

Proceedings of the Public hearing held by 10.00 AM on 21.08.2009 at Nanjil hall, District Collectorate, Nagercoil, Kanniyakumari District for the Four / Six laning of Kerala-Tamilnadu border to Kanniyakumari Section (Km 43.000 to Km 99.000) of NH-47 in the States of Tamil Nadu and Kerala including Nagercoil – Kavalkinaru Section (Km 0.000 to Km 16.400) of NH-47B under 10000 KM (NHDP – III Phase) Programme, Package II by National Highways Authority of India.

Present : **Thiru Rajendra Ratnoo, I.A.S.,**
District Collector,
Kanniyakumari District

Participants : List enclosed vide **Annexure I**

At the outset, the Assistant Environmental Engineer, Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board, Nagercoil welcomed the District Collector, Kanniyakumari District and the public. Further, he informed that as per the letter of Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India dated 31.5.2007 and in accordance with Environmental Impact Assessment Notification 2006, Public Hearing is conducted today on 21.08.2009 for the Four / Six laning of Kerala-Tamilnadu border to Kanniyakumari (Km 43.000 to Km 99.000) of NH-47, including Nagercoil – Kavalkinaru Section (Km 0.000 to Km 16.400) of NH-47B under 10000 KM (NHDP – III Phase) Programme, Package II by National Highways Authority of India at Nanjil Hall, District Collectorate, Nagercoil, Kanniyakumari District. Further, he informed that the Project Director, National Highways Authority of India, Kanyakumari unit will explain about the project and the summary of Environmental Impact Assessment Report. The Assistant Environmental Engineer requested the Project Director of National Highways Authority of India, Kanniyakumari unit to explain about the proposed four laning project and summary of the Environment Impact Assessment. He also requested the public to inform their name and village before starting their views. He further requested to express their opinion directly while recording their views.

The **District Collector**, explained that as per the notification of Ministry of Environment of Forests vide Stage 3 Part II (a & b) it is mandatory to hold public hearing and as per this, those who are directly affected due to this project to give their opinion and if needed, they shall give their views in writing and any social welfare organizations or any other local bodies may give their representation, if there is environment impact due to this project.

Thiru P. Selvakumar, Project Director, National Highways Authority of India, PIU, Kanniyakumari:

He explained that National Highways Authority of India is planning to convert the entire existing two lanes into four/six laning in various stages for the economic development of our country. As per National Highway Development Project (NHDP), the Metropolitan cities Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata and Chennai have already been converted into 4/6 laning as per Golden Quadrilateral under Phase I and North-South and East-West Corridor (NSEW) under Phase II. The existing road from Kanniyakumari to Trivandrum two lane in NH-47 is much of traffic having many buildings on either side of the road. Also he further informed the road connecting Nagercoil – Kavalkinaru of NH47-B is also having much traffic. The existing two way road is not in drive worthy condition at 100 KMPH as per National Highways Authority of India standards.

He informed under the circumstances stated above, as per NHDP 10000 KM under Stage III – Plan II from Tamil Nadu-Kerala border to Kanniyakumari (Km 43.000 to 99.000) of NH47, including Nagercoil to Kavalkinaru (Km 0.000 to 16.400) it has been decided to lay 4/6 lane for which Draft Project Report has been prepared by M/s Secon Limited and it has also been approved by the Government. He informed as per Environment Act, Tamilnadu Pollution Control Board is conducting this public hearing to know whether it will affect the environment, if this project is implemented.

He informed as per the detailed project report, this road is starting from Km 552/000 of existing NH-47 at Kazhakottam near Trivandrum which is reckoned as Km 0/000 for the project. The project road continues on the existing Trivandrum bypass upto Km 22 / 600 and traverses through cross country crossing Kerala / Tamilnadu border at Karode village at design chainage Km 43 / 000. It continues further in Tamil Nadu state and rejoins in the existing NH-47 at Km 626/187 (existing chainage) and deviates at Km 627/000 (existing chainage) bypassing Chunkankadai, Nagercoil, Sucheendram rejoining the existing NH-47 at Km 642/800. From Km 642/800 it follows the existing road upto Km 646/238 and deviates on Right Hand Side for bypassing Kottaram built up area and joins NH-7 bypass for Kanyakumari at Km 231/653.

