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Title: Need to initiate steps for rejuvenation of the river Vaigai of Tamil Nadu.

SHRI R. GOPALAKRISHNAN (MADURAI): Hon. Chairperson, thank you very much for giving me this opportunity. I would like to raise the matter regarding rejuvenation of the Vaigai river of Tamil Nadu. Madurai has the famous Meenakshi Temple. The Vaigai river runs through the city of Madurai. It is the lifeline of the city. It quenches the thirst of lakhs of people of the city of Madurai. There is a need to protect and preserve the ancient river.

Hon. Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu *Puratchi Thalaivi Amma* understood the need of Madurai city and the importance of the Vaigai river. Amma has been insisting upon inter-linking of rivers associated with Vaigai river for a long time. Amma lends her support and voice for this cause. The Central Government should prepare a detailed project report on Mahanadhi-Godavari-Krishna-Palar-Cauvery-Vaigai-Gundar link. The National Water Development Agency had completed a feasibility report long back in this connection. On the course of interlinking, the Vaigai river could be rejuvenated. The Vaigai river can have a new lease of life. Lakhs of people in and around Madurai city and the surrounding districts could be benefited through this.

It merges with the sea in Rameswaram, a holy and religious place near the Palk Strait. It is the main water source for drinking and irrigation of these districts. Every year, the famous religious 'Kallalagar Festival' is conducted on the River Vaigai. The River Vaigai is the identity of Madurai city as well as its surrounding districts. Therefore the efforts of hon. Amma's Government to protect the River Vaigai from pollution, garbage, dumping, etc., shall have to be supported and complemented by the Central Government to the maximum extent possible.

Therefore, I urge upon the Central Government to initiate immediate steps for rejuvenation of the River Vaigai by providing clear cut budgetary provisions as has been done in the case of the River Ganga. I am sure, under the leadership of our kind hearted hon. Puratchi Thalaivi Amma, rejuvenation of the River Vaigai would not be a tough task, provided the Central Government extends sufficient budgetary support.

On behalf of the people of Madurai, I would assure that the people of Madurai would extend necessary support for this noble cause of rejuvenating the River Vaigai.