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Govt revives Hubballi-Ankola rail project, greens see red over loss of 1,500 acres of forest

Rohith BR | TNN | Sep 7, 2018, 07:46 IST



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(Picture used for representational purpose)

BENGALURU: Even as experts raise concerns over deforestation in the Western Ghats, the Karnataka government has revived the controversial Hubballi-Ankola railway line project, for which close to 1,500 acres of forest with 2lakh trees have to be cleared.

Though the State Wildlife Board has rejected the proposal for the line that passes through Karwar, Yellapur and Dharwad forest divisions, the government has now appealed to the National Board for Wildlife (NBW), which will hear the matter shortly.

Environmentalists have also approached NBW, pointing out that a major part of the line alignment passes through Uttara Kannada district, which has the highest forest cover in the state. "The area through which the proposed railway alignment passes is one of the habitats for species like tiger, great Indian hornbill, king cobra and Asiatic elephant. The Biodiversity Impact Assessment Report stated that the project will have negative impacts like changes in land cover, loss of trees and habitat of wild animals, risks due to landslides, mudslides, smuggling of timber and forest goods,



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From the connectivity point of view, the 168km broad gauge railway line from Hubballi to Ankola is crucial for locals. Though announced 21 years ago, the project remained on paper, owing to various hurdles, including opposition from greens.

“The project directly connects the plains of Hubballi with Ankola on the coast. The government should find a midway solution to make it a reality. Earlier, there was talk about taking the line through tunnels wherever possible. Experts from organisations like IISc had suggested mitigation measures as well. Those opposing

the project are not considering the plight of the common man,” said Shashidhar M, a resident of Hubballi.

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