

The day Ganga came calling...and Gangavasis answered

The long-anticipated 'Ganga Aamantran Abhiyan', a pioneering and historic exploratory open-water rafting and kayaking expedition on the Ganga River from Devprayag to Ganga Sagar, was flagged off today by Union Minister of Jal Shakti, Sh. Gajendra Singh Shekhawat. What was heartwarming and thought-provoking though was the fact that school children turned up in large numbers to not only show their strength in support for the great cause that this is, but their heartfelt adieus to see off the rafting team on a safe and successful month-long expedition.

The sun peeked over the mighty Himalayas in Devprayag during the launch event today as Union Minister of Jal Shakti, Sh. Gajendra Singh Shekhawat gave a clarion call to everyone to join hands to ensure the aviralta and nirmalta of the Ganga. He was joined by MP of Garhwal, Sh. Tirath Singh Rawat, State Minister, Sh. Dhan Singh Rawat, MLA of Devprayag, Sh. Vinod Kandari, MLA of Pauri, Sh. Mukesh Singh Koli, DG-NMCG, Sh. Rajiv Ranjan Mishra and other eminent dignitaries. Sh. Shekhawat's call was answered unanimously by everyone present on the occasion. The Himalayan valley of Devprayag reverberated with chants of 'Har har Gange, Namami Gange'. The loudest cheers were from the large droves of school students and Namami Gange's ever-present, untiring ambassadors, the Ganga Praharis. Furthermore, the launch of the 'Plastic Free Devprayag' campaign only made the occasion all the more apt as people renewed their pledge to ensure a pollution-free Ganga. Sh. Shekhawat also gave out awards to the winners of various Swachhata related competitions in schools in addition to felicitating two educational institutions, IIT-Roorkee and UMANG, for actively conducting Swachhata related activities for their students and spreading awareness.

As the flag off moment drew near, Sh. Shekhawat prayed for the safety of the entire rafting team and the successful completion of the adventurous, unprecedented journey before flagging off the month-long expedition across the entire length of the Ganga. Sh. Shekhawat was joined by his daughter, Ms Suhasini Shekhawat for the first stretch of the expedition from Devprayag to Rishikesh. The highlight of the day though was when Sh. Dhani Singh Rawat, seeing the energy and excitement of the people, joined in for the opening leg of the expedition from Devprayag to Rishikesh along with the team.

This is the first-ever effort by National Mission for Clean Ganga to raft across the entire stretch of the river and also the longest ever social campaign undertaken through an adventure sporting activity to spread the message of River Rejuvenation and Water Conservation on such a massive scale. The expedition aims to draw attention to the ecological challenges being faced by Ganga. Apart from the awareness campaign, the team from CSIR-Indian Institute of Toxicology Research will collect water samples from across diverse ranges of the river for the purpose of water testing, while members of the Wildlife Institute of India will undertake flora and fauna census for the year 2019.

#NamamiGange #GangaAamantran