

Fourteenth Lok Sabha**Session : 10****Date : 16-05-2007**

**Participants :** [Baal Shri T.R.](#), [Kharventhan Shri Salarapatty Kuppusamy](#), [Malhotra Prof. Vijay Kumar](#), [Krishnaswamy Shri A.](#), [Chitthan Shri N.S.V.](#), [Baal Shri T.R.](#), [Malhotra Prof. Vijay Kumar](#), [Appadurai Shri M.](#)

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Title: Shri Vijay Kumar Malhotra called the attention of the Ministry of Shipping, Road Transport and Highways regarding the status of the Sethu-Samudram Canal Project and reported controversy regarding its alignment

MR. SPEAKER: Now, I am going to take Item No. 17, namely, Calling Attention.

Hon. Members, a Calling Attention regarding the status of the Sethu-Samudram Canal Project and the reported controversy regarding its alignment is listed today at Item No. 17 in today's Order Paper in the names of Sarvashri Dharmendra Pradhan, A. Krishnaswamy, N. S. V. Chitthan, S. K. Kharventhan and M. Appadurai.

In the meantime, Shri Dharmendra Pradhan has *vide* his letter dated 16.5.2007 requested that Prof. Vijay Kumar Malhotra may be allowed to call the attention of the Minister of Shipping, Road Transport and Highways instead of him.

I have acceded to this request as a very special case, but it should not be treated as a precedent.

Prof. Vijay Kumar Malhotra may now call the attention of the Minister of Shipping, Road Transport and Highways.

May I earnestly appeal to all sections of the House that sometimes some sensitive matters are taken up very emotionally, but after all, these are important matters for which Calling Attention is given. Please let us hear each other and give replies, so that we can proceed with the matter in a manner that behoves us.

... (Interruptions)

श्री मधुसूदन मिस्त्री (साबरकंठा) : महोदय, ये लोग बोलकर चले जाते हैं, किसी को सुनते नहीं हैं... (व्यवधान)

श्री प्रभुनाथ सिंह (महाराजगंज, बिहार) : महोदय, मेरा भी एक विषय है।... (व्यवधान)

अध्यक्ष महोदय : आप लोग बैठ जाइए। कुछ काम करने दीजिए।

... (व्यवधान)

अध्यक्ष महोदय : रूल्स के अनुसार कालिंग अटेंशन पहले लेते हैं। I am following the rules, nothing else. रूल मैंने नहीं बनाया है। आप सब लोगों ने बनाया है। Let us do it in a dignified manner.

... (Interruptions)

PROF. VIJAY KUMAR MALHOTRA (SOUTH DELHI): Sir, I call the attention of the Minister of Shipping, Road Transport and Highways to the following matter of urgent public importance and request that he may make a statement thereon:

“The status of Sethu-Samudram Canal Project and the reported controversy regarding its alignment.”

THE MINISTER OF SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): Sir, with the pendency of two court cases vide OS no. 59 of 2006 in the hon. Court of Subordinate Judge, Ramanathapuram and Writ Petition No. 2262 (M/B) of 2007 in the hon. High Court of Judicature at Allahabad, Lucknow Bench, the matter pertaining to implementation of Sethusamudram Ship Channel Project is *sub-judice*. However, without prejudice to the ongoing proceeding in the courts, I am submitting the factual position before this august House.

### **Sethusamudram Ship Channel Project**

The Sethusamudram Ship Channel Project (SSCP), which has been a longstanding demand for over 150 years of the people of peninsular India specially the people of Tamil Nadu, envisages dredging of a ship channel to connect the Gulf of Mannar and Bay of Bengal through Palk Bay so that the ships, depending on draft required, moving between the east and west coast of India could have a continuous navigable sea route around the peninsula within India's own territorial waters. This will save up to 424 nautical miles of distance and up to 30 hours of sailing time for these ships.

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\*Placed in Library. See No. LT 6584/2007

The project is of great significance from national defence and security point of view as well as it will enable quicker access between the coasts as well as shortened response time.

The hon. Prime Minister inaugurated the commencement of works on the Project on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2005 in the presence of Shrimati Sonia Gandhi, hon. Chairperson, UP A, Dr. Kalaignar M. Karunanidhi, presently the hon. Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu and other senior leaders. The work on the project has been progressing uninterruptedly since then. A total quantity of 14.56 million cubic metre has been dredged so far.

### **Selection of Alignment of Sethusamudram Channel**

In the year 1996, the Government decided to make the Tuticorin Port Trust as Nodal Agency for the Project. Tuticorin Port Trust in March, 1998 engaged M/s National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (NEERI) to conduct the Initial Environmental Examination (IEE) of the Project. M/s NEERI considered 5 alternative routes for the channel, out of which alignment numbers 1, 2 and 3 were rejected earlier. The alignment number 4, cutting through Rameshwaram Island (between Kodandaramasamy Temple and Dhanushkodi) and alignment number 5, around Dhanushkodi, were discussed with the Steering Committee headed by the Development Adviser (Ports), Department of Shipping. The alignment number 4 suggested by the Steering Committee near the Moonru Iruppu Chatram was recommended as the best alternative, keeping in view various aspects including environmental, ecological and navigational.

Presentation of IEE by NEERI was made before the Ministry of Environment & Forests (MoEF) in March, 1999. MoEF vide their letter dated April 1999 conveyed that *prima facie* they were not in favour of

this project as the project had serious environmental implications with respect to marine park and the biosphere reserve located in that particular area. In view of the categorical views expressed by MoEF, it was proposed to take up preparation of the Detailed Feasibility Study and the Environmental Impact Assessment Study before taking a final decision on the project. The approval for instituting fresh studies was given by Shri Arun Jaitely, the then Minister (Surface Transport) on 09-03-2001. These studies were assigned to NEERI in October 2001.

