

According to the latest 'State of The World's Mothers' Report, every year over 3,09,300 children (29% of the global share) in India don't live beyond the first day because of complications associated with preterm birth, hygiene and maternal health. More newborns die on the first day in India than in any other country. Despite being more populated, China ranks 4th and accounts for only five per cent of the global share of first day deaths.

Nearly two-thirds of all first-day deaths occur in just ten countries and most of these countries have very large populations like India and Indonesia.

Others high up on the list are Pakistan, Afghanistan and African nations like Nigeria and Ethiopia. Predictably, just one per cent of the global first-day deaths occur in developed countries. Preterm deliveries, low birth weight (28% of babies in India are under-weight), stunting among women, early marriage and childbearing further heightens the risk for babies. In India 47% girls are married off by the age of 18.

In view of above alarming scenario, I would urge hon. Minister for Health and Family Welfare to initiate necessary measures.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN : Shri Parshottam Khodabhai Rupala – not present.

**Demand to review the existing action plans for cleaning
of polluted rivers in the country**

SHRI VIJAY JAWAHARLAL DARDA (Maharashtra): Sir, there has been a steady deterioration in the quality of water of Indian rivers over the last several decades. India's 14 major, 55 minor and several hundred small rivers receive millions of litres of sewage, industrial and agricultural wastes. Most of these rivers have been rendered to the level of sewage flowing drains. There are serious water quality problems in the cities, towns and villages using these waters. Water-borne diseases are rampant, fisheries are on decline and even cattle are not spared from the onslaught of pollution.

Recently, a study has been done by Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Boston which has said that Yamuna Action Plan is incapable of restoring or protecting the river. According to them, the current system is wrought by lack of accountability, enforcement of rule of law and corruption. In the past 18 years, Rs.4439 crore have been spent by Government bodies of Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and

Haryana under the Yamuna Action Plan but to no avail. Now, even the Supreme Court has asked these States to explain the same.

The Study Report postulates a four-pronged plan – restore flow to the river, keep waste out of waterways, protect the integrity of the basin and create a new vision for the river.

A dedicated approach is required for revision in current policies and jurisdictional mandates, integration of non-structural solutions, focussing on coordinated land use planning and river protection, and emphasis on education, incentives, and public involvement to realise the change.

Let us make a beginning with Yamuna and later on, gradually relocate the same to other rivers.

**Demand to absorb casual artists working as announcers/news readers
in air/doordarshan as permanent employees**

DR. BHARATKUMAR RAUT (Maharashtra): Sir, I rise to bring to the notice the grave injustice perpetuated against thousands of casual artists working in various All India Radio and Doordarshan Kendras of Prasar Bharati, who are performing responsible duties as announcers and news readers. The qualified artists, who had been auditioned for their voice, have been working in most of the AIR and Doordarshan Centres across the nation for more than 15 years. During this period, they were not absorbed in the permanent service of the Government as there were no vacancies of posts of announcers or news readers. After persistent demand, the Prasar Bharati has now advertised for posts. However, the qualifications and age-limits are such that those who are doing the job for the last 15 years are not termed as eligible.

So far, these casual artists were getting only Rs.350 per day, with a ceiling of six-day work in a month. Now the fees have been increased to Rs.1,400 per day. However, I am told that now they are booked only for two or three days a month. This is an act of gross injustice. Moreover, these artists are made to work for more than 12 hours and they perform duties of technical staff as well. The House will be surprised to know that in many AIR stations, the work is handled by only casual artists. The demand of the casual artists, working as announcers/news readers is that they may be absorbed in the permanent service of the Prasar Bharati before opening up the recruitment to all others. I support the demand and call upon the Minister of Information and Broadcasting to take cognizance of their grievances immediately.