

NT>

Title: Need to declare Sabarimala as the National Pilgrim Centre.

SHRI RAMESH CHENNITHALA (MAVELIKARA): Mr. Speaker, Sir, Sabarimala is one of the very important pilgrim centres in India. More than five crore pilgrims visit that Temple every year. The facilities for the pilgrims are very very poor. Due to this, a lot of difficulties are caused to the people in the Sabarimala Hills, the Pamba and other places.

Time and again, we had requested for providing more forest land to make available more facilities for the pilgrims who are coming from different parts of our country. When I raised the issue in this august House, your predecessor, Shri G.M.C. Balayogi, was very kind enough to constitute a Committee of which Shri O. Rajagopal, Shri K. Francis George and myself were Members. We visited the Sabarimala and the nearby places. We have submitted a report to the Government of India as well as the State Government of Kerala. The Government of Kerala had taken certain action for parking and other facilities by earmarking 50 acres of land which were originally in the hands of the Farming Corporation of Kerala.

I request the hon. Minister of Environment and Forests to grant more land so that proper facilities could be provided by the Travancore Devasthanam and the State Government of Kerala.

The Pamba River, which is considered to be a holy river in the southern India, is also contaminated by a large number of pilgrims who come from different parts of our country. We have submitted a proposal for including the Pamba River also under the River Conservation Project.

The Government of India should declare Sabarimala as a national pilgrimage centre and provide enough financial assistance for making this place more viable and spacious just like the Vaishno Devi Shrine in the northern India. Just like that Shrine, Sabarimala is one of the very important pilgrimage centres. It may be declared as a national pilgrimage centre. The people belonging to all communities – Muslims, Christians and Hindus – go to that Temple. So, it is a place of national integration.

Considering all these aspects, it should be declared a national pilgrimage centre and given more facilities for the pilgrims who are visiting this area.