Copy of the progress report on Rapid Environmental Impact Assessment for Sethusamudram Ship Channel Project was received from NEERI in Oct. 2002, a copy of which along with the brief on the subject was given to office of the then Minister (Shipping) Shri V.P. Goyal. A review meeting was convened by the then Minister of State (Shipping) [Shri Su. Thirunavukkarasar] on 23-10-2002.[\[r14\]](#)

It is pertinent to note that the progress report on Rapid Environmental Impact Assessment for Sethusamudram Ship Channel Project on 'Analysis of Alternatives ' recommended as follows:-

“Thus, from all considerations including environmental and ecological, the alignment farther away from the Dhanushkody Island appears to be the best choice. Hence, it is proposed that the canal should originate from the Tuticorin new harbour in the Gulf of Mannar, extend towards east and further north-east up to south of Pamban Island, then cut through the Adam's Bridge, thereafter proceed parallel to the International Medial Line before finally joining the Bay of Bengal channel.”

The then Minister of State (Shipping) put up a note to the then Minister (Shipping) [Thiru. V.P. Goyal] on 25/10/2002 seeking decision on the initial depth of 7 meters and a clear-cut 'in-principle' approval of deepening of this canal to 9 metres/12 metres/14 metres in subsequent stages. On 29/10/2002, the then Minister (Shipping) Thiru. Goyal approved for not to consider beyond 9-10 metre (depth and constitution of a Coordination Committee under the Secretary (Shipping) to review the progress and put the project on fast track.

The then successive Minister of Shipping, Thiru Shatrughan Sinha had in response to a matter of Urgent Public Importance(Special Mentions) raised in Rajya Sabha by Prof. Sankaralingam, while informing him about the progress of the project on 23/9/2003, inter-alia, mentioned about the alignment of the channel through Adam's Bridge east of Pamban Island.

The broad principles and parameters of the channel alignment thus considered by the NDA Government is the present alignment of the channel, that is the Alignment number 6.

### **Public Hearings conducted in respect of SSCP**

Fourteen public hearings for consideration of environmental clearance of the project were held in six coastal districts in three rounds during the period from September 2004 to February 2005. Subsequently, on 31.03.2005, the Ministry of Environment and Forests granted environmental clearance to the Project after following due procedure and detailed scrutiny.

### **Geotechnical Studies**

Adam's Bridge, as per information available to the Project Authorities, is a series of sand shoals created by sedimentation over a long period of time in the area.

To assess the dredgability and the quantity of sub-soil to be dredged, Project Authorities had conducted Geotechnical Studies such as Bathymetry, Sub-Bottom Profiling, Vibro-coring and Borehole Investigations. Borehole Investigations were conducted at 81 locations up to 20 meters of depth in Adam's Bridge area by various agencies. International guidelines and practices were followed. The samples have been preserved by the project authorities and are available for any scrutiny.

The then Union Minister, Coal & Mines, Ms. Uma Bharati, desired that the Geological Survey of India (GSI) should take up an R&D project on the past climatic fluctuations in the Adam's Bridger Area to establish a probable Palaeogeography of the terrain. The GSI, accordingly, conducted these studies as a part of "Project Rameshwaram" during December, 2002 to March 2003. The studies included Reconnoitry Survey, Drilling and Off-shore Surveys, Collection of Bathymetric data, Sea-bed samples and Side Scan Sonar Images of the Sea Bed in Dhanushkodi foreland and drilling in one of the islands within EEZ of India and laboratory studies etc. In this study, the boreholes were drilled even up to a depth of 205 metres. Core sediment/logs of these boreholes indicate presence of compact clay, calcareous sandstone and fossiliferous limestone deposited in an episodic manner. The sedimentation pattern clearly points to the past sea level fluctuations. Preliminary studies suggest that all the boreholes are within the Upper Quaternary period (5 to 7 lakh years from today).

In this context, it may be noted that on the issue of origin of Adam's Bridge, NASA , USA on its website has mentioned - "Better known tombolos include ... the now partially submerged giant tombolos forming Adam's Bridge (Palk Strait) connecting Sri Lanka to India... Such tombolos usually indicate a constant sediment source and a strong unidirectional or bi-directional (monsoonal) long shore current." [\[MSOffice15\]](#)

Tombolo means a bar of sand connecting an island with another island or the mainland. Adam's Bridge area in fact has a constant sediment source from the rivers flowing into Palk Bay and experiences bi-directional long shore current, due to South West and North East monsoon.

The project authorities on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2007 and subsequently the Ministry have taken up the matter for seeking more details from NASA.

None of the studies and investigations conducted so far has produced any tangible scientific evidence of any man-made structure in the area.

## **6 . Heritage site**

As per the information available, no archaeological studies have revealed the existence of any structure of archaeological importance in the area. In the absence of any clinching evidence, none of the successive Governments including the NDA Government, have neither declared nor initiated any action to declare the project site or parts thereof as Monument of National Importance.

In view of the aforementioned, I would like to state that the alignment of Sethusamudram Ship Channel does not contain any UNESCO declared World Heritage Site or any Government declared Monument of National Importance. Therefore, there is no question of damage being caused to any such heritage by the implementation of this Project.

प्रो. विजय कुमार मल्होत्रा (दक्षिण दिल्ली) : अध्यक्ष महोदय, यहां लोग बहुत तालियां बजा रहे हैं। ... (व्यवधान) मंत्री महोदय के वक्तव्य को मैंने अच्छी तरह से पढ़ा है। यह बहुत ही निराशाजनक है, आपत्तिजनक है ... \* उन्होंने एनडीए सरकार के समय के बहुत से मंत्रियों का उल्लेख किया। महोदय, मैं कहना चाहता हूँ कि यह जो सेतु समुद्रम कैनल प्रोजेक्ट है, इसके बारे में विवाद नहीं है। विवाद इसके एलाइनमेंट के बारे में है। उन्होंने जानबूझकर, जब-जब कैनल प्रोजेक्ट के बारे में बताया और कैनल प्रोजेक्ट की स्वीकृति दी गयी, तो इस एलाइनमेंट को कभी स्वीकृति नहीं दी गयी। जब हमारे पास एक अल्टरनेट एलाइनमेंट मौजूद है। जैसे स्वेज नहर और पनामा नहर जिस प्रकार से निकाली गयी थी, उसी प्रकार धनुकोटि के पास जो जमीन का हिस्सा है, उसमें से अगर कैनल निकाल दी जाए और जहाजरानी वहां से हो जाए, तो न राम सेतु को ... (व्यवधान) आप यह बात जरा वहां जा कर कहिए कि वहां राम सेतु नहीं है। ... (व्यवधान)

MR. SPEAKER: Let him say. Why are you objecting to it? You can reply to that later.

