Nitin Gadkari warns Yamuna polluters of strict action

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Promoting an ambitious Yamuna water front in Delhi, water resources and highways minister Nitin Gadkari warned of strict action against polluters, saying he had even once asked whether an FIR could be filed against the Haryana chief secretary for the state’s failure to act.

“He (water resources secretary) said he would talk to Haryana government. I have also decided to call a meeting of the state government officials on the issue (Yamuna pollution). Strict action will be taken against anyone who is polluting Yamuna, Ganga and its tributaries,” said Gadkari.

He shared a few details of his plan to develop the riverfront in Delhi as a “world class garden” at an estimated cost of Rs 40,000 crore. Though Gadkari didn’t elaborate on his FIR threat, the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) has only powers to issue show cause notice against officials and polluters under existing laws.

The minister said the issue of developing Yamuna riverfront in Delhi would be discussed with the city lieutenant governor (LG). “Once the LG gives his approval, we (Centre and city government) will develop the riverfront by partially funding it and awarding the works in PPP mode to private agencies which can spend Rs 40,000 crore for the project.” “It is my vision to develop a world class ecological and environment friendly riverfront park on 35 km stretch of river Yamuna in Delhi,” said Gadkari while recalling his discussion on the issue with chief minister Arvind Kejriwal last month.

He was speaking here on the occasion of signing of a tripartite agreement between National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG), Uttar Pradesh Jal Nigam and Triveni Engineering & Industries Ltd for developing India’s first city-wide integrated sewage infrastructure for Mathura at an estimated cost of over Rs 437 crore on hybrid annuity-based mode.

A separate agreement was also signed between NMCG and Indian Oil Corporation Ltd (IOCL) for the reuse of two crore litres per day of treated sewage water by the latter’s refinery in Mathura. The company is currently using water from the over-stressed Yamuna. IOCL will pay Rs 16 crore annually to the developer for using the treated water.

The developer will use the money to operate and maintain sewage treatment plants and other sewerage network. Sharing details of the projects on Yamuna and other tributaries, Gadkari said in addition to 14 ongoing projects (10 in Delhi, two in UP and two in Haryana – at Sonipat and Panipat), the ministry has identified 20 new towns on Yamuna and its tributaries (Hindon and Kali) for pollution abatement. Ten towns in this list are on the Yamuna.