

(v) REPORTED THREAT TO COCHIN PORT
AFTER SINKING OF THE DREDGER LORD
WELLINGTON

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI (Chirayinkil): Under rule 377, may I draw the attention of the Minister about a matter of urgent public importance? The Cochin Port was created by dredging at Sea Mouth at Cochin 50 years ago and a Cutter Section—Dredger Lord Wellington was used for it. Since then this dredger played an important role in keeping the Cochin Port always free for navigation. It was functioning very well; and there was no defect in the engine; and as such, it could be used very well. Even though the Cochin Port acquired another dredger at Mattancherry, it could not match the functioning of Lord Wellington. The depth of the navigation channel had to be maintained constantly. So, this constant work had been done by Lord Wellington alone. A new fishing harbour project has also started and the Cochin Shipping Yard is nearing completion. For the functioning of these two projects, the dredging activities of the sea and the port area have to be continued more vigorously. Unfortunately, on February 21 last, at noon, Lord Wellington sunk and went deep into the water. The episode was over within 20 minutes.

It may be noted that every year the outer bar dredging used to be conducted at the end of December; but, for the last few years, it is being postponed to January and February. In these months, the sea becomes rough and the dredger has to conduct dredging in this rough weather. The reason for such a change is unknown.

Lord Wellington went under repairs; and trial dredging was done. A Fitness Certificate was issued for its being sent to the sea. After this certificate was issued, dredging was started; and it was only then that the dredger went under water. Everybody was surprised to see that this great asset of the Cochin Port met with this fate.

There are many doubts among people and the employees of the Port,

about the incident. There is every reason to believe that the engineering department completely failed to maintain this dredger properly. It was not the engine defect that made it sink, but the defect of the body made water flow in; and the disaster occurred.

Because of there being no dredging activities in the port, the employees of the Cochin port are in an agitated mood. A fear of unemployment and retrenchment has developed among the people.

The Cochin port has also been incurring heavy expenditure and they have decided to hire a dredging vessel from some other agency. It costs one lakh rupees per day for dredging by these contractors.

Another dredger which belongs to the Cochin Port is worthless in functioning.

Even though the Chairman of the Port Trust is efficient enough, the Permanent Engineering Department is yet to be streamlined. It is necessary that an enquiry should be conducted into the whole episode and the circumstances which led to the loss of Lord Wellington. It will also throw some light on the whole functioning of the Engineering and Marine Maintenance Department of the Cochin Port. So, I demand a thorough enquiry into the whole functioning of this department and the circumstances which led to the incident. I also request the Government to take immediate steps to save the Cochin Port from the dangerous situation of complete ruin.

श्री राम बिलास पासवान (हाजीपुर) :
अध्यक्ष महोदय, मैं एक जानकारी चाहता हूँ। एक कालिंग अटेंशन हम ने दिया था कर्नाटक में हरिजनों को कुएं पर पानी भरने से रोका गया, इसके बारे में। करीब 8-10 सदस्यों ने यह कालिंग अटेंशन दिया था. . .

MR. SPEAKER: Everything is being considered. There is a method for it.

श्री राम बिलास पासवान : उस पर कंसिडर किया जायगा ?