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Hubli-Ankola railway line hopes to start soon

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Studies on the feasibility of the Hubli-Ankola railway link had been on for more than a decade. Many politicians of the region have even made a career promising this important line to voters. It now appears that the line could become a reality.

Hopes of seeing this railway line actually laid were bolstered after a scientific team from the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, arrived to take up a preliminary study of the topography of the terrain.

The six-member team headed by TV Ramachandra and Subhaschandra arrived in Kumta from Bangalore on Sunday. They will leave on Monday for Castle Rock, along with experts in the fields of geology and forests.

The team is expected to visit sites in the area till August 9. It will also hold talks with officials of the forest department in Karwar on August 8. The team will also discuss the matter with officials of the forest department in Yellapur, Kiruvatti, Mastikoppa and Hubli.

The foundation stone for this route was laid over a decade ago, by former prime minister AB Vajpayee. Environmentalists, however, vigorously opposed the construction of a railway line in the region, as it was estimated that nearly 750 hectares of forest could be destroyed for the construction of the 167-kilometre line.

In 2001, the cost of the project was estimated at `998 crore.

After opposition from environmentalists, the Central ministry of forests and environment had put a halt to the project.

However, many minor bridges and culverts had already been constructed between Kalghatgi and Hubli, before the ministry halted the project.

Former zilla panchayat president, Uttara Kannada zilla panchayat, Ramananda Nayak, said, "For ten years, the Ankola-Hubli railway line action committee has been campaigning for this line.

However, nothing has happened. Senior scribes and intellectuals like Patil Puttappa and others have also taken part in the struggle to get this line."

Ananth Kumar Hegde, MP of Uttara Kannada district, said, "I personally met former Union minister Jairam Ramesh, along with my colleague in Parliament, Prahlad Joshi."

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