

12.00 hrs.

CALLING ATTENTION TO MATTER
OF URGENT PUBLIC
IMPORTANCE

Erosion of Kerala Coastal Belt

SHRI C. K. CHANDRAPPAN (Telli-cherry) : Sir, I call the attention of the Minister of Irrigation and Power to the following matter of urgent public importance and I request that he may make a statement thereon :

“Reported sea erosion of Kerala coastal belt threatening disruption of trunk roads, canals, sea walls etc., and steps taken by the Central Government in that regard.”

THE MINISTER OF IRRIGATION AND POWER (DR. K. L. RAO) : Kerala has a coastline of about 560 kms. The coastal strip is densely populated. The National Highway and Inland Navigation system run parallel to the coastline with only a narrow belt of land separating them from the sea.

Erosion is intensive in a length of about 320 kms. This occurs mostly during the monsoon months starting from the end of May, when the sea is usually rough. In many places, the sea advances by 30-40 meters and recedes by 25-30 meters leading to loss of land of about 5-10 meters annually. This results in damage and loss of dwellings and agricultural land. The inhabitants of the coastal belt who are mainly fishermen are the most affected.

The Kerala Government has reported the following details collected, so far, of sea erosion and consequent damage this year.

In Alleppey District there was a erosion at Valiazheekal, Alleppey, Punnapra and Purakkad during March. 70 dwelling houses were damaged. Between 17th and 25th April, sea erosion occurred also near Mavila Kadapuram in Cannanore District, damaging a few houses. Construction of sea wall in this area has been taken up. In Kozikode District, there was sea erosion at Pudiappa in Elathur village and at Iringal during the first week of June.

Assessment of the extent of sea erosion and damage caused is still being made by the State Government.

The Government are aware of the seriousness of the erosion problem on the Kerala coast, the loss and misery it causes to the inhabitants in the coastal belt, the threat it poses to the communications and also of the need for implementing works which will help in stabilising the shore land. Since 1955, the State Government of Kerala has been implementing anti-sea erosion measures consisting of sea walls, groynes etc. Uptill now, Rs. 9.5 crores have been spent and nearly 25% of the coastline requiring protection, mainly in the worst affected reaches, has been covered. Even these reaches however require careful watch and immediate repairs.

The Government of India has constituted a Beach Erosion Board consisting of experts. Necessary advice in planning and execution of the works as required by the State Government is given by this Board.

SHRI C. K. CHANDRAPPAN : I have gone through the statement made by the hon. Minister very carefully. It is a very good thing that we have a minister who sympathetically approaches the problem, who knows the problem of sea erosion and who always, not only now in making this statement, tried to understand the problem sympathetically and find a solution to a problem of this magnitude.

I would like to quote here from the statement made by the hon. Minister some-time back. I quote :

“the coast line of India extends for a length of about 5700 kms. and the erosion occurs in batches in several States, but it is quite serious in the 550 kms. stretch of coast line in Kerala. Sea erosion causes permanent loss of valuable land in the densely populated State of Kerala.”

This was the statement made by the hon. Minister, Dr. K. L. Rao. He had also made an assessment that in order to solve the problem of sea erosion, Rs. 45 crores should be spent and out of this sum of Rs. 45 crores, Rs. 40 crores should be spent for building walls, groynes. etc. on the Kerala coast alone.

Why I say this is because in the statement the problem is posed but at the end

[Shri C. K. Chandrappan]

of the statement, when it comes to the operative part, I am so disappointed with it. At the end of the statement, he says :

"The Government of India has constituted a Beach Erosion Board consisting of experts. Necessary advice in planning and execution of the works as required by the State Government is given by this Board."

They will give advice, examine the plans and will go through the plans also. But what we want is something different.

The statement again says that the Kerala Government has sent a report saying, 70 huts have been affected and that in some parts of the coast the sea erosion is serious.

