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Title : Need to formulate an Action Plan for conservation of Vembanad wet land system in Kerala.

DR. K.S. MANOJ (ALLEPPEY): The Venbanad lake along with the adjacent wetland over the eastern and southern sides forms Kuttanadu, the rice bowl of Kerala, and the largest wetland system in the West Coast of India. Five rivers originate from Western Ghat drain into this lake. A good portion of the wetland has been converted into paddy fields which remain water logged for six months a year. Every year tonnes of insecticides, weedicides, fungicides and chemical fertilizers reach into the wet land.

The fragile ecosystem of the wet land influences the life and health of people living in and around the region and it is important for the conservation of global biological diversity and for sustaining human life through the ecological and hydrological functions they performs. 'Venbanadu Kayal are the most productive ecosystem in our nation, the abode of unique species of plants and animals. It is also the cradle of several endemic and rare species of fishes, the nursery of commercially important shrimps, prawns and crabs and the natural habitat of Mussels, Oysters and clams. The wetlands are very important from the point of view of their flora and fauna as well as their water chemistry. The deterioration of water quality and the consequent damage to aquatic organisms are found to be very serious as per the studies conducted by the various scientific institutions and the pollution level is found alarmingly high. Shrinking of Venbanad lake to 37% occurs as a result of land reclamation. In view of the above it is utmost necessary to evolve a sustainable action plan to conserve the Venbanad wet land system, one of the major wet land system designated as Ramsar site in India.

(viii) Need to accord clearance by the Forest Department for

construction of road and bridge between Rath (Hamirpur)

and Garautha (Jhansi)