... (Interruptions)

श्री खारबेल स्वाई (बालासोर) : राम सेतु है ... (व्यवधान)

अध्यक्ष महोदय : खारबेला जी काइन्डली बैठ जाइए।

... (व्यवधान)

MR. SPEAKER: You do not have to yield to them. Shri Swain, please sit down. Do not record anything.

(Interruptions)\*

MR. SPEAKER: It is very difficult. Let him speak. You can reply to that later.

... (Interruptions)

प्रो. विजय कुमार मल्होत्रा : अध्यक्ष महोदय, जब धनुकोटि के पास इसे बनाया जा सकता है और इसे बचाया जा सकता है, लेकिन इसके बारे में मंत्री महोदय जी जिद पर अड़े हुए हैं। वह जिद हिंदू भावनाओं पर कुठाराघात करने की है और किसी प्रकार से इसे पूरी तरह से नट करने की है। [c16]

अध्यक्ष महोदय, मैं आपके सामने... (व्यवधान)

\*Not recorded.

MR. SPEAKER: Silence please. He will reply. Why are you worried? Nothing will go on record.

*(Interruptions) \**

अध्यक्ष महोदय : आप बैठ जाइए।

...(व्यवधान)

प्रो. विजय कुमार मल्होत्रा : हम यहां आपकी तरह नहीं करते।...(व्यवधान)

MR. SPEAKER: Please sit down. There are four hon. Members to take part in this discussion.

प्रो. विजय कुमार मल्होत्रा : इन्होंने बहुत से मंत्रियों के नाम उल्लेख किए, बहुत से कोट किए।...(व्यवधान) जस्टिस के.टी. थॉमस, जिन्हें अभी पदम भूण दिया गया और जिनका बहुत सम्मान है, जिनका हमारी पार्टी के साथ कोई ताल्लुक नहीं है, इन्हीं की पार्टी के साथ ताल्लुक रहा है।...(व्यवधान) He says:

“In project like this, Sethu-Samundram Shipping Canal Project, decisions are to be based not only on a study of geological implications, the religious sentiments of the people are also to be taken into account. The religious sentiments of the people of Bharat must be honoured and there exists a tradition in this land, of honouring religious sentiments. So, it is my definite opinion that Ram Sethu must not be broken. ”

This is what Justice Thomas says.

अध्यक्ष जी, जस्टिस कृणा अय्यर जो आम तौर पर लैफ्टिस्ट माने जाते हैं, उन्होंने प्रधान मंत्री जी को एक पत्र लिखा। He says:

“I should address you better late than never. ”

MR. SPEAKER: You have to vouch for them.

PROF. VIJAY KUMAR MALHOTRA : Yes, I will give it to you.... *(Interruptions)* Please listen to me now.  
... *(Interruptions)*

अध्यक्ष महोदय : श्री बसु, यह क्या हो रहा है।

...(व्यवधान)

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\*Not recorded.

प्रो. विजय कुमार मल्होत्रा : आप लोगों ने क्या मजाक बना रखा है।...(व्यवधान)

अध्यक्ष महोदय : आप बैठ जाइए। I am controlling the House.

...(व्यवधान)

MR. SPEAKER: Please sit down. You are disturbing him.

... (*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: I have asked him to sit down. Do not do this.

... (*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: He is competent to look after him.

... (*Interruptions*)

श्री खारबेल स्वाई : इतनी अंडरस्टैंडिंग हो गई कि अभी डिफेंड कर रहे हैं।...(ब्यवधान)

MR. SPEAKER: Dr. Chakraborty, I thoroughly disapprove of what you are doing. I request that only Prof. Malhotra will speak and nobody else's intervention will be recorded.

... (*Interruptions*)

अध्यक्ष महोदय : मल्होत्रा जी, आप बोलिए।

...(ब्यवधान)

PROF. VIJAY KUMAR MALHOTRA : He wrote a letter to the Prime Minister in which he says:

“I should address you better late than never. The subject must have already been within your attention, and is known as Sethu-Samundram Shipping Canal project....the facts with scientific objectivity and national anxiety. My appeal to you is to stop building any bridge or other construction, an action hostile to the nation and its Swaraj. Our nation will be weaken and may suffer new dangers with American presence in the Sethu-Samundram waters by doing what for centuries has never been considered necessary or feasible or in any manner advantageous to us.”

SHRI T.R. BAALU: Where is the American presence there?... (*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: You may note down the points and reply to them.

... (*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: I am not keeping silent. Again and again I am requesting. I have said that I apprehended this.

... (*Interruptions*)

PROF. VIJAY KUMAR MALHOTRA : He has a right to reply.

MR. SPEAKER: Kindly, Prof. Malhotra, I am speaking in your favour. I had requested all sections of the House because it is a matter which is disturbing many people either on this side or that side. Since we are

discussing this matter in this House, let it be done in a proper atmosphere. You can fully reply. I will give you full opportunity. If you do not get the opportunity to reply I will delete the entire debate.

... (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER; Mr. Basu, you are repeatedly defying the Chair.

... (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Who is using that word? Please stand up. Is that how you treat your colleagues? You have not got the courage.

... (Interruptions)

PROF. VIJAY KUMAR MALHOTRA : He further writes:

“In the name of India, that is Bharat, and appealing to your patriotic statesmanship, I beseech you to reconsider the stand taken. This is a matter of a political party business or popularity or pro-American yen. I hope you will give great thought as the Executive Head of India to the grave issue implied in the enclosed paper and with which the nation shall define its survival.”

MR. SPEAKER: That is the view of a gentleman.[\[R17\]](#)

PROF. VIJAY KUMAR MALHOTRA : He says that the project should not be done.

MR. SPEAKER: You will have to authenticate that.