I would like to invite the hon. Minister's attention to the recent newspaper reports that the sea wall of a length of 7 miles, Elamkunnappuzha has been broken and disrupted by sea erosion. When we are discussing this, you should know that the sea waves of the height of 20-30 ft. are dashing against the sea coast and the roads, the railway lines and the canals are under the threat of disruption. Under these conditions, what we require is something different.

The present plan as framed by the Central Government is like this that it is linked up with flood control measures. Flood is a problem affecting all over the country. But sea erosion is a unique problem affecting Kerala. In this statement also, the hon. Minister admits that, annually, we are losing 5-10 metres of land. I want to say one thing. When our boundaries are threatened by foreign forces, if China attacks or if Pakistan attacks, we send army and air force to protect and save the boundaries of our country and spend crores of rupees. To Ladakh, we are sending army. Every year, the coast of Kerala is being eaten away. You may get a report, after some years, that beautiful Kerala has been eaten away by the sea. We want only Rs. 40 crores to fight this aggression of the Arabian Sea.

What we want is only Rs. 40 crores as suggested by the hon. Minister, Dr. K. L. Rao and hundred per cent of that money should be spent by the Centre, making a

special national scheme to fight sea erosion. If such a scheme is there, then it should not be linked up, as it is now, with flood control scheme. I ask the hon. Minister whether the Government is thinking in terms of taking a policy decision of delinking the problem of sea erosion from that of flood control, as it is now.

Again, if you go to Kerala, you can see that almost the entire coast line is affected. Out of 560 kms., 320 kms. of the coast line needs protection.

Only 70 or 77 kilometres are protected. I have seen the plight in my constituency. There is a place called Azhikkal where we want to build a port and there an old woman, Fatima Bibi, came to me with tears in her eyes and her child in her hands. She said that in her life time she had been changing constantly her dwelling. Five times she had changed her place. I have seen the last place where she had built up a hut. That place also was being eroded and I am sure now that Fatima Bibi should be changing to the sixth place. I would like to ask the Government a pertinent question.

MR. SPEAKER : May I request the hon. Member to formulate a little bit of question also ?

SHRI C. K. CHANDRAPPAN : Whether the Government is allotting Rs. 4.5 million for fighting sea erosion considering the grave situation there ? I would like to know from the Government whether they are going to allot a little more than this Rs. 45 lakhs which they have gracefully allotted.

Secondly, I would like to know whether they are going to give relief to these people who are the victims of the recent sea erosion.

AN HON. MEMBER : See aggression.

SHRI C. K. CHANDRAPPAN : Yes, it can be called sea aggression also.

The Kerala Government has submitted a scheme to the Planning Commission for fighting sea erosion and they wanted Rs. 12 crores during the Fourth Plan, period. But

the Working Group of the Planning Commission has made it Rs. 10 crores. I would like to know from the Government whether the Government is going to allot this Rs. 10 or 12 crores to fight sea erosion or not.

These are the questions I would like to pose before the Government.

DR. K. L. RAO : What the hon. Member has said is entirely correct. There is no doubt that the Kerala sea coast is subject to heavy erosion year after year. It is also estimated that for protecting the balance length of 240 kms. requires about Rs. 40 crores. It will indeed be very good if we could find these Rs. 40 crores in the next ten years, that is, this decade and if we are able to spend Rs. 4 crores every year for 10 years, that will be an ideal situation to save the Kerala coast as also the Indian coast. The only question is about finding the finance—whether it is to be borne by the Centre or by the State. On various occasions this question was raised. Even the Public Accounts Committee in its 47th Report have said that it should be taken up at the national level. But, later on, different opinions prevailed. So far as the Ministry of Irrigation and Power is concerned, they feel the problem requires special consideration. Both in the Fourth and the Fifth conferences the Ministers of Irrigation and Power had recommended that this problem should be given special treatment and financial assistance, but in recent times a different view prevailed.

