

Title: Need to check move to privatise mining of strategic minerals in Kerala.

SHRI P. RAJENDRAN (QUILON): Sir, the coastal stretch from Neendakara in Kollam district to Thottapally in Alleppey district in Kerala State has the richest mineral deposits in the country which includes illmenite, rutile, leucoxene, silliminite, zircon and monazite in heavy quantities. As they come under the strategic minerals, the mining rights in these areas are fully owned by the Government and hitherto conducted only by the Kerala State owned Kerala Minerals and Metals Limited and the Indian Rare Earths Limited, a Central Government undertaking.

Meanwhile, the hon. Prime Minister has announced a new project of mineral separation plant worth Rs. 10,000 crore, a joint venture of National Mineral Development Corporation and Indian Rare Earths Limited, Kollam during his inaugural address on 18th January, 2003 at the Global Investment Meet conducted by the Government of Kerala. However, it is understood that the Government of Kerala has designed the project in the private sector. It is learnt that the Kerala Government has already submitted this proposal for the approval of the Central Government.

The privatisation of this strategic sector will be a great threat to the security of the nation and detrimental to our national interests. Indiscriminate private mining will cause adverse environmental problems and shatter the livelihood of the fishermen community of coastal Kerala. Hence, I would like to urge the Central Government to retain the mineral and mining absolutely in public sector in view of our national security and national interests.