

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
MINISTRY OF ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS  
**RAJYA SABHA**  
**UNSTARRED QUESTION NO - 1989**  
ANSWERED ON – 20/12/2023

**SAFETY MEASURES IN UNDER-CONSTRUCTION TUNNELS**

**1989. SHRI MALLIKARJUN KHARGE:**

Will the Minister of ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether it is a fact that Government guidelines recommend emergency exits for tunnels longer than 1.5 Kilometer, if so, the details thereof;
- (b) whether emergency exits were provided in the recently collapsed Silkyara Tunnel in Uttarakhand, if so, the details thereof and if not the reasons therefor;
- (c) the details of ongoing tunnel projects in the country especially in the Himalayan region and the details of safety measures being employed in such projects including emergency exits; and
- (d) the steps taken by Government to rehabilitate and support workers who got stuck in the tunnel collapse?

**ANSWER**

THE MINISTER OF ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS

(SHRI NITIN JAIRAM GADKARI)

(a) No sir. As per IRC:SP:91-2019 (Guidelines for road tunnels) separate service tunnel, adjacent to the traffic tunnels could be considered at design stage considering various factors like land availability, traffic volume, length of tunnel and additional cost. This additional tunnel provides access for maintenance without requiring tunnel closure. This service tunnel can be used as escape passage during an emergency.

(b) In the Silkyara bi-directional tunnel on Dharasu – Yumunotri highway (NH-134), a provision of separation wall has been provided at the centre of the carriageway along with egress openings at an average interval of 565 m for vehicular crossover and at an average interval of 300 m for pedestrian cross passage for escape purposes during the emergencies.

(c) Currently, there are 34 tunnel projects in progress across the country on National Highways (NHs), out of which 26 tunnel projects are in Himalayan region. All projects are designed with safety as a paramount consideration. These projects are implemented as per site-specific requirements, established codes, incorporating essential safety measures including those for emergencies such as escape tunnels, twin tubes with cross passages, separation wall with emergency openings, lay-byes, automatic fire detection and suppression systems etc.

(d) The trapped workers were given medical aid and found in good mental & physical health. As financial support, each worker has been paid a sum of Rs 2.00 lakh in addition to one month paid leave by the Executing Agency. In addition to above, State Government of Uttarakhand has also provided financial support to all trapped workers of Rs.1 lakh each.

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