GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 2781
TO BE ANSWERED ON 06.08.2025

UDHAMPUR-SRINAGAR-BARAMULLA RAIL LINK

2781. SHRI AGA SYED RUHULLAH MEHDI:

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government has conducted any environmental impact assessments of the Chenab and Anji Khad bridges in fragile Himalayan zones;

(b) if so, the key details of the findings including risks to local ecology and slope stability;

(c) the details of the safeguards implemented to prevent ecological imbalance caused by the Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link (USBRL) project;

(d) the details of the quantifiable impact of the project on local employment and tourism in Kashmir;

(e) the details of the number of households fully or partially displaced due to land acquisition along with the number of them received compensation, rehabilitation till June 2025; and

(f) the details of the mechanism available for resolving pending claims related to displacement and resettlement?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF RAILWAYS, INFORMATION & BROADCASTING AND ELECTRONICS & INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

(SHRI ASHWINI VAISHNAW)

(a) to (f): Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link (USBRL) project of total length 272 Km has been recently commissioned. USBRL project

covers the districts of Udhampur, Reasi, Ramban, Srinagar, Anantnag, Pulwama, Budgam and Baramulla of Jammu and Kashmir.

The USBRL project is one of the most difficult new railway line projects undertaken in the country post-independence. The terrain passes through young Himalayas, which are full of geological surprises and numerous problems. In this project, Railway has made the world's highest Railway Bridge over Chenab river in Reasi district of Jammu & Kashmir. The iconic Chenab Bridge is 1315 m long having Arch span of 467 m and height of 359 m above river bed. Indian Railway's first cable stayed bridge has been constructed over Anji Khad in this project. Its bridge deck is 331m above the river bed level and height of its Main pylon is 193m.

The USBRL project has made substantial socio-economic contributions to the region, with employment generation being a significant aspect of its impact. The project has generated more than 5 Cr. man-days of employment.

Another crucial facet of the USBRL Project's socio-economic development efforts has been the construction of over 215 km of approach roads, which include construction of a tunnel and 320 small bridges. This road network has helped the local population in improvement of their connectivity with other areas and also improvement in socio-economic states.

In accordance with international norms, adequate safety provisions have been kept in the USBRL project. All tunnels having length more than 2 Km have been provided with mechanical ventilation systems to ensure air quality. Firefighting systems comprising fire hydrants and fire extinguishers have been provided to promptly address and contain potential fire incidents in all the tunnels. Further, to ensure safety of passenger, escape tunnels have also been made where length of tunnel

is more than 3 Km. Total 66 Km escape tunnels have been made in this project.

To ensure minimum disturbance to Himalayan ecology, due care has been taken for slope stabilization and the best institutes of the world were roped in for execution of this project. Comprehensive schemes for slope stabilization have been adopted as per NEERI guidelines and Detailed Design Consultants' suggestions to prevent erosion and damage to natural terrains.

Slope stability at Chenab Bridge was designed by Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore & IIT/Delhi. Other global firms having experience of such works were also engaged for independent check for slope stability for Chenab Bridge. Slope stability at Anji Bridge was also designed and proof checked by the experienced global firms.

Further, Environmental Impact Assessments due to construction of Katra-Qazigund new rail line, including Chenab and Anji Khad bridges have also been conducted through National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (NEERI), Nagpur. Extensive safeguards and mitigation measures have been implemented based on the Environmental Management Plan (EMP) prepared by NEERI.

Sedimentation tanks have been constructed at tunnel outlets before discharging into natural nallas to manage tunnel excavated material. Alternative water sources were provided to villages where natural sources were disrupted by resorting to reverse pumping. Proper lined drains and stepped chutes were constructed at required locations to ensure smooth flow of surface water and prevent erosion at muck yards.

Advanced techniques of controlled blasting were adopted during tunnelling to minimize vibrations and environmental damage. Sensors have been installed in all tunnels in Katra-Banihal section to monitor the Air Quality during operational phase also.

The entire rail project is electrified using a overhead conductor system in tunnels and in open stretches. Rail transportation is most environment friendly transportation mode, significantly reducing carbon footprint compared to diesel traction.

While specific measures for biodiversity conservation are delineated in the EMP, the overall environmental mitigation efforts contribute to protecting local ecology. Guidelines for site preparation for plantation activity on dumping sites include planting native species and turfing with grass for eco-restoration.

With the all-weather, reliable and comfortable rail connectivity of valley portion with rest of the Indian Railway network, tourism will get a big boost.

The USBRL project (272 Km) has been constructed completely in the Union territory of Jammu & Kashmir. Land acquisitions were carried out as per the prevalent 'Jammu & Kashmir State Land Acquisition Act 1990'. The Land Acquisition was conducted through Collector Land Acquisition, appointed by District Administration.

Assessment of land ownership, structures, identification of beneficiaries, calculation of compensations for land & structures, trees etc was done. Awards in this regard were published and disbursed the compensation amount.

Total land acquired for USBRL Project includes 1559.48 Ha of Private land and 276.71 Ha of Govt. Land. Complete payment of these land acquisitions amounting to Rs. 816.21 Cr. has already been deposited with concerned Collector Land Acquisition. The mechanism for resolving pending claims related to land acquisition is already included vide section 18 of Jammu & Kashmir State Land Acquisition Act 1990.

Railway acquires land through concerned State/District Authorities. All the activities in connection with land acquisition like assessment of amount of compensation to land losers etc. are under purview of the State Government. Compensation for land acquisition is made to the land losers by the Revenue Department of the State Government after demanding the same from Railways.

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