

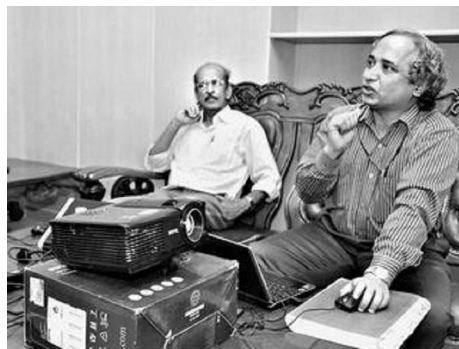
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Hubli-Ankola rail line: economic viability report awaited

Staff Correspondent

Team of IISc. scientists visits Dharwad and Uttara Kannada districts



Pros and cons: IISc. team head T.V. Ramachandra (right) speaking to presspersons in Hubli on Friday.

A team of experts from the Indian Institute of Science (IISc.), Bangalore, which has been studying the environmental impact of the Hubli-Ankola rail project, is awaiting the report from South Western Railway on the project's economical viability.

T.V. Ramachandra, an IISc. scientist, who is on a visit to Dharwad and Uttara Kannada districts to hold consultation with Railway officials and conduct public hearing, told presspersons on Friday that the report had become crucial in the wake of the ban on the export of iron ore.

“Now that iron ore export has been banned and as it is likely to continue, we want to know the alternative sources of revenue for the Railways on the route. The presence of the Kaiga nuclear plant, the import of coal, and the expansion of Seabird Project will have to be considered,” he said.

Mr. Ramachandra said that the Railway authorities had given them a four-year-old viability report. “We asked them to give us the latest report, which takes into consideration the iron ore export ban. We are ready with 80 per cent of the report and are working on the remaining portion. Once they give the viability report, we will incorporate it in our report and submit it to the Government,” he said.

Mr. Ramachandra said that either the national highway that passes through Uttara Kannada should be widened into a four-lane or the Hubli-Ankola railway line project should be taken up. Compared to the four-lane road, the rail project would be environment-friendly, he said. Mr. Ramachandra said the 12-member team from the IISc. began the survey in April and it went on till July-end.

“We were asked to take up documentation of the extent of flora and fauna, animal paths, assessment of environmental impact, engineering solutions appropriate for laying the track and also to come up with an environment management plan.

We have made a thorough survey of the wetland, plain land, and the ghat section on either side of the proposed rail route,” he said.

Mr. Ramachandra said that of the proposed 20 railway stations en route, setting up seven stations could be avoided and this suggestion had been conveyed to the authorities.

He said the Railway authorities had modified the alignment in some areas, reducing the forest land required for the project by five to eight per cent.

South Western Railway is preparing the report

'The rail project will be environment friendly'

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