

Review of Sethusamudram Shipping Canal Project

912. SHRI A. K. SELVARAJ: Will the Minister of SHIPPING be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has conducted any survey to review the Sethusamudram Shipping Canal Project;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government has sought any clarification from Tamil Nadu Government regarding the said project; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SHIPPING (SHRI RADHAKRISHNAN P.): (a) and (b) Government of India is keen to explore the possibility of alternate route for SSCP through Pamban Pass by avoiding the Ram Sethu/Adam's Bridge area and M/s RITES has been entrusted with the work of undertaking prefeasibility study on that area. RITES has submitted the report. Key findings of the report are given in the Statement (*See* below).

(c) No, Sir.

(d) Does not arise.

Statement

Key findings of the pre-feasibility Report of Rail India Technical and Economic Service (RITES) on the alternate route for Sethusamudram Ship Channel Project through Pamban Pass are given below:-

- (i) The major constraint in the Pamban channel is the narrow and shallow channel between the two Coral Reef Islands of Pullivasal and Krusadai. This narrow channel is silted up due to trap of long shore sediment transport between Gulf of Mannar and Palk Strait. The channel width at this location is about 125 metre and the depths are 2.13 metre below Chart Datum (CD). Only during high tide this critical channel can be negotiated.
- (ii) The bathymetric surveys carried out have revealed that the depths available under the Pamban Bridge are 5.5 to 5.6 metre. Without dredging in the proximity of the Pamban bridge the draft of the vessel can be increased to 4.5 metre with a depth of 5.5 metre by deepening and widening the narrow approach channel to Pamban between the Coral Islands.

- (iii) The manually operated lift span in the Railway bridge can be replaced by a Swivel type mechanism which would open the bridge horizontally and would allow passage of vessels. Since the opening is horizontal, there would be no restriction of air draft as far as Railway bridge is concerned. However, the air draft would be restricted to 21 metre due to road over-bridge across the Pamban Pass.
- (iv) If the channel is dredged for 12 metre (*i.e.* about 36 million cum of dredging quantity), vessels of about 30,000 Dead Weight Tons (DWT) size can navigate the Pamban channel with the restriction of 21 metre air draft due to road over-bridge across the Pamban Pass.
- (v) The Pamban Channel alignment will have navigational length of 136 kms out of which 54 kms fall in Palk Strait. This 54 kms channel has already been dredged substantially under the original Sethusamudram Ship Canal Project (SSCP) and would require around 1 metre additional dredging at present. The alignment includes 43 kms in Pamban Channel which require substantial dredging to achieve 12 metre depth. The balance length of the channel would not require dredging as natural depth is available for navigation of 30,000 DWT vessels.
- (vi) The replacement and increase of the Railway bridge span will require stoppage of Rail movement for a period of 24 months.
- (vii) The estimated expenditure for providing a navigable channel for 30,000 DWT vessels with restriction of 21 metre air draft through the Pamban alignment is around ₹2350 crores, which includes the cost of replacement of the lift span of the Railway bridge, dredging cost of 36 million Cum, cost of Vessel Traffic Management System (VTMS) and other shore based support to the project.
- (viii) To facilitate navigation of vessels more than 30,000 DWT size such as Capesize Vessels (80,001 to 2.0 lakh DWT) the restriction of air draft of 21 metre due to the road bridge needs to be removed apart from additional dredging cost. One option which can be explored is an undersea tunnel through which road and rail movement to Rameswaram island can be maintained. The undersea tunnel would obviate the requirement of the rail and road bridge. The estimated cost of tunnel construction is about ₹15,000 crores. The dredging cost would be additional and would increase progressively as the draft requirement increases.

- (ix) The Cost Estimates are only rough estimates and firm estimates would be available after the detailed Techno-Economical Feasibility studies.
- (x) The alternate route for Sethusamudram Ship Channel Project through Pamban Pass as suggested by the RITES is subject to environment clearance and concurrence of Government of Tamil Nadu, under whose jurisdiction Pamban channel falls.

Review of pending port related projects in Tamil Nadu

913. SHRI A. K. SELVARAJ: Will the Minister of SHIPPING be pleased to state :

- (a) whether it is a fact that Government has decided to review all the pending port related projects in Tamil Nadu;
- (b) whether it is also a fact that several infrastructure projects with crores of investment are lying idle in the State;
- (c) whether many port officials have made a request to complete these projects on a war footing basis to solve the congestion issue; and
- (d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SHIPPING (SHRI RADHAKRISHNAN P.): (a) The Ministry of Shipping reviews all port projects in all major ports including those in Tamil Nadu on a regular basis.

(b) to (d) Two road connectivity projects viz. Chennai-Ennore Road Port Connectivity Project (formerly EMRIP) and elevated 4-Lane link road from Chennai Port to Maduravoyal are delayed considerably. For Chennai-Ennore Road Port Connectivity Project, Government of Tamil Nadu has been requested to take necessary action for shifting of project affected families in Nalla Thanneer Odai Kuppam and Cherian Nagar along Ennore Expressway for early completion of the project.

The work of elevated 4-Lane link road from Chennai Port to Maduravoyal project, being executed by National Highway Authority of India (NHAI), has been stopped since March, 2012 due to issues raised by Government of Tamil Nadu on a portion of its alignment. The matter is pending in the Supreme Court. Along with NHAI, Chennai Port is also impleaded in this case for early completion of the Project to reduce congestion. Ministry of Shipping has also requested Government of Tamil Nadu to resolve the issue for early completion of the Project for removing congestion between the Port and its hinterland.