

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
WATER RESOURCES
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:1760

ANSWERED ON:03.03.2003

LINKING OF RIVERS

SRIPRAKASH JAISWAL;VILAS BABURAO MUTTEMWAR

Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state:

- (a) whether ecologists have expressed their apprehension against linking of rivers as it may upset natural river water systems, causing irreparable damage to bio-diversity, robbing rivers of their unique properties and adversely affect river habitats;
- (b) if so, whether all these aspects have been taken into consideration;
- (c) whether any meeting is being contemplated with the State Governments for arriving at a consensus in the matter;
- (d) if so, the details thereof;
- (e) whether views of Environmentalists and Geologists have been taken into consideration;
- (f) if so, whether they too have expressed their opposition to the proposals; and
- (g) if so, the reasons the Government intends to go ahead with the project?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF WATER RESOURCES (SMT. BIJOYA CHAKRAVARTY)

(a) to (g) Ecologists have been expressing their apprehensions against water resources projects due to impacts of these projects on micro climate, resulting in water logging and diseases and irreparable damage to bio-diversity etc. Since the inter-linking of rivers involves transfer of large quantity of water, the related environmental issues will also have to be addressed in respect of components involved in inter-linking of rivers. The Ministry of Water Resources, then known as the Ministry of Irrigation, formulated a National Perspective Plan for water resources development in 1980 which envisages inter linkages among Peninsular Rivers and Himalayan Rivers for transferring water from water surplus basins to water deficit areas for optimum utilisation of water resources. The Government of India has established the National Water Development Agency (NWDA) in 1982 as an autonomous society to carry out water balance and other studies and prepare feasibility reports. National Water Development Agency has identified 30 links under the National Perspective for preparation of the feasibility reports and has completed feasibility reports of 6 links under Peninsular Component. In National Water Development Agency studies, a minimum lean season flow of 10% of the total inflow at diversion structure after meeting downstream requirements is being provided to maintain the environmental and ecological needs of the river regime. Geological surveys and Environmental and Ecological aspects form part of the Feasibility Studies of the link projects being prepared by National Water Development Agency. Geological surveys are usually carried out by the Geological Survey of India while the Environmental and Ecological aspects are studied through consultants. The findings of these surveys/studies are duly considered in finalising the link proposals. Besides, the Central Government has set-up a Task Force under the Chairmanship of Shri Suresh Prabhu, Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha) on December 13, 2002 with the following term of reference:-

- (i) Provide guidance on norms of appraisal of individual projects in respect of economic viability, socio-economic impacts, environmental impacts and preparation of resettlement plans;
- (ii) Devise suitable mechanism for bringing about speedy consensus amongst the States;
- (iii) Prioritize the different project components for preparation of Detailed Project Reports and implementation;
- (iv) Propose suitable organizational structure for implementing the project;
- (v) Consider various modalities for project funding; and
- (vi) Consider international dimensions that may be involved in some project components.

The Task Force is working to suggest and guide the task of achieving the goal of interlinking of rivers by the end of 2016.