

## Road, rail projects will wreak havoc on Kodagu: IISc report

[Shrinivasa M](#) | TNN | Jan 12, 2019, 08:48 IST

TimesPoints

MYSURU: Undertaking major infrastructure projects in [Kodagu district](#) is inadvisable as even small disturbances could be catastrophic, says a recent [IISc](#) report, recalling the flood and landslide disaster last year. The report, 'Environment impact assessment of the proposed linear projects in Kodagu district', warns state and central governments against interfering with the intrinsically fragile system of steep slopes and sharp gradients while raising an alarm about unregulated tourism creating ecological and environmental imbalance in Kodagu. The forest area in the district, it says, is shrinking.

The report – by IISc scientists Ramachandra TV, Bharath Setturu, Vinay S, Vishnu D Mukri and GR Rao – is part of the Sahyadri Conservation Series and prepared by the Energy and Wetlands Research Group (CES-TE 15) of the Center for Ecological Sciences of IISc, Bengaluru.

The 264-page report discusses in detail eight upcoming projects, including widening of Bengaluru-Bantwal road, and laying roads between Halebeedu-Kutta, Madikeri-Channarayapatna and Mysuru-Thalassery railway line.

The scientists say the ecological consequences of road expansion and rail network plans would be immense and

adverse. Irrational land-use changes will result in a poor hydrologic regime, with the catchment losing the ability to retain water, leading to “floods and droughts (as it happened during the second week of August 2018), landslides and mudslides leading to loss of life and property”, it warns. The consequences would be conversion of perennial streams into seasonal ones and water scarcity during non-monsoon seasons. People could lose livelihood due to lower productivity, human-animal conflicts might worsen and the water deficit could lead to intra and interstate social conflicts, the report says.

The scientists recommended the state and central governments not to take up any major road or rail project as 90% of the district is ecologically sensitive. The report also suggested that the governments disallow [monoculture](#) of exotic species, even in coffee plantations, and incentivise growing of native species in coffee plantations.

The report says the district had 32% of forest cover under interior or intact forests in 1973, whereas in 2018 it covers only 19% – a change attributable to irreversible land use changes over four decades.