प्रो. विजय कुमार मल्होत्रा : Yes. अध्यक्ष महोदय, अभी इसके अंदर और क्या-क्या चीजें हैं, उस पर भी मैं आता हूँ। यहां पर राम सेतु को तोड़ने से 15 लाख मछुआरे बेकार हो जायेंगे और यहां पर फिशिंग की जो 600 प्रजातियां मिलती हैं, वे नट हो जायेंगी। उन्होंने भी इसके बहुत खिलाफ कहा है। यहां तक कि सुनामी के आने के बाद यह स्टैबलिश किया गया कि अगर यह सेतु न होता, तो सुनामी से केरल का पूरा तट नट हो जाता। उन्होंने भी इसके बारे में बहुत कुछ कहा है। इस जगह पर थोरियम के भंडार हैं। आप सेतु को तोड़ने के लिए जो चीजें लगा रहे हैं, उससे थोरियम के सारे भंडार नट हो जायेंगे। उसका भी इसमें बहुत ...[\(व्यवधान\)](#)

MR. SPEAKER: You put your question.

... (Interruptions)

प्रो. विजय कुमार मल्होत्रा : मैं केवल पांच मिनट लूंगा। यहां इतना लंबा भाण हुआ है। यहां 25-25 मिनट के भाण हुए हैं।

अध्यक्ष महोदय : इतना लंबा भाण कहां हुआ? यहां किसी ने लंबा भाण नहीं दिया। केवल आप ही लंबा भाण दे रहे हैं।

...[\(व्यवधान\)](#)

अध्यक्ष महोदय : आप बैठ जाइये।

...[\(व्यवधान\)](#)



MR. SPEAKER: You will get your opportunity. You will be called next.

प्रो. विजय कुमार मल्होत्रा : मंत्री महोदय ने इसका उल्लेख किया है कि अमेरिकन प्रेशर की बात कहां से आई? श्री रघुपति जी ने प्रधान मंत्री कार्यालय को पत्र लिखा जिसमें इन चीजों को हाइलाइट किया। It says:

“Both India and Sri Lanka have tried to register the water as historic in 1970-80. US do not recognize this claim.”

MR. SPEAKER: Where are you reading from?

PROF. VIJAY KUMAR MALHOTRA : Sir, I am reading from Mr. Raghupathy's letter to the Prime Minister.

MR. SPEAKER: Who is he?

PROF. VIJAY KUMAR MALHOTRA : He is the Chairman. जिनके बारे में पहले कहा गया था, यह उनका लैटर है।

MR. SPEAKER: You cannot read every letter here without authentication.

PROF. VIJAY KUMAR MALHOTRA : Sir, I am telling about the American pressure.

MR. SPEAKER: You know it very well. I do not have to tell you. Please do not violate the rules.

प्रो. विजय कुमार मल्होत्रा : उन्होंने पूछा कि अमेरिकन प्रेशर कहां है? अमेरिकन प्रेशर में आकर, मैं कहूंगा कि इसके स्कैम की बात अलग है किन्तु धार्मिक आस्था का प्रश्न बहुत बड़ा है। आपने कहा कि राम सेतु नहीं है। पिछले साल यहां दिल्ली में रामलीला देखने के लिए श्रीमती सोनिया गांधी गयी थीं। मैं भी उस वक्त वहां पर था। उसी राम सेतु के ऊपर से जो राम सेना जा रही है, उसे वहां रिपीट किया गया। हजारों सालों से करोड़ों लोग राम सेतु के एग्जिस्टेंस को मानते हैं। ...(व्यवधान)

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Baalu, he is saying that you need not accept it. You can reply properly. Mr. Malhotra, now you have to put your question.

PROF. VIJAY KUMAR MALHOTRA : Sir, I will take five minutes. अध्यक्ष जी, मैं यह कह रहा था कि यह आस्था का प्रश्न है। ...(व्यवधान)

SHRI ANIL BASU (ARAMBAGH): Sir, I am on a point of order... *(Interruptions)*

प्रो. विजय कुमार मल्होत्रा : कार्लिंग अटेंशन में प्वाइंट ऑफ आर्डर का क्या मतलब है?

...(व्यवधान)

अध्यक्ष महोदय : आप सब बैठ जाइये। आप सुनने दीजिए।

...(व्यवधान)

प्रो. विजय कुमार मल्होत्रा : अगर आप धर्म को नहीं मानते, इसमें आपकी आस्था नहीं है, तो आप इसे रोकने की कोशिश क्यों कर रहे हैं? ...(व्यवधान)

MR. SPEAKER: If you do not want it, then everything will be deleted.

... (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: What is your point of order?

SHRI ANIL BASU : Sir, he is referring to some documents and letter. He has to authenticate them.

PROF. VIJAY KUMAR MALHOTRA : I will authenticate every document I am speaking from...  
(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: You can refer to it but you cannot read like that.

प्रो. विजय कुमार मल्होत्रा : अध्यक्ष महोदय, मेरा आपसे इस बात का अनुरोध है कि आस्था का प्रश्न बहुत महत्वपूर्ण होता है।... \*

MR. SPEAKER: This will not come.

प्रो. विजय कुमार मल्होत्रा : यहां जो लुटियंस जोन है ...(ब्यवधान) इस लुटियंस जोन के अंदर हमारे बंगले ...(ब्यवधान)

MR. SPEAKER: Please put your question.

PROF. VIJAY KUMAR MALHOTRA : I am coming to that. अगर लुटियंस जोन को रोका जा सकता है, इसका एक कमरा भी नहीं तोड़ा जा सकता, तो राम सेतु कैसे तोड़ा जा सकता है। रामसेतु को तोड़ना, यह हमारी आस्था का प्रश्न है।

MR. SPEAKER: You have made your point.

प्रो. विजय कुमार मल्होत्रा : अध्यक्ष महोदय, मैं कहना चाहता हूं कि यह हिन्दुस्तान के करोड़ों लोगों की आस्था का प्रश्न है। अगर राम सेतु को तोड़ा गया और राम सेतु को तोड़कर ...(ब्यवधान) राम सेतु तोड़ा जा रहा है। ...(ब्यवधान) राम सेतु नहीं तोड़ने दिया जायेगा। ...(ब्यवधान)

MR. SPEAKER: Nothing will go on record.

