GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS

RAJYA SABHA
STARRED QUESTION NO. 121
ANSWERED ON 30.07.2021

SABARI RAIL PROJECT IN KERALA

121. SHRI JOHN BRITTAS:

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Kerala Rail Development Corporation Limited (KRDCL) has submitted a project for construction of Sabari railway line connecting Angamaly with Erumeli in the State of Kerala; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF RAILWAYS, COMMUNICATIONS AND ELECTRONICS & INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

(SHRI ASHWINI VAISHNAW)

(a) and (b): A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

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STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (a) AND (b) OF STARRED QUESTION NO. 121 BY SHRI JOHN BRITTAS ANSWERED IN RAJYA SABHA ON 30.07.2021 REGARDING SABARI RAIL PROJECT IN KERALA

(a) and (b): Angamali-Sabarimala new rail line was sanctioned in 1997-98 at a cost of ₹550 crore. Total length of the project is 116 Km. Anticipated cost of the project at 2017-18 rates is ₹2815 crore.

5 km section of this project was passing through Periyar Tiger Reserve Forest. On the request of State Government, the project was terminated at Erumeli due to reserve forest area. Alignment of the project passes through three Districts i.e. Ernakulam, Idukki and Kottayam districts. Final location survey (FLS) for Angamali-Kaladi-Ramapuram section (70 Km) has been completed in 2002 and further survey in the Kottayam district was stopped by local people in 2007 due to objections on alignment. The final project report can be prepared only after Final Location Survey is completed.

Consequently, in this project, work on Angamali-Kaladi (7 Km) and long lead works on Kaladi-Perumbavoor (10 Km) have been taken up. However, further works on this project could not be taken forward due to protests by local people against land acquisition and fixing of alignment of the line, court cases filed against the project and inadequate response from the State Government of Kerala.

This has delayed the execution of the above project and as a result, project cost has increased from ₹550 crore in 1997 to ₹1566 crore (including land cost of ₹719 crore) in 2011 and further to ₹2,815 crore (including land cost of ₹965 crore) in 2017. As taking forward of this project showing 512% increase in project cost solely with Railway Funds was not possible, Railway had requested Government of Kerala vide letters dated 06.09.2011, 22.12.2011, and 08.10.2012 to share atleast 50% cost of the project.

Government of Kerala vide their letter dated 27.11.2015 agreed to share 50% cost of the project. Government of Kerala had also identified this project for execution under Joint Venture Scheme with Ministry of Railways and therefore, an MoU was also signed on 01.09.2016. Unfortunately, within a year, the State Government vide letter dated 15.11.2016 withdrew their own consent to share 50% cost of the project.

However, given the public demand, Railways again conducted detailed deliberations on the feasibility of taking forward this project vis-à-vis the availability of funds. Due to significant deficit, it was again decided by Railways in December, 2017 that the project should be undertaken on cost sharing basis.

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Government of Kerala was again requested vide letters dated 06.02.2018 and 01.03.2018 for their consent to share at least 50% cost of the project for the benefit of the State. There has been no positive response to this offer. As the State Government has withdrawn its own previously sanctioned consent to share 50% cost of the project and is not cooperating in resolving the various obstructions, Railways has decided to freeze further expenditure on this project temporarily, and keep execution of works in abeyance, in September, 2019.

Ministry of Railways vide letter dated 11.01.2020 advised Government of Kerala that it is not feasible for Railways to take the project forward solely with Railway funds, and State Government of Kerala was again requested to share the cost of development of Railway network in the State. This will help Railways to provide the much required rail link for the travelling needs of local people and pilgrims to the Holy Shrine.

After long persuasion, recently Government of Kerala vide letter dated 07.01.2021 has conveyed their decision to share 50% of the total project cost (₹2815 crore) of Angamali – Sabarimala Railway project through Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board (KIIFB), subject to the condition that operation and maintenance of the track shall be done by Ministry of Railways while the stations along the route will be developed by a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) (through public private partnership route) and the net revenue realized by the SPV will be shared on a 50:50 basis between State Government and Ministry of Railways, after offsetting the cost of Operation & Maintenance (O&M) as agreed to by Railways. M/S KRDCL has been advised to complete Final Location Survey and to update the project cost. Further implementation of the project will be taken up after examination of complete report on merits including its financial viability.

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