

By March 2019, 80% of Ganga will be clean, target to clean the whole river by March 2020: Union Minister Shri Nitin Gadkari

The Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways, Shipping, Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation, Shri Nitin Gadkari has said that it is feasible to achieve the target of cleaning almost 70%-80% of river Ganga by March 2019 and the whole river by March 2020. He said that private sector support and funding through Hybrid Annuity Model are two instruments which would be pivotal in facilitating this.



Elaborating further on National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG), Shri Gadkari said that the focus is on ten major towns which discharge almost 64% of total sewage. Focus is also on the tributaries of Ganges discharging dirty water into the river.

Pointing out the heightened pace of project initiation and execution, the Minister said that 12 projects aimed at cleaning 40 *nalahsats* at a cost of Rs. 4,500 crore have been started. He said that the principle of One City One Operator has been introduced, to improve efficiency. Private operators are involved who will be also responsible for maintaining the quality of cleaning work by doing checks three times a day. They will check Chemical Oxygen Demand (COD) and Biological Oxygen Demand (BOD) to ascertain project progress. Real-time Water Quality Monitoring (RTWQM) stations have been set in operation, more of which will be operationalized in the second phase.

Traditional procurement models like EPC and DBOT do not provide adequate safeguards for sustainable Operation & Maintenance (O&M) of sewage treatment plants. Speaking about the suitability of the Hybrid Annuity model for sectors with uncertain revenue streams, the Minister said that under this model, 40% cost of Namami Gange projects are borne by the government, 40% cost by private operators and 20% from bank guarantees.



Shri Nitin Gadkari further spoke about turning the waste coming into rivers into wealth. He cited the example of Mathura refinery, where the waste water generated is being reused in power plants or for purposes like cleaning railways. He even cited the example of capturing methane emanating from waste and using it as fuel.

The Minister further said that rivers in India are important from religious, economic and tourist points of view. He gave the example of Varanasi-Haldia waterway; he said it will soon enable transport of cargo through waterways well upto Myanmar and Bangladesh. He said that 60 river-ports will be developed and River Traffic Control System will be developed, on the lines of Air Traffic Control System.

The cleaning of Ganga will not be possible until surrounding villages are clean, the Minister said. In this regard, 4,500 villages on the banks of Ganga have become Open Defecation Free and that 10 crore trees are being planted along its banks. Trash skimmers are deployed in 11 cities viz. Delhi, Haridwar, Garhmukteshwar, Kanpur, Allahabad, Varanasi, Patna, Sahibganj, Howrah, Mathura-Vrindavan and Nabadwip.

Alongwith cleaning of the Ganga, the access to the origin of the river will be made available round the year. He mentioned the plan to develop all-weather roads to Gangotri, Yamunotri, Kedarnath and Badrinath at a cost of Rs. 12,000 crore.

Shri Gadkari further said that while there is no dearth of funds for the mission, he wishes to mobilize funds from at least 1 crore people, so that as many people are able to play a direct role in the cleaning of the river which is so sacred and dear to us.

The Minister spoke of a promising proposal which he has received, on building a Water Temple at a cost of Rs. 200 crore. Citing this, he invited the industry to come forward and implement this. He said that the holy river should be clean like many religious places the world over; he said that Ganga should be made a globally renowned tourist destination.

Earlier in the day, a new wage settlement agreement has been signed for Group C & D category of Port and Dock Workers in Mumbai in the presence of the Minister. Read detailed release **here**.

DJM/MC/MAS/RS

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