

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS**

**LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 3667
TO BE ANSWERED ON 17.03.2021**

CONSTRUCTION OF RAILWAY LINE TO SABARIMALA

3667. SHRI ANTO ANTONY:

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government is using latest technology to construct railway line to Sabarimala without eviction of people through land acquisition and without causing environmental damage;**
- (b) if so, the details thereof along with the copy of the final project report in this regard;**
- (c) whether the Railways has prepared any final blue print to extent railway line from Kottayam to Erumeli on one side and from Punalar to Erumeli on the other side and if so, the details thereof; and**
- (d) the current status of construction of railway line to Sabarimala?**

ANSWER

**MINISTER OF RAILWAYS, COMMERCE & INDUSTRY AND
CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD & PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION**

(SHRI PIYUSH GOYAL)

(a) to (d): A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (a) TO (d) OF UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 3667 BY SHRI ANTO ANTONY TO BE ANSWERED IN LOK SABHA ON 17.03.2021 REGARDING CONSTRUCTION OF RAILWAY LINE TO SABARIMALA

(a), (b) & (d): All New Rail Line projects involve land acquisition. There is no technology available to construct a new Railway line without acquisition of land along the alignment. Angamali-Sabarimala new rail line was included in the Railway Budget for 1997-98 at a cost of ₹550 crore. Total length of the project is 116 Km. Latest anticipated cost of the project 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.

Government of Kerala was again requested vide letters dated 06.02.2018 and 01.03.2018 for their consent to share atleast 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 No. 93/W-I/Survey/SR/11 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. Zonal Railway has been advised to get the Estimate Revised from Kerala Rail Development Corporation Limited (KRDCL) for taking further action in this regards.

Average annual Budget allocation for Infrastructure & safety works, falling fully/partly in the State of Kerala, during 2014-19 has increased to ₹950 crore, from ₹372 crore (during 2009-14). Thus, the average annual budget allocation for 2014-19 is 155% more than average annual Budget allocation during 2009-14. Total proposed Budget Estimate (BE) outlay for Infrastructure & safety works, falling, fully/partly in the State of Kerala in 2021-22 is ₹871 crore, which is 134% more than average annual Budget outlay of 2009-14.

During 2014-19, 89 Km sections (29 Km Gauge Conversion and 60 Km doubling) falling fully/partly in the State of Kerala has been commissioned, which is 68% more than the, commissioning during 2009-14 (53 Km). During 2019-20, 18 Km doubling has been commissioned which is 70% more than average commissioning during 2009-14 (10.6 Km/per year).

(c): Survey for Erumeli to Thiruvananthapuram via Punalur (145 Km) new line was completed in 2013-14. Project could not be taken forward being financially unviable. There is no survey/proposal under consideration for Kottayam to Erumeli new line.