He informed that NH47B from Nagercoil to Kavalkinaru where it joins the NH-7 has been provided with a new alignment except initial length of 600 m starting just before the junction at Nagercoil Bypass (Km 82/181 of NH-47) and existing NH47 B.

The **Project Director** also explained the reasons for selecting the alignment alternate – I for NH-47 and alternate – II for NH-47B.

He informed that the area is heavily built up all along the highway. The major towns and villages continuously exist like Kuzhithurai, Marthandam, Thuckalay, Chunkankadai, and Nagercoil. The average houses and commercial shops, which are going to be affected due to proposed widening, will be on an average 200 to 250 houses per KM and practically there is no space for widening.

He further informed that the area is heavily built up all along the NH-47B. Major towns and villages continuously exist like Therekalpudur, Krishnanpudur, Visuvasapuram, Pandarapuram, Thovalai, Muthu Nagar, Aralvoimozhi, Bharathinagar, and Muppandal. The average houses and commercial shops which are going to be affected due to proposed widening will be on an average 100 to 150 numbers per km and practically there is no space for widening.

The project director also informed that there are a large number of sensitive religious structures like mosques, temples and churches all along the existing stretch. Most of them are 30-50 years old and replacement of these is very difficult.

He informed that most of the structures all along the highway are commercial and directly affect the livelihood of the local people.

He informed that as a part of Socio-Economic Study, during public consultation, it is revealed that most of the people are settled there more than thirty years back and do not want to shift, even if proper compensation is given.

He informed that the major direct environmental impacts and their mitigation measures required to be implemented are:

1. Cutting of trees - Two trees to be planted in place of one removed

2. Houses, shops, land - Giving compensation/assistance
3. Ponds, water sources – Maintenance will be done for the unaffected ponds and to increase the capacity of the affected ponds.
4. Ambient air, Noise - Tree plantation in the highly polluted area, improving the vehicle maintenance
5. Relocating the religious places – Proper development of the relocated places.

He informed that to compensate the environment impact National Highways Authority of India has allotted a fund of Rs. 5.00 crores. About 5900 families will be directly affected due to the new road formation. They will get the compensation as per rules. To form this road 66 hectares of Government poramboke lands and 427 hectares of private lands are going to be acquired and about 558 buildings are being affected.

PUBLIC OPINION:

Thiru R. Kalidasan, Chartered Engineer:

He informed that the alignment given by the Seacon Limited will affect the Indian Economy. The highways to permit a speed of 100 kmph will require a super elevation of 7% and gradient of 3%. To obtain that change, more houses will be demolished and the national economy will be affected. He specially mentioned that the alignment in between km 74.600 to 75.200 has made artificial curve and so, more than 10 crores rupees will be wasted.

The **District Collector** informed that those who are directly affected due to this new road formation may come and tell their views and opinion.

Thiru Pulavar Chellappa, Eraniel:

He informed that agriculture will be affected in this area by the project. Due to this formation of road from Trivandrum to Kanniyakumari particularly from Km 62.000 to Km 68.000, there are about 6 ponds are going to be affected. He requested to change the alignment to alternate area.

The District Collector stressed that those who are indirectly affected due to the formation of road in this area shall give their opinion in writing so as to give opportunity to those who are directly affected due to this project. He also informed to avoid time delay, one representative from each village with common view may express their views and to record their views in this meeting.

