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Title: Need to form a railway zone with its headquarters in Kerala.

SHRI K. P. DHANAPALAN (CHALAKUDY): Kerala is the only State holding a major position in the railway map of India, without a zone headquartered within its boundaries. It is the long-standing demand of the state to have a railway zone of its own, in the midst of the news that the Central government has not yet got the report of the committee appointed by the government for setting up railway zones, it is also being heard that there are moves for the formation of a new zone in Karnataka-Konkan area. Kerala is a very densely populated state (third in India) where people travel a lot and even small stations are crowded with passengers and as such a full-bodied rail network is a basic necessity. The existing lines and stations are getting over crowded. The state of Kerala occupies a significant position on the Indian Railway map with 1050 route kilometres and 1588 kms of total track. The Thiruvananthapuram and Palakkad divisions of the Southern Railway zone make up the divisions of the state for the railways. The Thiruvananthapuram division is the most profit making division for the South Zone. The Palakkad Railway Division was one of the biggest divisions of the southern railway till division of it. Salem Division has been carved out from Palakkad division and operates 76 express and 49 passenger trains daily while Thiruvananthapuram division operates 80 express trains and 60 passenger trains everyday and together carries 4.76 lakh passengers daily. Besides, both these Divisions together contribute about one-tenth of the total revenue earnings of the Southern Railway. Despite all this, Railway development in Kerala is not as desired and it is reflected in railway development. Currently, the State is at the mercy of the authorities in Chennai to receive its share of funds and the diversion of the money to other projects outside the state. The only way to speed up railway development in Kerala is to have a separate zone on the western coast of the country free from the control of Chennai. The Formation of a new zone would help Railways to oversee operations more efficiently. The Government of Kerala have already submitted a proposal to the Railway Board demanding the formation of a new zone having headquarters in Kerala. The creation of such a railway zone will ensure that the funds allocated in the budget are directly received by the state to be utilised for developmental works.

Hence considering the above facts, I request that the Govt. may take immediate steps for the formation of a railway zone headquartered in Kerala.