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Title: Need to grant early clearance to the proposal of Government of Kerala for laying a new approach track and strengthening the existing track to Sabarimala Temple.

SHRI S.K. KHARVENTHAN (PALANI): In Southern India, the Balaji Temple at Tirupathi, Karthik Temple at Palani and Ayyappa Temple at Sabarimala are the famous hill shrines. At Sabarimala, the temple of Lord Ayyappa is situated on a hilltop in the dense forest which is a part of the Western Ghats. The ancient hill shrine attracts pilgrims of all faiths from all over the world and 2 to 3 crores of pilgrims visit here. There is a steady increase of 20% devotees every year between mid-November and mid-January. The pilgrims are facing a lot of problems due to lack of road, toilet, clean water, food, medical facilities, etc.

The 7 km. Distance from Pampa to hill temple (Sannidhanam) is having only two ways of footpath and the tracks are not sufficient for the movement of 4 crore pilgrims in a year. The Pampa area is allotted for parking of vehicles and the site is also very small. During the season, lakhs of pilgrims sleep on the footpath and stampede occurred many times in the past leading to death of devotees particularly on the stretch leading to temple due to narrow and rough track.

Sir, the Ministry of Environment and Forest has already clarified that Sabarimala does not fall in the core area of the sanctuary but is situated in the buffer zone. Hence widening and strengthening of the hill tracks from Pampa to

* Treated as laid on the Table

Sannidhanam is urgently required and new tracks should also be constructed to decongest the existing traffic. Particularly a separate track to be formed for donkeys taking luggage and dolyees lifting old, disabled and sick persons. The matter is pending for a number of years with the Ministry of Environment and Forests for permission. I, therefore, urge upon the Minister to do the needful at the earliest.