

Title: Need to introduce a ship-service between Cochin and the Gulf countries.

SHRI E. AHAMED (MANJERI): Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to bring to the notice of this House an important matter relating to the State of Kerala. It is well known that Kerala sends the maximum number of manpower to other countries, particularly to the Gulf countries. In Saudi Arabia, there are about 1.5 million Indians, out of which 80 per cent are from the State of Kerala. In other Gulf countries also there are about four million Indians, out of which the over-whelming majority is from Kerala. It has now become very difficult for a labour in Kerala, working in the Gulf, to get himself transported from the Kerala coast to the Gulf coast. The ever-increasing airfare has always been a stumbling block for this purpose. Moreover, the employers in the Gulf are reducing their salaries and other perks including airfare. So, under the circumstances it has become most essential that a shipping service be introduced from Cochin to Gulf destinations like Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Kuwait, Muscat or to such other places.

Sir, now there is already a new ship sailing from Cochin to Lakshadweep. That ship could be made use of for the purpose of transporting the labourers from Kerala to the Gulf countries. So, the Ministry of Surface Transport should prepare a viable scheme for helping the people, especially those labourers who are going to the Gulf countries. The country is also earning foreign exchange through them. I would like to urge upon the Government to consider a plan for arranging a shipping service from Kerala to the Gulf countries.