Thiru Viyakulamuthu, Konnakzhivilai:

He informed that he is residing in Konnakuzhivilai and in his place and nearby village Poochikadu many people purchased 5 or 10 cents lands and constructed houses and living there. If this project is implemented here totally 52 houses will be affected. In the year 2002 the then M.P. Thiru Bellarmin had promised these people that an alternate alignment would be arranged for this project but it was not materialized. He said if this project is implemented more houses will get affected and he suggested to change the alignment to 100 to 150 feet towards north side from their village so that they will not be affected.

Thiru Jeya Nesakumar, Secretary, London Mission Church, Palliyadi:

He informed that to construct the London Mission Church in his village, they have applied to the District Collector on 02.09.1998 and got the permission for the same on 02.06.2000. From Natalam Panchayat they got permission to build the church in S. No. 1039/17-C and after taking severe efforts they were able to complete the building in March 2009. He further said when they heard about the proposed four lane in this area they have already made representations to various Government officials requesting to take steps to avoid the four lane

in this church area. Further he said only poor people are residing in this area and he requested the officers to find alternate land for constructing road.

Thiru Bennet, Palliyadi:

Thiru Bennet told that he was representing Ayyanvilai, Vandavilai, Palakadai, three times the alignments were taken at various times. In the first survey there was no damage to any of the buildings but during the second survey, about 72 houses will be affected if this project is implemented. As many houses are affected, he requested to find alternate way to lay the four lane in the above villages.

Thiru. Sobitha Raj, Advocate, Muthalakurichi:

He informed that measurements have been taken 3 times for this project. As per 2006 survey, alignment from Km 62.000 to 66.000 from Paruthikattuvilai to Eranial about 4 KM distance was taken with 180 degree in the straight line. Afterwards, during the year 2007-08 due to influence of some influential persons in this area the alignment was changed and due to this about 6 water bodies /ponds is going to be affected. But the Project Director informed during his speech that only 3 ponds are affected. He said that due to this alignment there is a big curve made which will affect the ponds and many areas are to be acquired for forming this curve. He further requested to make a comparative study of the measurements taken and to ensure that no damage to the ponds and houses in this area for forming the road in this place.

Thiru K. Padmados, Kanyakumari Earth Protection Association:

He has repeated the points raised by the previous speaker Mr. Sobitharaj and if the project is implemented after acquiring all the ponds, many poor agriculturists will get affected. Hence he requested to form the road as per the first alignment to avoid acquiring of more lands.

Meanwhile, the **District Collector** informed the public that the public hearing is not related to land acquisition and so, he requested the public to inform the environmental impacts due to the project.

Thiru K. Dharmaraj, Kaliankadu:

He informed that as per the plan shown, 0.8 km stretch is coming near the existing road near Thottiyode. Again it is joining near APTAA Market. Hence 60 houses will get affected due to this curve alignment. He said as per the first survey there is no damage to houses. At the time of survey there were less houses but now all the paddy fields are converted into flats and people have built houses in this area. He requested the Government to form the road as per the earlier survey taken.

Thiru M. Bagavathiappan, Therekalpudur:

He informed that he wanted to speak on behalf of Therekalpudur, Thirupathisaram and Bhimanagari areas. This area is getting water from the channel Therekal. He told that they came to know that this four lane is passing through this channel. If this is implemented this entire channel will be damaged or the width of the channel will get reduced and hence, paddy fields which are benefited from this channel will get affected. He further said that the stretch proposed from Bhimanagari joining to APTAA Market through Erachakulam. People residing in this area are afraid that their houses would be acquired for this project hence he requested to give a clear sketch of this project.

Thiru Ponnusamy, Aralvoimozhi:

He informed that he has spent enormous money to form a well in his place and if the road is formed in this area, out of 3 acres, 2 acres will get acquired alongwith the well and he could not do any agriculture with the available one acre land and he requested to give more compensation for the well.

Meanwhile, the District Collector stressed that this public hearing is conducted to hear the opinion regarding impact on environment and requested the public to give solid points on the environment impact. Regarding land compensation he asked the public to give it in writing for taking necessary action.