(Interruptions)\*

MR. SPEAKER: I am very sorry.

SHRI ANANTH KUMAR (BANGALORE SOUTH): Sir, he is interrupting every time... (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Why are you bothered? Let him put a question.

... (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Very well. I will delete your speech.

... (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: I will delete your speech. I am sorry.

... (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Please take your seat.

... (*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: This is very unfortunate. I will delete the speech. Will you sit down?

... (*Interruptions*)

SHRI ANANTH KUMAR : How can he interrupt like this?... (*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: Who are you to say this? Only Shri Malhotra will speak. I will decide about this. I will go through the proceedings and see. I am adjourning the House now.

... (*Interruptions*)

श्री अनंत गंगाराम गीते (रत्नागिरि) : मंत्री जी बार-बार क्यों खड़े हो जाते हैं?...(व्यवधान)

MR. SPEAKER: Shri Krishnaswamy, I will call you immediately after this.

Shri Malhotra, please put your question. Please do not arouse sentiments here.

प्रो. विजय कुमार मल्होत्रा : महोदय, मंत्री जी बार-बार यह दोहरा रहे हैं कि वह रामसेतु नहीं है। नासा ने वहां के जो चित्र लिए हैं, उनसे भी यह साबित होता है कि वहां सेतु है। हिन्दुस्तान के करोड़ों लोगों की यह मान्यता है और आप भी हर बार रामलीला में जाते हैं, वहां पर रामसेतु का दृश्य देखते हैं, रामसेतु की पूजा करते हैं।...(व्यवधान)

MR. SPEAKER: Please put your question and nothing more.

... (*Interruptions*)

श्री अनंत गंगाराम गीते : मंत्री जी फिर खड़े हो गए। मंत्री जी बार-बार क्यों खड़े हो जाते हैं?...(व्यवधान)

MR. SPEAKER: Please sit down. This is too much. What you all are doing is too much.

... (*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: The House stands adjourned to meet again at 2 p.m.

**12.36 hrs.**

*The Lok Sabha then adjourned till Fourteen of the Clock.*

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Let us complete the discussion under Calling Attention.

... (*Interruptions*)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Prof. Vijay Kumar Malhotra was on his legs. He may conclude now.

प्रो. विजय कुमार मल्होत्रा (दक्षिण दिल्ली): उपाध्यक्ष जी, मैं उस समय कह रहा था कि मंत्री महोदय ने जितने भी तथ्य देने की कोशिश की है, वे पूरी तरह से असत्य का पुलिंदा हैं और जानबूझकर गलतबयानी की जा रही है। उन्होंने कहा कि वहां रेत का टीला है, जहां रेत बनती है और कोई सेतु नाम की चीज नहीं है। वहां पर जितने भी कटर लगाए थे ड्रेजिंग के लिए, वे सारे टूट गए और टूटने के बाद उन्हें बनाने के लिए बाहर से लोगों को बुलाया जा रहा है। वहां अभी लोग गए थे और उन्होंने उस पुल पर चलकर दिखाया है। मीलों तक लोग उस पर चलकर दिखाते हैं। राम सेतु हिन्दुस्तान के 100 करोड़ हिन्दुओं की आस्था का प्रतीक है। हर वा हिन्दुस्तान में कम से कम लाखों जगहों पर रामलीलाओं में उसका मंचन किया जाता है और उसे दिखाया जाता है। मैं मंत्री जी से कहना चाहता हूँ कि जब उनके पास विकल्प मौजूद है, वैकल्पिक रास्ता है और कम कीमत पर बन सकता है, एक बटा दस कीमत पर बन सकता है और उसमें अमेरिकन प्रेजेंस भी नहीं होती, तो फिर क्यों उन्हें दिक्कत हो रही है। अमेरिका के दबाव में आकर सारे रास्ते को खोल देना और उसके अंदर बहुत बड़ा स्कैम कर देना यह ठीक नहीं है।...(व्यवधान)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Only the speech of Prof. Malhotra should be recorded and nothing else.

(*Interruptions*)\*

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\*Not recorded.

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DASMUNSI) : Sir, I would only like to bring to your attention the fact that under Calling Attention, only questions are asked and no speeches are made.... (*Interruptions*)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Prof. Malhotra, please conclude now.

... (*Interruptions*)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: I will request them also to calm down. Please let him conclude his speech.

... (*Interruptions*)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Let me conduct the House.

...(व्यवधान)

श्री अनंत कुमार (बंगलौर दक्षिण): मिस्त्री जी, मल्होत्रा जी कंक्लूड कर रहे हैं, आप कोआपरेट करें।

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Please sit down. Nothing should be recorded.

(*Interruptions*)\*

उपाध्यक्ष महोदय: आप बैठ जाएं, आपको भी मौका मिलेगा और डीएमके को भी बोलने का समय दिया जाएगा।

प्रो. विजय कुमार मल्होत्रा: मैंने नई बात बताई है। सारे गैजेट और सारे कटर टूट गए हैं। यह एक प्रकार से साजिश हो रही है। इस वजह से हिन्दुस्तान में बहुत बड़ा देशव्यापी आंदोलन होने वाला है और लाखों सन्त आंदोलन तथा सत्याग्रह करने वाले हैं। डायनामाइट लगाकर राम सेतु को उड़ाने की साजिश हो रही है।... \* मैं यह भी कहना चाहता हूँ कि यहां पर जब बाबर की जीत हुई थी और वह हिन्दुस्तान में आया था तो उसने मीर कासिम को राम सेतु और राम मन्दिर को तोड़ने भेजा था।... \* राम मन्दिर और राम सेतु हमारी आस्था के प्रतीक हैं, हमारे आदर्श हैं, हिन्दुस्तान की जीवन पद्धति है। उसे तोड़ना सहन नहीं किया जाएगा। अगर आपको यकीन नहीं है, तो यह करके देख लें।... (व्यवधान)

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\*Not recorded.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Now I would request Shri Krishnaswamy to speak.

