

**Parliament of India
(Rajya Sabha Secretariat)**

Press Release

Hundred and Forty-first Report on the petition praying for development of railway networks in Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh and other Himalayan States.

The Committee on Petitions of Rajya Sabha under the Chairmanship of **Shri Bhagat Singh Koshyari**, MP, presented its Hundred and Forty-first Report to the Rajya Sabha on 19th December, 2011 on the petition praying for development of railway network in Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh and others Himalayan States. The Petition was submitted by Shri Kedar Singh Fonia, MLA Uttarakhand and six others.

2. The Committee during the course of its deliberations interacted with the petitioners, representatives of Ministries of Railways, Defence, Finance and Planning Commission of India. The Committee undertook study visits to Mumbai, Goa and Srinagar to see some of the project in the Konkan Railway Network and rail network in Jammu & Kashmir and to explore the possibility of replication of technology used in Konkan Railway in the development of railway projects in other Himalayan States. During the visit, the Committee also interacted with the MD, Konkan Railway and MD, IRCON alongwith the representatives of the Ministry of Railways (Railway Board) on the petition.

3. The Committee while formulating its observations/recommendations has relied on the written comments of the concerned Ministries of Railways, Defence & Finance and Planning Commission of India, oral evidences of witnesses – official and non-official, the inputs received during its study visits and in response to its Press Release, observations of the Members of the Committee and interaction with others.

4. Following are the important recommendations of the Committee:-

4.1 **The Committee appreciated the effort made by the Planning Commission, Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Defence which have been instrumental in addressing the issue of development of railway network in the Himalayan States. The Committee also acknowledged the significant initiative of the Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission of India who has informed the Chairman, Committee on Petitions that following four projects have been identified as strategically important railway line projects from the defence point of view:**

- (i) Rupai - Parasuramkund
- (ii) Rishikesh - Karanprayag
- (iii) Tanakpur - Bageshwar
- (iv) Jammu - Akhnoor -Poonch

(Para 13 of the Report)

4.2 **The Committee took note of the recent developments regarding the Rishikesh-Karnaprayag railway line which was inaugurated, recently. The Committee appreciate the fact that the process of construction of Rishikesh-Karnaprayag railway line has been initiated as this is a very important strategic railway line. However, the Committee was of the opinion that this railway line should be extended up to Chamoli. Similarly the Tanakpur – Bageshwar railway line needs to be extended to Jaujilbi. The Committee has recommended that the construction work of Rishikesh - Karnaprayag project and the Tanakpur - Bageshwar-Jaujibli Project may be initiated at the earliest, and the Ministry of Railways must take up the matter with the Ministry of Finance on urgent basis, so that the projects do not get delayed.**

(Para 13.2 of the Report)

4.3 The Committee expressed concern over the role of the Defence Ministry in the past in taking up the matter in the right earnest for execution of strategically important railway line. The Committee took note of the situation on the Chinese side of the border and has deliberated at great length on the pros and cons of the developments initiated by China in the border areas. The Committee appreciated the stress placed by Ministry of Defence on defence preparedness. However, the Committee also recommends the Defence Ministry should be actively involved in atleast bringing the urgency of the strategically important railway lines to the notice of the Planning Commission, Ministry of Finance and the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs on a regular basis so that our infrastructure does not lag behind in our total defence preparedness. The Committee strongly recommends that commercial aspects should be treated as secondary when it comes to the question of national security. The Committee urges upon the Government to draw up a time bound plan of action to execute and implement the strategically important projects in coordination with the concerned Ministries of the Central Government, State Government and other stake holders in a time bound manner.

(Para 13.3 of the Report)

4.4 The Committee was of the opinion that the fiscal health of the State Governments specifically in the case of Himalayan States does not permit them to make financial provisions for the railway lines, causing delays. The Committee strongly recommended that the Government should create a separate pool of resources in terms of a separate corpus fund instead of seeking funds from the State Governments. This should be a non-lapsable plan fund to be utilized for strategically important railway lines. The Committee deliberated at length on the issue of funding by the State Government and the resultant cost escalation due to delays in allocation of resources by the State Government. The Committee felt that the only way out is to declare these projects as 'National Projects' or 'strategically important projects' with dedicated financial linkage.

(Para 13.5 of the Report)

4.5 The Committee appreciates the fact that the Ministry of Railways has a Backward Area Development Programme. The Committee felt that the Pradhan Manti Rail Vikas Yojana (PMRVY) may be integrated with the Backward Area Development Scheme and instead of having multiple schemes only one Scheme preferably under the nomenclature of PMRVY may be made, for which a fund should be created to implement the backward area and the socially desirable projects. The Committee has appreciated the issue regarding the fiscal constraints as far as funding of strategically important railway line is concerned and advocates that some sort of a methodology like imposing a cess could be done on lines of PMGSY so that a corpus fund could be created to fund the strategically important lines.

(Para 13.6 of the Report)