Thiru Ayyappan, Advocate, Kodyur:

He said that during the first survey about 5 to 6 houses are affected. In the second survey nearly 75 houses will get affected. After Tsunami affected in this district, all agricultural lands are being converted into house flats and many houses are coming up in this area. Hence the land value has been increased in this area. If this project is implemented, here many water bodies, ponds, houses will get affected. Some years back they gave petition to the District Collector under the leadership of the then Central Minister Thiru Pon Radhakrishnan. At that time, the Minister informed the draft plan was prepared for laying the four lane in the hill side area so that the hill area will be economically developed but now this alignment has been changed.

Dr. Arunachalam, Retired Medical College Superintendent, Kaliankadu

He informed that he is residing near the Sivan Temple in Kaliankadu. He told that three times surveys have been taken along the Sivan Temple. The first survey was taken on the north side of the temple and second survey was taken between the existing road and the temple and third survey was taken on the existing road for extending the same. He said as per the plan shown by the Project Director, the alignment is coming near the temple now and it will be difficult for the people who are coming to the temple and he suggested to form the road as per the first survey i.e. north side of the temple. If this is not possible atleast the present stretch may be laid straight without any curve so that this temple will not be affected.

Thiru Soosai Mariyan, Social Worker, Appattuvilai, Thuckalay:

He stressed that to get this project done, we have to sacrifice some thing. When the first survey was taken about 20000 houses were affected and to avoid the heavy losses to the people, second survey was taken. He told only few houses are damaged and so he welcomed the four lane in this area.

Dr. R.S. Lal Mohan, Retired Central Government Officer:

He informed about 40 water bodies/ponds are going to be affected. He also said that the project director informed only 6 ponds are going to be affected and he did not inform about the details like depth, width of the balance 34 ponds. Due to this the environment will severely get affected. He further stressed as the ponds are demolished about 1000 hectares of agriculture lands will get affected for want of water. Earlier there were 54000 hectares are getting benefited and it was reducing to 20000 hectares and crop which was 3.4 lakh tonnes is not reduced to 1.4 lakh tonnes. He informed this project should not be implemented by acquiring all these ponds. He pointed out that the water table has gone to 50 - 100 feet which is mentioned in the report given by the consultant itself. He also pointed out that our Prime Minister and Agriculture Minister are stressing that the water bodies should be well maintained and the ground water depletion also to be included in the report. He also pointed out about the safe guarding the trees. He showed the documents regarding contract given for cutting of 50 to 60 trees in the year 2006 but now only the public hearing is conducted and he stressed this anomaly should not be happened at any stage. He informed that he welcomed the four lane in this area but it should not affect the water bodies at any stage and he requested the District Administration to do the needful.

Thiru P. Raja Selvyn Raj, Marthandam:

He mentioned that Marthandam is also a big town next to Nagercoil and as per the present plan the alignment is going far away from Marthandam so the people residing in this area will get affected. He suggested to form fly over in the crowded place like Kuzhithurai and extend the existing NH47 road which will be benefited for them.

Thiru R.K. Sundaram, Mahadhanapuram:

He vehemently opposed that there is no benefit for anybody due to this new four lane in this area. He told that Nagercoil District is a small district having 1600 sq. metre area and before 1967 through Pechiparai dam they get plenty of water and agriculture was done twice in a year. He pointed out the ground water level has gone 100 feet down which is mentioned in the Project Report itself. Further, he said that the groundwater will be changed as saline water. He suggested to make the existing NH-47 into 100 feet width and he also told that all lands are converted into house flats in this area and there is no necessity for four lane in this area. He further told as per the National Highways Authority of India Act 1956 enormous power was given to National Highways Authority of India and even they know that the road can be formed without affecting the ponds and houses but the National Highways Authority of India people are using their powers by acquiring all water ponds and houses to form this new four lane. He further informed even if anybody goes to court they will not get any justice. He informed already this Kanniyakumari district is surrounded by sea water on all three sides and ground water has gone deep in to earth and if this project is implemented in this area, sea water will enter in to the lands and water become saline. He further pointed out the PWD and Revenue departments are not maintaining the existing ponds and water bodies in this district and there is no big industry or large scale agriculture is in this area and so, there is no necessity for four lane in this district and requested to extend the existing NH-47 into 100 feet width road.