... (Interruptions)[R18]

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Shri Ramdas Athawale, what are you doing? You are a very senior hon. Member of this House.

... (Interruptions)

SHRI A. KRISHNASWAMY (SRIPERAMBUDUR): Sir, Sethu Samudram Project is around 150 years old project. It is the dream of the people of the Tamil Nadu. It is a national pride and honour. Though the project was conceived by the Britishers, it had never become a reality during the British regime. Though this project was commissioned after the UPA Government came to power, it was approved by the NDA Government. ... (Interruptions)

This was inaugurated by hon. Prime Minister and hon. Chairperson of the UPA. For the past two years, the BJP kept quiet. Now, after commissioning of this Project, they have started politicizing the issue. They are raising this issue to politicise it by referring to Ramlila and Ram Sethu. Actually, its name is Adam's Bridge. ... (Interruptions) Of course, the hon. Minister will reply to it. ... (Interruptions) Even in history it has been referred to as Adam's Bridge. ... (Interruptions)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Shri Krishnaswamy, please ask only clarifications.

... (Interruptions)

SHRI A. KRISHNASWAMY : It is not Ram Sethu. ... (Interruptions) Kumari Uma Bharati also went there. ... (Interruptions) It is Adam's Bridge, not Ram Sethu or Ramar Bridge. ... (Interruptions) It was the dream of the British people. British people called it as Adam's Bridge. But definitely the BJP wants to politicise the issue. They want to penetrate South India. As they have politicized the Ayodhya Temple issue, they want to politicise this issue also. They want to enter Tamil Nadu through this issue. ... (Interruptions) This issue was raised in this same House by former Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, the hon. Aringar Anna. ... (Interruptions)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: What is your question?

... (*Interruptions*)

SHRI A. KRISHNASWAMY : Sir, a question about alignment has arisen now. Therefore, I would like to know from the hon. Minister, in all how many alignments were considered from time to time before finalizing the existing alignment of the Sethu Channel; when the present alignment was finalized, whether any objection or reservation was expressed by any political party or any organization on the alignment issue. Thank you.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Shri N.S.V. Chitthan.

Shri Chitthan, you are allowed to seek only clarifications.

SHRI N.S.V. CHITTHAN (DINDIGUL): Sir, Prof. V.K. Malhotra spoke so long. You have allowed him. I have not even started yet. Please be liberal to our side also.

Sir, at the outset I would like to thank our hon. Minister for his elaborate and detailed statement depicting the whole history of Sethu Samudram Project. As he has mentioned in his statement, this project was the dream of people of Tamil Nadu for more than 150 years. Long back, Poet Subramaniya Bharati, our tall national leader, Perunthalaivar Kamaraj, Shri K.T. Kosal Ram, Aringar Anna, Dr. Kalaignar Karunanidhi and almost all the leaders of different political parties had all along been pressing and demanding for the early implementation of this prestigious project.

As the hon. Minister stated, the hon. Prime Minister inaugurated the commencement of works of the project on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2005 in the presence of Madam Sonia Gandhi ji, hon. Chairperson of the UPA Government, Dr. Kalaignar, the present hon. Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu and all other senior leaders of Tamil Nadu. [\[MSOffice19\]](#)

[\[a20\]](#)

The work on the project has been progressing uninterruptedly since then. A quantity of 14.56 million cubic meters has been dredged on.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Now what is your question?

SHRI N.S.V. CHITTHAN: What were you doing during the inauguration time? ... (*Interruptions*) Sir, I have not put my question. I have not yet come to the question. I warn the BJP and other allied Parties, any attempt to stop or delay the project by the BJP or by any other allied Parties will hamper the economic progress of the nation, particularly the coastal region of Tamil Nadu. It is also to be noted that the NDA Government had never declared during their regime that the canal did contain any UNESCO declared world heritage site or declared monument of national importance. BJP wants to gain political mileage by raising this issue. ... (*Interruptions*)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Now what is your question?

SHRI N.S.V. CHITTHAN: I would like to ask the hon. Minister what are the likely repercussions in physical and financial terms, if any realignment takes places. In that case, what are the likely cost and the time over run in the project? What is the present status of this on-going Sethu-Samundram Project? How much has been spent so far and how long will you take to complete the project as the project is connected with the economic progress of Tamil Nadu. Of course, Lord Rama is not the sole propriety of BJP. Our country is a secular State. There are so many Hindus this side. We believe in Rama and Hinduism.

Sir, for their information I would like to add that during the inauguration time, the heir of Raja of Ramanathapuram, who sent Swami Vivekananda to America was present. Sir, their main aim is to gain political mileage in raising the issue.

SHRI S.K. KHARVENTHAN (PALANI): The Sethu Samudram Ship Canal Project envisages the creation of a navigable canal from the Gulf of Mannar to the Bay of Bengal through a stretch of Shallow Sea in the Palk Strait separating India and Sri Lanka by dredging.

The above Project was first proposed by a British, Mr. A.D. Taylor of the Indian Marines during 1860. At the instance of late leader, Shri K. Kamaraj, hon. late Jawaharlal Nehru's Cabinet cleared the Project for the first time in the year 1955. The Project was studied in 1955, 1983 and 1986. During NDA regime – 1998 to 2003 – various feasibility studies were carried out and the Project was approved, including alignment by the Ministers Shri Thirunavukarasar, Shri Arun Jaitly and other BJP led NDA Ministers. ...  
(Interruptions)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Nothing will go on record except the speech of Shri Kharventhan.

*(Interruptions)\**

SHRI S.K. KHARVENTHAN: Consequent upon the request of Dr. Kalaingar Karunanidhi and due to the strenuous efforts taken by our hon. Minister, Shri T.R. Baalu, the Scheme was launched at Madurai by hon. Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh, hon. Shrimati Sonia Gandhi on 2<sup>nd</sup> July, 2005 at an estimated cost of Rs. 2,500 crore.

I want to know from the hon. Minister how this Project is expected to boost our National Defence?

