

Forestry Interventions to Be Seen By July 2018

Effects of forestry interventions for the Clean Ganga Mission should start becoming visible by July 2018. Cleaning and conserving the Ganga has to be seen also from the economic point of view and not just from the religious point of view as crores of people depend on this river for their livelihood. The funds allocated for this task must be used efficiently and not spent for the sake of spending, said the Union Minister for Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation, Uma Bharti.

She was speaking at the inauguration of a two-day national level stakeholders' meet on preparation of the DPR on forestry interventions for the Ganga at the Forest Research Institute. Bharti said she was never against construction of power projects on rivers but stressed that dam designs should not alter the flow or character of the river. She said, "We have to ensure that Rs20,000 crore allocated for this mission to be spent across four years is used effectively and not spent just for the sake of spending it. Uttarakhand has immense scope for creating a new development model. I want to see Uttarakhand develop as a hub of medicinal herbs so that medicines made in Uttarakhand from these herbs replace the Chinese medicines in the international market."

"Apart from ensuring efficient use of funds and timely action for Ganga, we also have to ensure convergence of the intentions of those in Delhi with the position of those in the States to prevent a situation as created by declaration of the Bhagirathi eco sensitive zone which was well intended but had elicited public opposition," said Bharti. Minister of Environment, Forests and Climate Change, Prakash Javadekar said the Government was in the process of facilitating zero liquid discharge from identified leather tanneries along the Ganga while sensors have been installed in most of the other identified polluting industrial units along the Ganga to monitor pollution. Stringent action will be taken by the government against any unit found flouting the pollution norms, said.

Javadekar said the Government had identified 630 polluting units along the Ganga of which 440 are leather tanneries in the Kanpur region. "The Central Leather Research Institute is about to finalise its DPR on zero liquid discharge from tanneries. Of the remaining 190 identified polluting units, sensors have been installed in 110 and are being installed in the remaining 80 to monitor air and water pollution 24/7. The reality is that about 68 per cent sewage is dumped in rivers untreated, one-third industrial effluents and two-third of agricultural waste including pesticides end up contaminating water bodies. The ministry is serious about tackling various types of wastes including e-waste and stringent action will be taken against those flouting pollution norms. We have a focused agenda of cleaning all rivers starting with the Ganga.

Considering the importance of glaciers, the government is also in the process of establishing the institute for Himalayan studies,” said Javadekar.

Assuring full support in the mission, chief minister Harish Rawat said that Uttarakhand could be a laboratory for water conservation if the Centre provides required financial support. He said, “We are the first State to give bonus for planting trees and conserving water. However, about 300 rivulets in the State have either dried out or are dying out and in order to ensure conservation of the Ganga it is vital to also focus on the other rivers and rivulets that subsequently merge into the Ganga. On the other hand, action is also required to tackle the three major enemies of biodiversity in Uttarakhand- pine, wild boars and sand,” opined the CM. Minister of State for AYUSH, Shripad Yesso Naik pointed at the immense scope for plantation of medicinal herbs in Uttarakhand and other areas along the Ganga.

A sum of Rs 9.93 crore had already been released for Uttarakhand by the National Medicinal Plants Board, he added. Minister of State for Youth Affairs, Sarbananda Sonowal assured full support of his ministry in execution of works like plantation and protection of herbs along the Ganga. State Forest Minister Dinesh Aggarwal, National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) director TVSN Prasad, ADG Forest (Conservation) SS Negi, ICFRE DG Dr Ashwani Kumar and FRI director Dr Savita were also among those who expressed their views on the occasion.

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