

Sixteenth Loksabha

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Title: Regarding construction of a canal/channel along Rann of Kutch to link Rajasthan to Arabian Sea.

COL. SONARAM CHOUDHARY (BARMER): An immense salt water waste, Rann of Kutch extends from Arabian Sea in Gujarat to Bhakasar in district Barmer, Rajasthan which I represent in this august House. It would be a pleasant surprise to my distinguished colleagues to know that it is possible to construct a canal/channel along Rann of Kutch to link Rajasthan at Bhakasar in Barmer Distt. to Arabian Sea — a distance of about 300 kms. Rann's land is almost flat and there are no hindrances on the entire route like huge rocks and hillocks. It is a barren land devoid of vegetation as well as human life. Its soil is a mixture of sand, mud and salt. As such, its construction is feasible like the Suez Canal in Egypt and Haldia port in West Bengal (India). The route of the canal/channel shall be almost wholly via Gujarat. It would be of great benefit to Gujarat, Rajasthan and the country. I am told tha British Govt. also carrid out feasible survey during year 1902.

2. Geological evidences suggest that whole of Western Barmer was under sea in earlier geological times and a Gulf extended from Rann of Kutch in Barmer upto South of Jaisalmer. The construction of this link canal was envisaged during British-rule also and I have been taking up this issue in the House from time to time since the year 1996. If need be, I shall give literature. The Sanchor-Barmer Basin of Rajasthan is an extension of Cambay Basin. Oil has been discovered in Barmer and currently being produced by Cairn India Limited th partnership with ONGC. Further discoveries of oil and natural gas are imminent which are being explored in the area by various agencies. If this canal/ chanal is connected with Arabian Sea, following main gains will be achieved.

- (a) It will help in reclamation of salty land, mostly in Gujarat measuring about 20,000 Sq Kms.
- (b) It will strengthen second line of Defence, as Canal network in Punjab sector.
- (c) A new Sea Port connecting Western Rajasthan Distt. like Banner, Jaisainer, Jalore, Pali, Sirohi, Nagour, Bikaner etc. This will facilitate movement of many mierals like Marble, Granite, Lignite, Bentonite, Lime stone etc.
- (d) There are rich deposits of Crude oil and Gas in Western Rajasthan, especially in Barmer, Jaisalmer, Jalore, Carriage of oil and Gas , especially to Kandla Sea Port will be much cheaper (25%) Compared to Road transport.

3. I raised this issue in the House under Rule 377 on 10 August, 2015 and by Unstarred Question No. 3230 on 15 March, 2018. The Hon'ble Minister of State for Shipping advised vide his letter dated 15 October, 2015 about pre-feasibility study prepared in this regard. I also took up the matter with the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Rajasthan to take up this project expeditiously. However, I regret to note that no progress has been made in this regard.

4. Therefore, I urge the Hon'ble Prime Minister and Hon'ble Minister for Shipping to carry out Feasibility report and DPR so that life line project of Western Rajasthan can be undertaken.