Thiru Nazar, Advocate:

He informed that for business development in this country this four lane projects are implemented all over India. He told that from Chennai to Kavalkinaru, already four lane was formed and in this area the Government is going to form four lane after destroying the 40 ponds available in this area. He told that already there are 3 highways are existing i.e. from Kavalkinaru to Nedumankadu, NH-47 Nagercoil to Trivandrum and the coastal road which connects Kolkata – Kashmir. Hence he requested to not to form this new four lane after destroying the paddy fields and ponds and agriculture is backbone for our country. He also

told that country which develops agriculture will become a strong in future. He informed that there is no necessity for four lane in Kanyakumari and suggested to extend the existing NH47.

Dr. Sobhana Raj, Retired Principal:

He informed that he has made a survey on Environment in Kanniyakumari district during 2000 and as per that survey about 5000 ponds were available in earlier periods which was reduced to 2700 ponds and we are not worrying about that. He further said in 2001 he has made another survey which revealed that 582 people on an average depends on one pond and for 40 ponds about 23000 people are getting benefited due to these ponds. Hence he opposed that this project should not be implemented by destroying all these 40 ponds in this district. He told there is no other water source for this district from any other districts like Tirunelveli which is a dry area or any states like Kerala. If this project is implemented the future generation will get affected for want of water. He further told as per various researches done the ground water table has gone down from 1.5 meters to 6.5 meters. Further he pointed out about the tree cutting for formation of road and instead of planting 2 trees for every tree cut, he suggested to plant 9 trees for each cutting tree. He also mentioned about the degeneration of forests in this area and environment will be badly affected if forests are destroyed and in future there is acute shortage of water. He finally told he welcomed the four lane in this area without destroying the 40 ponds.

Thiru S.R. Sri Ram, President, Consumer and Human Rights Association:

He welcomed the formation of four lane in this area but without destroying or affecting the 40 ponds and he suggested to form concrete pillars in the ponds and also desilt the existing ponds and deepen and widen the banks of the ponds in this area. He appreciates the efforts made by National Highways Authority of India by forming pillars on the Narikulam Tank for which they spent about Rs. 30 lakhs and saved about 25% of water in this method. He informed that in many countries Airports and many villages and cities are formed on the Sea water by making large pillars and he told to spend more money on this aspect and this money is people's money and it can be very well utilized for projects like this. He said there is no more survey is required and as per the project report the four lane way may be formed for which there is nothing wrong in sacrificing some of our lands for which the Government will give enough compensation.

Thiru Narayanan, Villukuri:

He informed that about 25 years back foundation stone was laid for formation of road about 300 meters towards south of Villukuri. He further said that the second time survey was conducted in Kudhiripandhuvilai, Madathattuvilai. He told now he came to know upto Pudugramam through Poochikadu village this four lane is proposed. He wanted that they should not be affected due to this four lane and suggested to form as per the first survey made.

Thiru G. Ayyappan, Paraseri, Villukuri:

He informed as per the first survey the alignment was taken on the left side of Thottiyode. As per the second survey the alignment is coming 200 meters on the south of the Thottiyode. Due to this 50 acres agriculture lands are getting affected. He suggested to form the four lane as per first survey.

Thiru Thavasimuthu, Kunnathur:

He said that he very recently knows about the formation of new four lane in their area and due to this the lands and ponds are getting affected. He said since he is very poor and he depends only on agriculture he requested for alternate alignment or form overbridge to avoid acquiring his lands.

