRIPERUMBUDUR): Mr. Chairman, Sir, this is a very vital issue. Every year, while we face severe drought in one part of the country, there are huge floods in some other parts of the country inundating many villages. To solve this perennial problem, interlinking of rivers is absolutely necessary. This was also the dream of our former Prime Minister Vajpayee Ji. It is not only my view, but also that of the people in general.

I would like to mention here, and this is important, that our rivers had the freedom to run their own course. This was before we attained our freedom. After our Independence, rivers lost their independence. We are building lengthy national highways for our comfort and for the growth of our economy. It is time to now focus on interlinking of rivers and we should have a national river project.

Last week, our Union Minister of Water Resources said that the interlinking of rivers would not only provide electricity to the tune of 34,000 MW but also help in implementation of the ambitious rural irrigation scheme that would irrigate 35 million hectares of land on the way. This will also prevent floods in some States.

As far as our Government is concerned, our Amma has been strongly urging the Centre to implement the interlinking of Rivers like *the Mahanadi, the Godavari, the Krishna, the Pennar, the Palar and the Cauvery* under Integrated Peninsular River Development Programme. The linkage would solve the perennial problem of providing water for irrigation and also will take care of the drinking water needs of people in the southern part of the country.

Therefore, I would request the Government to allot sufficient funds to prepare a Detailed Project Report for this purpose.