
Kashmir rail link project to have modified alignment

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Project today reported that India Railways have proposed to start afresh on the Kashmir rail link project after finding it unviable.

The Railways have proposed a modified alignment which will reduce in cost, length and infrastructure on the section. As per the modified alignment, the length of the route has been reduced from 124 kilometer to 70 kilometer and the number of tunnels from 62 to just eight.

Since the route is becoming shorter, number of stations will also be reduced from 9 to 5. The new alignment has been proposed to have fewer curves in comparison to the earlier one. While the number of bridges has been reduced from 90 to 10 on the changed route, the much touted Chenab bridge has been shifted further upstream resulting in drastic reduction of its length from 1.4 kilometer to 480 meters. The project cost has also been reduced from about INR 9,000 crore earlier to INR 7,000 crore now.

Barring the construction of a main road, the work on the section remains suspended since August. Though work was commenced more than 4 years ago, much progress could not be made due to repeated collapse of tunnels while cutting the mountains for the rail route. The Katra-Qazigund segment is the most difficult terrain of the project, consisting of large steep slopes intersected by a number of rivers. Besides geological challenges, climatic condition is also very severe in the area.

Meanwhile, Swiss Engineering consultants will do the feasibility study followed by a detailed study of the proposed new alignment and submit the report in December. The Katra-Qazigund segment, part of 292 kilometer long Kashmir rail link project.

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