Thiru C. Subbiah, Aralvoimozhi:

He informed if this four lane is formed in this area many agriculture lands and water bodies will get affected. He suggested that there is enough area available on the existing NH-47 and that road can be extended to 100 feet or 120 feet at Rs. 100 crores. For new formation of NH-47 the Government has allotted Rs. 850 crores and this area will get affected. He said now they are doing agriculture with the available water in the wells and he came to know that their lands are marked wrongly as Dry lands and he requested to mark as Wet lands so that he can get more compensation.

Thiru GoI, Vellamadam:

He stressed that the four lane is very much needed in this district. He told already the paddy fields are converted into house flats and only buildings and houses are formed around the 46 ponds and the available water is not used by anybody and he stressed that four lane should come in this district.

Thiru Nagarajan, Nature and Environment Society, Villukuri:

He mentioned that he wanted to speak about the environment impact and fresh air and good water are required for everybody at this stage. He mentioned about the speech given by Project Director in which it was mentioned that they will plant trees and ponds will be duly maintained after the project and for that he wanted to know how much fund was allotted for that purpose. He further wanted to know in the already completed four lane projects this scheme is fully planned and funds are properly utilized and he wanted to know details for that. He further said if that is not done properly this public hearing is conducted only for formality.

In the meantime explanation was asked about the tender advertisement published in the local daily papers dated 18.08.09 by the National Highways Authority of India. For that, the Project Director replied that the advertisement was not a tender and this is only parallel activity by the Department so as to avoid the delay. Further, he informed that the tender advertisement was published by the Highways Dept of Govt. of India, whereas public hearing is conducted for the environmental clearance to be issued by the Ministry of Environment and Forests and these two ministries are not connected with each other. The reply given by the Project Director was not accepted by the members of the local business union and they told that already the tender has been finalized and this public hearing is conducted only for formality. Further, the Project Director has informed that the order passed to cut the trees in NH-47B was issued by the state Highways Dept and it is not relevant to the National Highways Authority of India.

The District Revenue Officer explained in detail that for any project this type of activities will be done by the Government. Further he informed by conducting this public hearing the views recorded by the public will be informed to the higher ups and further course of action after considering the above views will be taken. For that the public enquired whether any change will come or alternate alignment will be made. The DRO replied as per Government rules this public hearing is conducted and if it is affecting majority of people, there may be chances for change that cannot be decided now.

Meanwhile, **Thiru. Sundaram, Mahadhanapuram** informed that the project is not necessary due to heavy impacts and the existing two lane road itself is sufficient.

Further, Thiru. Narayanan, Villukuri informed that the 4 lane is necessary but the provision of Rs. 5 crores for environmental management is not adequate.

Thiru. Chokkalingam, Aralvoimozhi requested to provide employment opportunity to the people in addition to the compensation.

Subsequently, the **Assistant Environmental Engineer**, Tamilnadu Pollution Control Board, Nagercoil summarized the proceedings of the meeting.

Dr. Justin when he talked that his land is going to be acquired and he hope he will get less compensation which is not enough for him and for that he requested job for his wards.

The person who speaks from Moondradaippu informed that he has lands in Kaliyakkavilai which are to be acquired by the Government for this road formation and he requested while calculating the compensation as per present market rate should be given. The Collector informed this situation arises when the people buy lands they quote low rates to save money on registration of land at the time of purchase.

Conclusion :

In general, the public expressed their opinion to not to destroy the ponds, to prevent the impact on the environment and also to provide job for the directly affected public apart from the compensation. The public also suggested pillars with overbridges shall be constructed to protect the ponds while carrying out the project.

Annexure I – List of participants

Annexure II – Written petitions received (53 Nos. – 722 pages).

Assistant Environmental Engineer,
Tamilnadu Pollution Control Board,
District,
Nagercoil.

District Collector,
Kanniyakumari

Nagercoil.