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A statement circulated by Shri Ram Naik, BJP leader & former Minister of State for Railways (Independent Charge) in a Press Conference held in Mumbai on 24th September, 2012

Elevated Railway Corridors - a Mirage: Ram Naik

Mumbai, Monday : "For 72 lakh Mumbai suburban railway commuters, an elevated railway corridor is a mirage! Instead, the Railways should concentrate on all the pending projects on war footing and also publish a White Paper on Mumbai suburban projects", demanded Shri Ram Naik, BJP leader & former Minister of State for Railways (Independent Charge) in a press conference held in Mumbai today. Shri Naik has also requested for an appointment of the newly nominated Minister of Railways Shri C P Joshi to acquaint him with the demands of Mumbai suburban commuters.

Elaborating on the problems of the suburban commuters, Shri Naik said, "The last week saw several contradictory reports on elevated corridors of the suburban railways. While one report stated that the Prime Minister Office (PMO) has approved Rs.18,000 crore project of elevated corridor of Western Railway from Churchgate to Virar, the other report claimed that the Railway Board have rejected Rs.32,000 crore project of elevated corridor of Central Railway from Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus to Kalyan. The first point needs to be raised : if yes on Western Railway, why no on Central Railway? The proposed project is a joint public-private partnership (PPP) project of the Railways, the State Government and the Private Organizations. All coaches will be fully air-conditioned and the project may take a minimum period of 7-8 years for completion. The major issue would be whether industrial and other workers as well as lower middle class living in far-away suburbs would find the fare affordable. If there be substantial difference between the fares of elevated railway and the existing suburban railways, whether the elevated railways would get sufficient number of commuters. It is therefore necessary to have a public debate on elevated corridors."

"Presently the State Government, through MMRDA is executing two metro rail projects. The projected dates of commercial commencements have already been over. The first project of Versova - Andheri - Ghatkopar line for which the foundation stone was laid by Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh on 21st June 2006 is not only incomplete but has also met with five major accidents as a result of which it is difficult now to know when it will be completed. For the

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second project of Charkop - Bandra - Mankhurd line, the foundation stone was laid by President Smt. Pratibha Patil on 18th August 2009. However, the ground work is yet to begin. In this background, the PPP elevated corridors project looks like a mirage. It is indeed difficult for me to guess as to why information about this project did not come out through official sources like the Prime Minister Office (PMO), the Chief Minister, the Railway Minister or the Railway Board", added Shri Ram Naik.

About the suburban railway projects, Shri Ram Naik said, "When I was the Minister of State for Railways (Independent Charge), we incorporated the Mumbai Railway Vikas Corporation (MRVC) and launched the Mumbai Urban Transport Project (MUTP). The implementation was being monitored. However, after Dr. Manmohan Singh became the Prime Minister in 2004, the progress slowed down. Suburban commuters are not only the witnesses for the snail speed but are also suffering due to it. The original estimate of Rs.3,125 crore went upto Rs.4,174 i.e. increase of Rs.1,049 crore. More than 17 months have elapsed since the completion of widening of tracks from Virar to Dahanu, yet the Railways have not commissioned Churchgate - Dahanu direct local trains. The Western Railway has completed conversion of D.C. to A.C. traction which enables the trains to save not only on electricity consumption but also the trains can run at 100 K.M.s per hour instead of the present 80 K.M.s. If this change would have been incorporated in railway timetable, the commuters would not only save their running time but it would enable the Railways to increase their number of services. If the Government genuinely desire to give some immediate relief to the harassed 72 lakh Mumbai commuters, they should immediately commission Churchgate - Dahanu local services and also try to execute all pending MUTP - I & II projects on war-footing. Together with that, they should take the commuters into confidence by publishing a White Paper on Mumbai suburban services."

"We have sought appointment with the newly nominated Railway Minister Shri C P Joshi to acquaint him with the problems of Mumbai suburban commuters", stated Shri Ram Naik at the end.

(Office Secretary)