

**SPECIAL MENTIONS****Need to give permission to the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) to resume excavations at Keeladi in Sivaganga District of Tamil Nadu and provide adequate financial assistance**

SHRI T. K. RANGARAJAN (Tamil Nadu): Sir, the excavations at Keeladi, a small village in Sivaganga district near Madurai in Tamil Nadu, have successfully brought out the evidence of urban settlement of a flourishing civilization. The civilisation dates back to third century BC and third century AD. Two years of excavations in 2015 and 2016, unearthed 1800 antiquities in first year and 4000 antiquities in second year.

The early historic remains in the form of elaborate brick structures, brick drains, paved brick floors associated with grooved roof tiles, terracotta ring wells and furnaces have been unearthed. The treasure trove include semi-precious stones and antiquities like iron implements, ivory dice and black and red ware and russet coated ware. More than 70 Tamil-Brahmi inscribed shreds have been discovered during the excavations.

It is noteworthy to point out in that the ongoing quarrying activities along Vaigai River pose major threat to these archaeologically significant sites. Lack of funds and any undue delay in carrying out excavations at Keeladi may only end up missing a golden opportunity to unravel the history.

I, therefore, seek the intervention of hon. Minister of State for Culture and Tourism to instruct the Central Advisory Board of Archaeology of India to immediately permit ASI to resume excavations at Keeladi and provide necessary financial assistance to yield desirable result. I also request to establish a Site Museum on the premises to display all the items excavated over the past months, unravelling one of the oldest urban civilisations in South India.

SHRI TIRUCHI SIVA (Tamil Nadu): Sir, I associate myself with the Special Mention made by Shri T. K. Rangarajan.

SHRIMATI KANIMOZHI (Tamil Nadu): Sir, I also associate myself with the Special Mention made by Shri T. K. Rangarajan.

SHRI LA. GANESAN (Madhya Pradesh): Sir, I associate myself with the Special Mention made by Shri T. K. Rangarajan.

DR. SUBRAMANIAN SWAMY (Nominated): Sir, I associate myself with the Special Mention made by Shri T. K. Rangarajan on the ground that the excavation near

Madurai, which is my home town, shows that it is a part of Indian civilisation similar to the excavation of Mohenjo-daro and Harappa in Gujarat. It shows that we were one civilisation exposing the British bogus theory of being two civilisations.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Yes, we are one civilisation. There is no doubt about it. Don't go by the British theory. Go by our own theory. We are one.

SHRIMATI KANIMOZHI (Tamil Nadu): Sir, as stated and as pointed out, there is no on-site museum. So, most of the artefacts have been unearthed. Like, they unearthed one pot. They just left it there and went for lunch, By the time they came back, somebody had just thrown a stone on a pot which was made 2000 years ago and it was broken. So, there is no security for the objects there. I think, an on-site museum is a necessity. ...*(Interruptions)*... Funds are not being allocated. Something has to be done about that.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I think, the Government should take note of it. ...*(Interruptions)*... Agreed; agreed. ...*(Interruptions)*... Yes, Mr. Minister, would you like to react? ...*(Interruptions)*...

THE MINISTER OF CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS AND THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI ANANTHKUMAR): Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir, this issue of archaeology excavation near Madurai is a very important issue. I will bring it to the notice of the hon. Minister of Culture and Tourism. We will do everything so that the things, which have been excavated there, are taken care of.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much. Now, Dr. V. Maitreyan. ...*(Interruptions)*... Mr. Tiruchi Siva, you have supported it. ...*(Interruptions)*... That is enough. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI TIRUCHI SIVA: Sir, I had given a Special Mention notice on the same issue. My name is there in the list. But, it has not been circulated to me.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Okay, okay. I am sorry. Sorry, Dr. Maitreyan, the name of Tiruchi Siva is also there. Yes, Mr. Siva, you can associate.

SHRI TIRUCHI SIVA: Sir, it has not been circulated to me. Once it comes, kindly permit me also.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Okay. Now, Dr. Maitreyan.