With regard to the immediate problem, certain amount of money has been allotted to the State for protecting the sea coast. What the hon. Member has quoted is last year's amount. What the general policy of the Government of India is that the Government of Kerala must spend the monies that are allotted in that year and above that, if still some more money is required, then the Government of India gives it as a loan.

SHRI N. SREEKANTAN NAIR (Quilon) : The hon. Minister has said that it would be ideal to spend Rs. 4 crores annually for the next ten years. But, in view of the fact that even the existing sea walls have been washed away, that programme does not seem to be quite all right.

The whole thing has got to be looked at as one scheme. Therefore, I would ask a question.

In view of the fact that the experience of the past 25 years has shown that both groins and sea-walls, put up in small sectors where the tides make the most serious inroads into the beach, would not solve the question of sea erosion in over 300 miles of the coastal belt of Kerala which alone, out of thousands of miles of coastline in India, is threatened by the tidal waves of the Indian ocean,—may I know from the Government—

- (1) whether the Government is prepared to classify this sea-erosion along with the other natural calamities like flood and drought and declare this coastal belt as a famine area ;
- (2) whether Government intends to approach the World Bank or some other Agency to secure the necessary funds to protect the entire coastline of Kerala as one project, so that this pernicious tide is deflected away from the Kerala coast and the people in the thickly populated coastal belt of Kerala are allowed to sleep in peace without the nightmare of being swallowed up by the sea with their entire families and their huts and their coconut groves ; and
- (3) whether the Government would consider protecting the sea-walls with small groynes at regular intervals, so that the sea-walls are not washed away in stretches of several miles as it did in Cherai in Central Kerala two days ago ?

DR. K. L. RAO : I have said in my reply that we have got a very good sea-erosion expert body which goes into this problem. This is a colossal type of work.

SHRI N. SREEKANTAN NAIR : So many strips of land have been washed away.

DR. K. L. RAO : I got a message from Kerala Government last night at about 8 O'clock. That does not mention that. In the absence of any statement from the Kerala Government, I cannot say anything only based on newspaper reports. Any sea

[Dr. K. L. Rao]

erosion work is such that one cannot stand guarantee that that will be there for ever. It is not like other kinds of work. Sea is a ferocious natural force. From the work done on any coast in any country in the world one cannot vouch safe for the safety of the coastal belt from sea water. Therefore, if as a result some area is washed off, that is bound to be the case. I have said in the statement that the work that is done requires careful attention.

If the hon. Member has any particular information to give, I request him to pass on a note to me so that I may take up with the beach erosion expert body to scrutinise all these situations and ensure greater stability of those works.

The hon. Member raised a question about funds. The present practice is this. At the end of the flood season what is done is, we assess the value of the total amount of damage and if that exceeds what is provided in the State Plan then the Government of India gives money. What portion of it is loan etc. will be decided at that time. But the hon. Member has been saying that this is a colossal problem and that a small State like Kerala cannot meet this colossal problem and that some consideration must be shown. That is a point which is yet to be decided.

SHRI N. SREEKANTAN NAIR : Will you tackle it as an integrated project ? The entire coastal area should be taken as one project, not piecemeal ..

DR. K. L. RAO : Even if I have all the funds, it will take another 10 years....

SHRI RAMCHANDRAN KADANNAPALLI (Kasargod) : The cruel attack by the sea, the perennial calamity of sea erosion in Kerala, more violent in monsoons, had been discussed in this very House many times for the past many years.

You know, Sir, the people worst affected are naturally the poor fishermen of the coastal areas. Even otherwise their plight is miserable. Added to that, this sort of constant uprooting of their huts is leaving them on the verge of starvation. Therefore, I want to ask the following questions :—

- (1) Will the Government come out in a big way for scientific and long-

term plan to completely protect the coast-line of Kerala ? The areas in Kasargod, Maatool and Puthiyangadi are the worst-affected.

- (2) Will the Government rush immediate help as they do for refugees ? and
- (3) Will the Government wholly subsidise a strong-based Fishermen's Housing Programme, so that their living places may stand the onslaught of the sea ?

