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Title: Need to include Vembanad Lake of Kerala in the list of Lakes identified under the National Lake Conservation Programme.

SHRI JOSE K. MANI (KOTTAYAM): Lake in Central Kerala from extinction. This backwater system covers an area of over 1512 sq. km and supports paddy farming, fishing and tourism providing livelihood to more than 1.6 million people.

A unique characteristic of this lake is the locatin of the Thanneermukkom bund. It was constructed to prevent intrusion of salt water into the Kuttanad low-lands. This barrier has helped the farmers in Kuttanad where farming is done below sea level. But this area is vulnerable to breaking out of epidemics, blockade of navigational channels due to prolific growth of Hyacinth and extinction of marine life.

Vembanad Lake is the back bone of back water tourism in Kumarakom, Alappuzha and Kochi. This wetland system was declared as a new Ramsar Site of international importance in the year 2002. India being a signatory to the Ramsar Convention is duty bound for the conservation of this lake for environmental, hydrological and economic reasons.

I urge the Centre to wake up to the gravity and urgency of the issue and to include Vembanad Lake in the list of Lakes identified under the National Lake Conservation Programme.