Secondly, whether at any point of time the alleged heritage factor, "Ram Sethu" issue was raised during the investigation conducted by the BJP Ministers, Shri Arun Jaitly, Kumari Uma Bharti and by other Ministers during the BJP led NDA regime in the period 1998 to 2003?

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\*Not recorded.

\*SHRI M. APPADURAI (TENKASI): Sethu Samudram Project is an accomplishment of 150 years old dream of Tami Nadu British Naval Commander AT Taylor was the first one to meet the

proposal. Thereafter we have been discussing about this every now and then. Government of India had set up a committee headed by Sir A.Ramasawmy Mudaliar to conduct a feasibility study of this project. It was recommended then that Sethu Samudram Project can be taken up along with Tuticorin Port Project. The cost estimate was a mere Rs. 10 crores then. But in 1963, permission was accorded only to Tuticorin Port Project. It was completed in 1975. Ever after that Sethu Samudram Project had its projected cost keep on increasing. In 1996, it required Rs. 760 crores of rupees. Only in 1999, an announcement came to give a hope that the project may be completed in a span of 3 years. But Rs. 4.83 crores was allocated late in 2001 that too to conduct further feasibility study of the project. However the study helped to arrive at a decision to take up 44 Km. Channel. The completion of the project would help every ship to save 30 hours of extended journey taking a circumlocutious route with 442 nautical miles more going round the island nation. Developing Tuticorin Project can help augmenting economic activity in 13 small harbours in Tamil Nadu thereby giving a boost to the economy of Southern States and Southern districts in particular. Tuticorin port which is being modernized now can handle two thousand ships per year emerging as a big and important port in this region than even Colombo and Singapore thereby help boosting Haldia port in West Bengal. This will help earning Rs. 50 thousand crores per year apart from great savings in fuel. Communal forces are now spreading a falsehood in the name of Ram Sethu if only to scuttle the economic development. NASA scientists have

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\*English translation of the speech originally delivered in Tamil.

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said that there are only sand tumboulines and not any man made structure in Adams Bridge the Shallow area in the gulf there. Let us progress with science and scientific temper. Ram Bridge is a myth and a mere belief and there is no scientific basis and has not been proved scientifically as 4 years of study has disproved the claims of BJP. Let superstition not come in the way of progress. The BJP is suggesting alternative alignment avoiding Kothanda Ramasawmy Temple-Dhanushkodi alignment. The suggested alignment infact would cause great ecological disaster. It would affect 21 coral seefs at a stretch of 12 Kms and a vast fish breeding area in that region. Considering the fact that there is only Adam Bridge and not Ram Bridge, we must go ahead to save the interests of fishermen in those coastal areas. Let us shatter myths and construct this economically viable and prosperous a project at the earliest. Hence I would like to know from the Hon. Minister whether the on going Sethu Samudram Project would be completed in time as per schedule without any further delay?

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Now, I would like to request the hon. Minister to give the reply.



... (*Interruptions*)

SHRI ADHIR CHOWDHURY (BERHAMPORE, WEST BENGAL): Sir, I want to seek a simple clarification.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Please sit down. According to rules, I have to give the time to five Members only. Otherwise, I have a very long list with me.

... (*Interruptions*)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: The hon. Minister is on his legs. Nothing will go on record except the hon. Minister's reply.

(*Interruptions*)\*

प्रो. विजय कुमार मल्होत्रा : उपाध्यक्ष महोदय, पहले यह बताया जाए कि एलाइनमेंट को मंजूर किया जाएगा या नहीं? ... (ब्यवधान)  
रामसेतु के डेमोलीशन को रोका जाएगा या नहीं? ... (ब्यवधान)

\*Not recorded.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Now, the hon. Minister is replying.

SHRI ADHIR CHOWDHURY: Sir, please allow me to seek a clarification.... (*Interruptions*)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Please sit down. Nothing is going on record. I am sorry.

(*Interruptions*)\*

THE MINISTER OF SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, first of all, I would like to thank my very close, bosom friend Prof. Malhotra, the mover of the Calling Attention and my other close friends Shri A. Krishnaswamy, Member of Parliament; Shri N.S.V. Chitthan, Member of Parliament; Shri S.K. Karventhan, Member of Parliament and Shri M. Appadurai, Member of Parliament for their observations made in this House – whether they are good or bad.

At the same time, I would like to tell you that we, in the Government here, act according to the Constitution only. Article 51A is about Fundamental Duties. It says:

“It shall be the duty of every citizen of India-- ”

I quote two portions only.

Article 51A (f) says:

“to value and preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture; ”

Sub-clause (h) says:

“to develop the scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform. ”

What is meant by scientific temper? You are my friend Prof. Malhotra. ... (*Interruptions*) He knows what is science, what is scientific temper... (*Interruptions*)

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\*Not recorded.

PROF. VIJAY KUMAR MALHOTRA: That enactment about religious symbols was passed in this House. It says that except the Ramajanna Bhoomi, all other religious symbols exist as they existed in 1947.... (*Interruptions*) किसी भी धार्मिक सिम्बल को तोड़ा नहीं गया।

SHRI T.R. BAALU: I am only on Article 51A of the Constitution. If you want me to be guided by the Constitution, I welcome it. I am directed by the Constitution. That is what I want to impress upon you. [\[R21\]](#)

Sir, I am guided by the Constitution of India and I want to develop scientific temper not only among the Members of the Treasury Benches, but also among the Members of the Opposition Benches. We are clearly guided by scientific approach on this matter without affecting the religious sentiments of the people... (*Interruptions*)

SHRI ANANTH KUMAR (BANGALORE SOUTH): What about Ram Setu? ... (*Interruptions*)

SHRI T.R. BAALU: There is no Ram Setu at all. ... (*Interruptions*) Sir, I would request you to keep the House in order. I have to answer to the points raised by hon. Members.

As far as the Indian map is concerned, whether during the tenure of the NDA Government or during the tenure of any other Government since Independence, no change has occurred. ... (*Interruptions*)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Please listen to him.

SHRI T.R. BAALU: Sir, there is no Ram Setu at all anywhere in the Indian map. Where is Ram Setu? Where is Adam's Bridge in the map? Do they agree with me or not? ... (*Interruptions*)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Whatever is spoken without my permission will not be recorded.

