

GOVERNMENT OF MADRAS.

MARINE DEPARTMENT.

22nd September 1881, No. 454.

Santapillai Reef.

Read the following papers :—

From J. H. TAYLOR, Esq., Lieutenant, R.N.R., Master Attendant, Madras, to the Chief Secretary to Government, dated Madras, 22nd August 1881, No. 7549 [Current No. 525].

Administrative Department.

I have the honor to acknowledge the Proceedings of Government, No. 378, dated 3rd August 1881, and to express my opinion that the project of removing the Santapillai rock by dynamite is a much more serious undertaking than the Committee of Lloyds or the Agent of the Dynamite Company appears to imagine. So far as information on record goes, the rock is about a quarter of a mile in length and considerable in breadth. I do not consider that the sum mentioned would at all be adequate to the work considering the preliminary expenses and necessary plant and establishment. It would of course be desirable that a complete examination of the reef should be made. The Marine Department Diver sent up to search for the wreck of the *Lassa* failed, in the most quiet month in the year, in making any useful observations—*vide* my remarks in letter to Government, No. 4971,* dated 6th June last, upon proposed plan.

2. I would beg leave to observe that the rock is by no means so serious a danger as the correspondence seems to indicate; the only two vessels, *Lassa* and *Dacca*, lost on it were literally thrown away. The light-house by day and the light by night are very good safeguards for any navigation, together with use of the lead.

3. The light would still be required for vessels making the coast for Bimlipatam from Rangoon or eastern ports, though it might be moved to Bimlipatam. No saving can therefore be depended on in this direction.

4. It would be far better in my opinion to test the value of the Dynamite Company's suggestion on some small, but equally dangerous, rock, as, for example, the Whale rock off Galle, a most dangerous pinnacle, or the Crocodile rock off Muttum, also a pinnacle; both the expense and the efficiency of the plan could be tested cheaply on these dangers. The magnitude of the Santapillai reef demands more careful consideration. For instance, the debris scattered by the dynamite might fall into deep water from these pinnacle rocks, but in the case of the Santapillai, which is believed to be a plateau, the debris would require to be dredged up and removed as proposed by Colonel Beaumont in his method referred to in my letter above quoted, and the expense of a sea-going dredge to lift from seven fathoms deep is a most serious consideration. This and other important items that would be demanded in practice do not seem to have suggested themselves to the correspondents.

5. With regard to paragraph 2 of the letter from Colonel Chesney, dated 16th July 1881, No. 716-S (Current No. 463), I can only report that this department has no means for carrying on the preliminary borings or the examination by divers. A large steady vessel to accommodate the party and furnish a base for operations would be a necessity in that out-of-the way place.

6. In conclusion, I must agree with the Indian Light-house Committee in the fourth paragraph of Commander Dundas Taylor's letter, 2nd July 1881, No. 64, that, if the Dynamite Company would, for the sum of £10,000, guarantee to remove the Santapillai rock to a mean level of seven fathoms, it would be a desirable offer to accept.

No. 451 [Current No. 548].

OFFICIAL MEMORANDUM.

Till some such complete survey and sections of the Santapillai rock have been made as suggested in paragraph 3 of letter from the Superintendent of Marine Surveys, No. 64, of 2nd July 1881, printed with G.O., 3rd August 1881, No. 378, Marine, have been executed, it would, I regret to say, be out of my power to offer any reliable opinion upon this reference; at the same time, taking into consideration the danger which the rock constitutes in regard to the trade of Bimlipatam, if not of the coasting trade generally, it would appear to be extremely desirable to ascertain all the facts so soon as the sea is sufficiently calm—next January or February probably.

(Signed) R. H. SANKEY, Col., R.E.,
Chief Engineer, P.W.D.

5th September 1881.

To the Chief Secretary to Government.

From J. H. TAYLOR, Esq., Lieutenant, R.N.R., Master Attendant, Madras, to the Chief Secretary to Government, dated Madras, 13th September 1881, No. 8061 [Current No. 579].

Administrative Department.

I have the honor to acknowledge official memorandum, Marine Department, No. 1531, dated 10th September 1881, and to state my opinion that a preliminary survey of the Santapillai rock by divers should be made next March. It may be that the difficulties, some of which I drew attention to in my letter, No. 7549, dated 22nd August last, may render further proceedings unadvisable. In order to carry out the inspection, a steam vessel will be necessary with steady sea-going qualities and accommodation and stores for the party. I should recommend not less than four well-equipped divers, and the whole should be in charge of an officer of the Marine Survey to carefully note the position and plot off the information given by the divers. I have no steam vessel of the kind required, but I should think the Indian Government vessel *Hugh Rose* would suit very well, or one similar; too much expense need not be incurred. I have no Marine Diver now on my establishment; the man who went up to examine the reef when the *Lassa* was cast away has resigned; he was a very poor diver, and the failure to get any information about the reef was doubtless his fault. I am waiting, in the absence of any applications, to take on one of Mr. Thorowgood's men when he has done with their services. I anticipate great difficulty in the way of boring owing to the ground swell, but every day adds to our knowledge on these subjects, and new expedients are daily brought forward. The first season, which will be only the month of March 1882, will be spent fully in divers' inspection, and upon their report future action may be taken. It is more than probable that the Santapillai elevation will take the shape of all the neighbouring hills on the main land and consist of rounded sides with elongated almost flat surface. I would respectfully recommend that the Government of India be requested to refer the work of inspection to the Marine Survey Department for execution, the estimate for the expense being primarily submitted to the Madras Government for consideration.

ORDER THEREON, 22nd September 1881, No. 454.

Ordered that the Government of India be addressed.

(True Extract.)

To the Master Attendant, Madras.
„ Public Works Department.

Exd. J. W. Fischer,

S.S.C.

J. W. Fischer
A. L. S. S.
Chief Secretary.

P. N. C. No. 5639

Govt. of (1881) Madras.

MARINE.

To
THE MASTER ATTENDANT,
Madras,
&c., &c., &c.

Dated September, 22nd.

Issued

Recd. 3 Oct. 1881. Encl.

G.O., 22nd September 1881, No. 454.

S. S. C.

SEPTEMBER.

Santapillai Reef.—Letters from the Master Attendant, Madras, reporting on the proposal to remove the Santapillai reef by dynamite and submitting proposals for a preliminary survey of the reef by divers, forwarded to the Government of India.

No. 2444 Wa/5th Oct. 1881.

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Recorded. G. N. V.
Subd. in Receipt Reg.

G.O. 24/6/81 N. 1591 W

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