

Ministry of Road Transport & Highways signs MoU with IL&FS for construction of Zojila tunnel

The tunnel will provide all weather connectivity between Srinagar, Kargil and Leh

An MoU was signed yesterday between National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation (NHIDCL) under the Ministry of Road Transport & Highways, and M/S IL&FS Transportation Networks Ltd for construction of the 14.150 km long, 2-lane bi-directional Zojila Tunnel in Jammu & Kashmir . This would be India's longest road tunnel and the longest bi-directional tunnel in Asia. The construction of this tunnel will provide all weather connectivity between Srinagar, Kargil and Leh and will bring about all round economic and socio-cultural integration of these regions. The project has strategic and socio-economic importance and will be an instrument for the development of the economically backward districts in Jammu & Kashmir.

The project aims at construction of 14.150 km long two lane bidirectional single tube tunnel with a parallel 14.200 km long egress tunnel between Baltaland Minamarg in the state of J&K. The total capital cost of the project is Rs 6808.69 crore. It includes the cost towards land acquisition, resettlement and rehabilitation and other pre-construction activities as well as maintenance and operation cost of the tunnel for four years. The civil construction cost of the project is Rs 4899.42 crore. The construction period of the project is seven years which shall be reckoned from the date of commencement of construction.

The tunnel will be an engineering marvel, a first of its kind in such geographical area. It will have all modern technical safety arrangements such as cut and cross ventilation system, two axial fans,, fully transverse ventilation system, uninterrupted power supply, CCTV monitoring, variable messaging boards, traffic logging equipment , tunnel radio, emergency telephone system etc.

The main objective of the project is to provide all weather connectivity to strategically important Leh region in Jammu & Kashmir which at the moment is limited to at best 6 months in a year because of snow on the passes and threat of avalanches. This project, along with other ongoing projects like 6.5 km long Z-Morh tunnel at Gagangir would ensure safe, fast and cheap connectivity between the two regions of Kashmir and Ladakh.

Speaking on the occasion Shri Nitin Gadkari, Minister of Road Transport & Highways, Shipping and Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation urged the construction company to make efforts to complete the project faster than the seven years assigned for it so that its benefits can reach the people of the region at the earliest. He also urged the company to explore whether it is technically feasible to lay railway tracks in the tunnel along with the road.

The projects will also increase the employment potential for the local labourers for the project activities. There would be enormous boost in employment as local businesses get linked to national market and the region is able to receive round the year tourist traffic.



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