(*Interruptions*) \*

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\*Not recorded.

SHRI T.R. BAALU: Sir, Prof. Vijay Kumar Malhotra said that I have misled the House. I would like to categorically state that I have not misled the House. I have all the relevant records of the Government with me which state that Shri Arun Jaitley proposed this project, Shri Thirunavukkarasar endorsed it and Shri V.P. Goel finalized it. Over and above this, Shri Shatrughan Sinha, the last Minister who was holding this portfolio, wrote a letter to Rajya Sabha Members saying: 'We are going ahead with the project'. ... (*Interruptions*) Sir, if they want, I will read everything here. These are all Government records which were there even during the tenure of the NDA Government.

Moreover, we have established 81 bore holes in the Adam's Bridge area. ... (*Interruptions*)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Nothing will go on record except the reply of the hon. Minister.

(*Interruptions*)\*

SHRI T.R. BAALU: Sir, he charged that I have misled the House. I have not misled the House. I have never intended to mislead the House. In fact, we, in the UPA Government headed by Dr. Manmohan Singh, never intended to hurt the religious sentiments of any community, including the Hindus. ... (*Interruptions*) Sir, let them not disturb me. ... (*Interruptions*)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Whatever is spoken without my permission will not go on record.

(*Interruptions*) \*

SHRI T.R. BAALU: Sir, he said that I have misled the House. I would like to again state here that I have not misled the House. ... (*Interruptions*) Sir, Sadhvi Uma Bharati, the then Member of Parliament of the BJP and a Minister in the NDA Government discussed the issue with the Geological Survey of India and directed the GSI to go for a palaeographic study. I would like to quote from the official Newsletter of the Geological Survey of India dated September, 2003, Volume XVII, No. 2. It says:

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\*Not recorded.

“Satellite imageries over the South Indian coast, the North Sri Lankan coast and the adjoining area released by NASA were published in the Indian newspapers to suggest that India and Sri Lanka were once joined by the Adam's Bridge. It was also reported that the bridge may have its origin at about 0.175 Ma.”

Sir, 0.175 Ma means about 17.5 lakh years ago. It further says:

“Honourable the then Union Minister of Coal and Mines Sadhvi Uma Bharati evinced keen interest in this news item and discussed the issue with the Director-General, GSI and the Dy. Director-General, Marine Wing, GSI. She desired that the GSI should take up an R & D project on the past climatic fluctuations in the area to establish a probable palaeogeography of this terrain.”[\[R22\]](#)

PROF. VIJAY KUMAR MALHOTRA: What does it show?... (*Interruptions*)

SHRI T.R. BAALU: Sir, they should not disturb the Minister... *(Interruptions)* They said, 'I am misleading'... *(Interruptions)*

PROF. VIJAY KUMAR MALHOTRA: Yes, he is misleading the House... *(Interruptions)*

SHRI T.R. BAALU: I am opposing them... *(Interruptions)*

“Shri P.C. Shrivastava, Deputy Director General, Marine Wing, GSI accordingly planned and launched a special programme, “Project Rameswaram”, in an incredibly short time in four phases – (i) reconnoitry survey, (ii) drilling in the Dhanuskodi Foreland, offshore surveys involving collection of bathymetric data, seabed samples, side scan sonar images of the seabed, (iii) drilling in one of the islands within the EEZ of India and (iv) laboratory studies including dating of the samples towards construction of the chronological climatic fluctuations in the past. The programme was implemented on a war footing from December, 2002 to March 2003 under the dynamic leadership and an impeccable supervision of Shri Shrivastava himself.”... *(Interruptions)*

“Three boreholes, approximately 4 kms. apart, were drilled to collect subsurface sediment/rock samples towards generating geological data for suggesting a possible geological milieu of the Dhanuskodi Foreland and the Adam’s Bridge. The first borehole at Mundram Chatram near CRPF Camp was drilled up to 120 metre depth, the second borehole at Dhanuskodi up to 205 metre depth and the third borehole at the first island of the Adam’s Bridge up to 103 metre depth.”

Finally, what is the result? “The sedimentation pattern clearly points to the past sea level fluctuations. Preliminary studies suggest that all the boreholes are within the Upper Quaternary period.”... *(Interruptions)*

I would ask them what is Upper Quaternary period... *(Interruptions)*

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Mr. Baalu, please address the Chair.

SHRI T.R. BAALU: Sir, They should understand the facts. According to the scientific studies, there was no Ram Bridge up to 205 metres. There was no man made bridge... *(Interruptions)* Maybe, I am going up to 12 metres only. What is their problem? We are going to dredge the particular channel up to 12 metres. We may go up to 20 metres or 25 metres maximum, depending on the conditions there... *(Interruptions)* We have done up to 205 metres. What is their problem? There is no man-made structure as far as our dredging is concerned and moreover, if they want to contest Srimad Valmiki Ramayana, we will discuss the matter... *(Interruptions)* Where is the origination of the particular Setu? It has never been stated in the Valmiki Ramayana or in any other Ramayana. Where is it? They should mention, where is it stated?... *(Interruptions)*

There are so many stories. This is mythology... *(Interruptions)* Ramayana is a mythology. Everybody has accepted it. What is their botheration?... *(Interruptions)* We never hurt the feelings of Hindus, not only Hindus, but also Sikhs, Muslims, Christians and everybody... *(Interruptions)* I would advise them not to play their card... *(Interruptions)*

My friend, Malhotraji and other people have dismantled the existing 400 year old Muslim Mosque. Now, they are claiming that we are dismantling the Ram Setu, which is not available, whereas they have dismantled the 400 year old mosque... *(Interruptions)*

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Please conclude now.

SHRI T.R. BAALU: That was the history. This is not history. This is all mythical... *(Interrupti[r23]ons)*

We never intend to hurt the feelings of Hindus or any of the religions. We are secular; this Government is secular than you.... *(Interruptions)*

**14.31 hrs.**

*(At this stage, Shri Ratilal Kalidas Varma and some other hon. Members came and stood near the Table.)*

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