The State Government have prepared a plan for an expenditure of Rs 12 crores, but they are not able to meet these huge expenses to face this problem. So, the problem should be considered as a national problem and the Government of India should give their whole consideration for this programme. I request that this anti-sea-erosion programme should be included in the Central Flood Control Board Schemes.

DR. K. L. RAO : There is nothing much that I can add to what I have submitted already. As I have said, the whole thing impinges on finances. In regard to finances, we have to consider again the matter in view of the various representations made and in view of the position. I can only say this that I shall submit this to the Planning Commission and have the problem reviewed again, but as for the present practice. I have stated the position already.

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI (Chirayinkil) : The hon. Minister has told us what the State Government have stated. But I would like to draw the attention of the hon. Minister to the report of the Public Accounts Committee in 1965. I do not want to read the whole report, but I would only point out that the committee had stated that the problem of sea-erosion in Kerala should not be considered and tackled as an *ad hoc* problem but as a consolidated one. But unfortunately, the Government of India are tackling it only as an *ad hoc* problem. The Kerala Government as well as the Members of Parliament from Kerala are suggesting that it should be taken up as a flood control programme and should be included in the flood control programme. But we find that the hon. Minister has been avoiding the answer to

this question. I would like to know whether the Central Government are prepared to include the problem of checking the disastrous sea-erosion in the flood control programme.

Of course, the Kerala Government had recommended a plan of Rs. 12 crores for the Fourth Plan. But the Planning Commission recommended only Rs. 10 crores. And some officials sitting in the secretariat here, who have probably seen the sea so far in their life have considered this to be some trivial affairs and have sanctioned only Rs. 45 lakhs. This sum of Rs. 45 lakhs is not sufficient to tackle the problem even for a day there. I would like to know who those people are who are sitting here and cutting even the proposals of the Planning Commission and sanctioning only Rs. 45 lakhs? At least whatever the Planning Commission, has sanctioned should be given to the Kerala Government. The Kerala Government had proposed a total expenditure of Rs. 40 crores to save the coastal belt. In fact, I would suggest that not only the coastal belt of Kerala but the entire coastal belt should be safeguarded from the aggression by the sea every year.

DR. K. L. RAO : It again impinges on finances. The point is that in the Fourth Plan, the financial aid to the various States is given according to a particular formula. This money is given in the form of loans and grants and it is for the States to allot any money that they have given to the various sectors, and nobody comes and interferes with that. If the Kerala Government wants to enlarge Rs. 10 crores, the Planning Commission would have no objection. They have allotted Rs. 5 crores having regard to the various other sectors. What the hon. Member evidently has in view is that Kerala requires some additional assistance in view of the very big peculiar and unique nature of the problem, and that is a thing which has got to be again discussed with the Planning Commission.

DR. HENRY AUSTIN (Ernakulam) :
In view of the fact...

SHRI SEZHIYAN (Kumbakonam) :
One doctor is putting a question to another doctor.

AN HON. MEMBER : With a third doctor in the Chair.

MR. SPEAKER : I am very sorry that in spite of the fact that I am a doctor, they do not refer to me as doctor.

SHRI G. VISWANATHAN (Wandiwash) : Hereafter we shall do so.

AN HON. MEMBER : We shall call you as Dr. Speaker,

DR. HENRY AUSTIN : In view of the breaches in the sea from Monambam to Cherai, a distance of three miles, threatening the Cochin harbour and the coastal belt of Cochin city, will the Government be pleased to take immediate steps to fill the breaches and to take other comprehensive long term measures to save Kerala from oceanic aggression? Mythology says that Kerala was formed from the sea by a miracle brought by Parasurama. Now, it seems to us that the spell of that miracle is losing its weight, and the sea is again causing this crisis. But we are not deterred by that because in this age of science and technology, I am sure the people who are really concerned would not take this problem lightly. I would submit that my own political and public career started on this particular issue. Along with Shri Sreekantan Nair, in the mid-30s, we tried to focus attention of the then Maharaja's Government in Kerala to this vital problem of the State being eaten furlong by furlong every monsoon season. With Shri Sreekantan Nair I went round a number of places then under sea erosion to enlist the co-operation of the members of the Congress which was banned at that time by the State Government. Those areas are now under the sea and trawlers are moving about trapping fish. Of course, this is a matter for satisfaction to my hon. friend, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Trade, Shri George, because of the foreign exchange it earns for us. But thousands and thousands of people have been uprooted on account of this.

