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KSR-KIA suburban line gets 3-yr deadline

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
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THE Union Cabinet has fixed a deadline of three years for completing the 41.4 km KSR Bengaluru-Kempegowda International Airport Line (Corridor 1) of the Rs 15,767-crore Suburban Rail Network. The time frame announced for the completion of the entire 148.17 km line is six years.

An official confirmation sanctioning the Suburban Rail Project for the City, approved by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) on October 7, has not been made public due to the model code of conduct being in place in Bengaluru. A letter officially conveying its approval has been sent from D K Mishra, Director, Metropolitan Transport Projects, Railway Board, to Amit Garg, Managing Director of K-RIDE, nodal agency for implementing the project. The letter issued on October 21 was made public by rail activists through social media on Tuesday night.

Giving the cost break-ups and deadlines, the letter specifies that the State and Centre shall each bear Rs 2,479 crore while K-RIDE would mobilize Rs 12,396 crore.

"It is a historic occasion for Bengaluru which desperately needs such a transportation system," said a senior railway official. However, he hastened

to add, "Both the deadlines announced are just not possible."

Another railway official pointed out that it has taken the Centre two years to just approve the project. "It is a project costing over Rs 15,000 crore. The designs have to be done. Consultants have to be called for and approvals obtained. Though Railways have 90% of the land with them, civil construction works would also require considerable time," he said. The 3-year period is too close, he said.

Mobilisation of funds would be the most challenging aspect, said an official familiar with such projects. "If you see the sanction letter closely, it says only around Rs 500 crore out of the Rs 2,479 crore would be provided by the Centre.

The remainder will be mobilised through monetization of lands at the disposal of Railways. "Sale of land through tenders and finalizing bidders and then raising resources is time-consuming," he added.

Sanjeev Dyam, urban transportation expert, said, "There is a possibility of building at grade stations on the airport route within three years, the section between Lottegahalli and KIA. However, the portion between KSR and Lottegahalli will be an elevated portion and constructing girders and laying tracks here would take much time."



The KIA halt station is 4.5 km from the airport | EXPRESS

Flying? Soon you can see airline info display at halt stn

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FLIGHT information display boards are set to come up at the Kempegowda International Airport (KIA) halt station, 4.5 km from the airport, set to be thrown open shortly. This will be the first railway station in Karnataka to have such a facility.

The station, located between Yelahanka and Devanahalli on the Yelahanka-Chikkaballapur Line, is fully ready now. Its formal launch will take place only after the present model code of conduct ends, said a senior railway official.

With free shuttle bus services set to take flyers to the airport from here, flight schedules will help passengers.

A spokesperson of the Bangalore International Airport Limited (BIAL), which operates KIA, told TNIE, "The number of flight information display systems will depend on the traffic the station sees. It will be functional before the station commences operations." BIAL has already provided CCTV cameras at the platform as well as the station premises.

Other amenities that would be put up at the station include vending machines, cafeteria, booking counter, concourse area, rest rooms, granite benches for seating and drinking water facilities, the spokesperson said.

The airport has around 28,000 employees. The trains stopping at the halt station will also stop at Yelahanka, Doddajala and Chikkajala, where a huge chunk of airport employees reside.

An MoU was signed between the BIAL and the South Western Railway on September 9 this year which said the former would build the station and hand it over to the Railways for operation and maintenance.