

In a first, landless tribal tillers may get payout for bullet train project

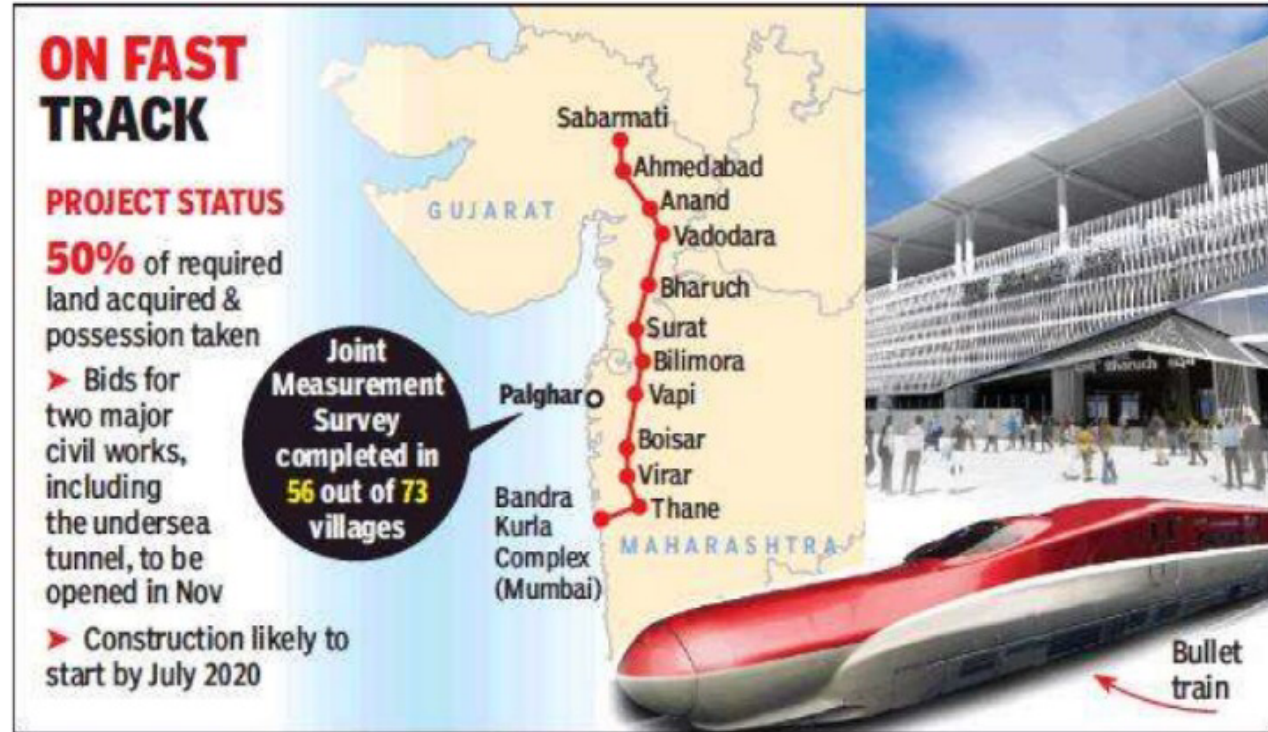
NHSRCL & Govt In Talks Over Amount

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New Delhi: In a first, tribal people who have been tilling land for 20-30 years without possessing ownership papers will be compensated during land acquisition for the ambitious Ahmedabad-Mumbai high-speed rail project.

The National High Speed Rail Corporation (NHSRCL) and Maharashtra government are working out the compensation amount for such tillers in Palghar district in the state which has seen considerable opposition to the project. The Corporation now claims that patient engagement has helped and land surveys — to be conducted with owners — are pending in only 17 villages.

"In principle, we have de-



ecided that though these people are non-title holders, their livelihood is affected when the land they cultivate in is acquired and should be somewhat compensated. But how much, that's something I need to work out with the state government so that it's accept-

able," NHSRCL managing director Achal Khare told TOI.

Khare admitted the Corporation is facing certain issues in acquiring land in the district, but has now managed to complete about 41 sale deeds and is in the final stage to take possession of the land.

"Most of these people, who are cultivating the land, are not owners. These are in somebody else's name. This is one issue we are facing now. We — Maharashtra government and NHSRCL — are trying to find a solution in a humanitarian manner. If

someone is cultivating the land for 20-30 years and the land is not in his name, so how do I pay him?" he said.

Earlier joint measurement survey (JMS) could not be carried out in 33 of 73 villages. "Now we have done JMS in 16 more villages and only 17 villages are left. We are also discussing with villagers to find the kind of development they want and to prepare a plan to meet their requirement," he said.

Khare said misgivings were rooted in previous experiences when promised compensation was not fully paid or delayed. People also shared how resettlement was delayed.

NHSRCL appointed a communicator for every two villages and that helped. "There were misgivings that our project will cut villages into two parts. We are going completely elevated (15-16 meters above the ground) and we are taking only 60 feet to build the high-speed rail corridor," Khare said.