Another factor is that areas where we have monozite, rare earths, ilmanite, zircon and other things which are vital for the development of atomic energy are being lost to us.

[Dr. Henry Austin]

As regards my constituency of Ernakulam I have here a copy of the leading newspaper of Kerala with a circulation of over 5 lakhs which has displayed on its front page on the 11th of this month a picture of a 3-mile breach caused by the sea between Munambam and Cherai, as a result of which 3,000 people have been uprooted. They are homeless now. According to this paper, the *Mathrubhoomi*, if this erosion continues for another two weeks, the sea will be washing the coastal area inside, that is the backwaters of Ernakulam City. The Cochin Harbour is in danger and the new project which is the hope of Kerala, the Ship-building Yard itself will be at stake. 16 miles south and 16 miles north of this breach, three to four thousand fishermen have been uprooted. They have no homes. Therefore, I would request the hon. Minister to despatch a high power commission immediately for an on-the-spot study and for taking the necessary steps. As a temporary measure, I would suggest that all those who have been deprived of their houses due to this erosion should be provided housing sites or temporary shelter and later a massive programme of house-building should be undertaken.

As regards the other aspects, my other esteemed friends have dealt with them. Again I would say that 25 years ago when we started this agitation, some high-ranking advisers of the Maharaja were saying; 'What can be done? It is a natural phenomenon'. My esteemed friend, Minister, Dr. K. L. Rao who is very much seized of the situation and is doing his very best, even he, says that this is a natural phenomenon. I would say no, people in other parts of the world do not consider problems like this as such irremediable national calamities. Take the case of Holland, most of which lies below the sea level. But they have erected sea walls to stem the onslaught of the sea. Here in Kerala land is scarce and is very precious. If it is allowed to be eaten away like this, I would say it is callous negligence. I would therefore highlight this aspect of the situation so that effective steps may be taken to save not only the poor people of Kerala and their living space but also the State and the country which gains immensely from the rare minerals available in those areas, to which I have already referred. There is also the fishing industry which is affected. The backward regions are affected. So this is a

national problem and as such I would suggest that a mission be sent immediately to survey the situation and steps may be taken to persuade the Planning Commission and other appropriate agencies to take the necessary steps to stem the erosion immediately.

DR. K. L. RAO : I have not heard of the particular breach, to which the hon. member has referred. But I will ask the Kerala Government to deal with this breach and also send an expert to survey the place and suggest what immediate steps should be taken. I would like to assure the hon. member that we will take the necessary steps. The discussion has served a very good purpose in highlighting the problem which is necessary specially from the point of view of obtaining the finance required for the work. I am particularly thankful to the hon. Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission who is here and is doing his best in this matter.

12.30 hrs

PAPERS LAID ON THE TABLE

Notifications under All-India Services Act

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS AND IN THE DEPARTMENT OF PERSONNEL (SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA) : I beg to lay on the Table :

- (1) A copy each of the following Notifications (Hindi and English versions) under sub-section (2) of section 3 of the All India Services Act, 1951 :—
 - (i) The Indian Administrative Service (Fixation of Cadre Strength) Ninth Amendment Regulations, 1970, published in Notification No. G.S.R. 47 in Gazette of India dated the 9th January, 1971.
 - (ii) The Indian Administrative Service (Recruitment) Amendment Rules, 1971, published in Notification No. G.S.R. 316 in Gazette of India dated the 6th March, 1971.