

NHAI takes Firm Action following Reinforced Soil Wall Failures in Projects on NH-66 in Kerala

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The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) is taking immediate and decisive action following the recent failure of a Reinforced Soil Wall at Mylakkadu in Kollam District on December 5, 2025. The Mylakkadu failure, which occurred on Kollam – Kadambattukonam Project, involved a 9.4-metre high RS Wall approach to a Vehicular Underpass. Preliminary assessments suggest the cause is a Deep-Seated Shear/ Bearing Capacity Failure, meaning the soil at foundation was too weak to support the fill.

NHAI has acted swiftly and severely to ensure accountability. The Concessionaire and its Promoters (M/s Shivalaya) and the Independent Engineer (M/s Feedback - Satra JV) have been temporarily suspended from bidding for future projects. They have also been issued Show Cause Notices for potential debarment (upto 3 years for Concessionaire and upto 2 years for IE) along with monetary penalties. The Project Manager of the Concessionaire and the Resident Engineer of IE have been immediately removed from the project site.

While the technology of RS Walls is sound, the failures raise serious concerns about the bearing capacity and quality of the soil used in the design and construction of these structures/ RS Walls along NH-66. To address this, NHAI is launching a massive, multi-pronged initiatives:

1. Expert Assessment:

Following the Mylakkadu incident, a high-level Expert Committee, including Dr. Jimmy Thomas (IIT-Kanpur) and Dr. T.K. Sudheesh (IIT-Palakkad), visited the site on December 6, 2025, to investigate the causes of failure & suggest remedial actions. The findings of a previous Expert Committee, constituted after the Kooriyad incident, are already being acted upon.

2. Intensive Soil Testing Across NH-66:

NHAI has appointed 18 Geotechnical Agencies to conduct rigorous soil sampling and testing at 378 structure/ RS Walls locations across 18 projects on NH-66 in Kerala. This includes sites that are already constructed, in progress, and yet to start. Agencies will deploy multiple rigs within 7–10 days to start the work, aiming to complete tests at 100 locations within one month and the remaining within three months.

3. Design Review and Remedial Action:

Based on these comprehensive field and lab reports, the design and construction of every RS Wall will be re-checked. Remedial actions, including the dismantling and reconstruction of walls, will be taken where necessary. RS Walls will only be accepted after this process is complete and quality is confirmed. Accountability will be fixed for all lapses found during this review.

4. Safety Audits Expanded:

Following a separate incident involving the falling of girders on the Aroor-Thuravoor Elevated Road Project in November, NHAI has already engaged RITES to conduct a safety audit on that project. These safety audits will now be expanded to cover other projects on NH-66 to proactively identify and rectify any potential safety concerns.

NHAI reiterates its commitment to the highest standards of quality and safety for the public and assures that all necessary measures are being taken to ensure the long-term integrity of the National Highway 66 corridor.

GDH/DS

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