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Title: Need to expedite construction of the stretch of National Highway between Panipat and Jalandhar and stop collections of toll tax on this Highway till its completion.

SHRI RAVNEET SINGH (LUDHIANA): The Panipat-Jalandhar National Highway (NH-1) project is running behind schedule. The six laning project from Panipat to Jalandhar commenced on May 11, 2009 and it was scheduled to be completed in 30 months, i.e. by the end on November 11, 2011 at a cost of Rs 2747.55 crore. Since then five deadlines had been fixed and the last being March 31, 2013. In the meantime, the project cost has escalated, and the expenditure on the project was Rs 3,280 crore by the end of October, 2012 and about 30 per cent work is yet to be completed.

The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) had planned to finish 25 per cent of the work by May 2010, 65 per cent by May 2011 and the entire project by November 2011. But only 80 per cent work was completed by the end of March 2014. But most of the flyovers and underpasses are still under construction.

There are four toll plazas on the stretch at Panipat, Karnal, Shambu, and Ludhiana. The Karnal toll plaza alone is earning an average revenue of 35 to 37 lakh per day. The total revenue earned from the toll plaza from 2002 to 2011-12 is about Rs 753 crore and it is consistently increasing due to an upward revision of toll charges and an increase in the number of vehicles. The revenue which was a meagre Rs 38.92 crore in 2002-03 jumped to Rs 134.55 crore in 2011-12, thanks to the hike in toll tax.

Charging toll tax during the construction of National Highways is unjustified as roads are considered as basic facility. Since, the concessionaires have failed to complete the project within stipulated time, they should not be allowed to collect toll tax at the cost of the interest of common people. I, therefore, request the Government to intervene and direct the NHAI to expedite the completion of Panipat-Jalandhar National Highway No.1, in public interest and also henceforth advise the concessionaires to stop collecting toll tax from general public till the completion of the entire stretch of the road.