

(c) The completion of any Railway project depends on various factors like quick land acquisition by State Government, forest clearance by officials of forest department, shifting of infringing utilities (both underground and over ground), statutory clearances from various authorities, geological and topographical conditions of area, law and order situation in the area of project site, number of working months in a year for particular project site due to climatic conditions, cooperation and zeal of State Government for early completion of project, encountering unforeseen conditions like earthquake, flooding, excessive rains, strikes of labour, orders of Hon'ble Courts, situation and conditions of working agencies/contractors etc. All these factors affect the completion time of the project, which is finely worked out at the completion stage. Therefore, confirmed timeline for completion of the project cannot be given at this stage.

Sabari rail project

2987. SHRI K. J. ALPHONS: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the status of Sabari railway project to cater to the need of pilgrims going to Sabarimala; and

(b) the total estimate for the project and the amount provided in the current year's budget?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI PIYUSH GOYAL): (a) and (b) Angamali-Sabarimala new rail line (116 Km) was sanctioned in 1997-98 at a cost of ₹550 crore. The 5 km section of this project was passing through Periyar Tiger Reserve Forest. On the request of State Government of Kerala, 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.

To resolve the issue, State Government proposed a revised alignment from Ramapuram to Erumeli (41 km). Revised alignment has been approved.

For this project, Government of Kerala had consented for sharing 50% of above project cost in November, 2015. However, the State Government had requested in November, 2016 to execute this project with Railway funds.

Due to alignment issues as stated above and abnormal increase in land cost, the project cost has increased from 550 crore to ₹2815 crore. Land Cost has been increased from ₹22.82 crore (in original estimate) to ₹ 965 crore. Due to this, State Government has again been requested in January 2018 to continue to share 50% cost of the project.

Even though Government of Kerala has approved alignment in 2013, local people are not permitting survey work in Kottayam District. FLS for Ramapuram-Erumeli (41 Km) has been taken up with police protection and the progress is very slow due to continuous protest. Despite this, 10 Km FLS has been completed so far.

The project is presently held up as Government of Kerala is neither arranging the land nor agreeing to share 50% cost as agreed by them earlier and also due to resistance created by the local people. These issues have been brought to the notice of Government of Kerala by various letters dated 06.02.2018, 01.03.2018, 26.03.2018 and 08.08.2018.

The project-wise details of projects including expenditure and outlay are made available in public domain on Indian Railways website i.e. www.indianrailways.gov.in >Ministry of Railways >Railway Board >About Indian Railways >Railway Board Directorates >Finance (Budget)>Railway-wise Works Machinery & Rolling Stock Programme Regular Budget (year).

Many vacant posts in railways despite recruitment

2988. SHRIMATI VIJILA SATHYANANTH: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Indian Railways have a sanctioned strength of 15,06,598 employees, of which 12,23,622 personnel are on the rolls, leaving 2,82,976 vacant posts;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether it is also a fact that with the current drive to recruit 1,51,548 people, 1,31,428 posts will still be vacant;

(d) whether it is also a fact that an estimated 53,000 and 46,000 employees will retire in 2019-20 and 2020-21 respectively, creating about 99,000 additional vacancies; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?