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Title: The Minister of State in the Ministry of Environment & Forests made a statement on National Ganga River Basin Authority.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA): Mr. Speaker, Sir, the need for revamping the Ganga Cleaning Programme has been widely recognized. Hitherto, the implementation has been piecemeal and focussed more on municipal sewage. The problem is compounded by inadequate flows. It was felt that a comprehensive response is necessary, covering water quality and flow, sustainable access, prevention and control of pollution, food and energy security, in the form of a national mission by giving the Ganga the status of a National River. Ganga has a special place in the hearts and minds of all Indians and this needs to be recognized. It was felt that a model for river cleaning should be set up through a new institutional mechanism.

Accordingly, the Central Government has decided to give the Ganga the status of a 'National River' and set up a 'National Ganga River Basin Authority' as an empowered planning, financing, monitoring and coordinating authority for the Ganga River under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986. The Authority will be chaired by the Prime Minister and have as its members, the Chief Ministers of the concerned States. The Authority will be vested with appropriate powers to carry out its functions. A Notification in this regard is being issued by the Government.

The National Ganga River Basin Authority would be responsible for addressing the problem of pollution in the Ganga in a holistic and comprehensive manner. This will include water quality, minimum ecological flows, sustainable access and other issues relevant to river ecology and management. Under the new approach, the river basin will be the unit of planning.

The Authority would combine regulatory and developmental functions keeping in view powers vested with State Governments and its institutions. It is expected that this would rejuvenate the collective efforts of the Centre and States for cleaning the River Ganga and help accomplish the mission that had been initiated in 1985 by the then Prime Minister Shri Rajiv Gandhi.

(Placed in Library, See No. LT – 10640/09)

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