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News

Centre Gives In To Public Pressure, Says NO To Elevated Corridors Via Bandipur



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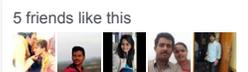
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Bengaluru/ Mysuru: Giving a major relief to wildlife activists who have been protesting to save Bandipur Tiger Reserve from mindless development, the Centre has made it clear that it will not take up the controversial project of constructing elevated corridors that cuts through the Tiger Reserve.

night traffic ban through Bandipur Tiger Reserve. The unstarred question was raised by Janata Dal (United) MP from Kerala, Veerendra Kumar.

The Union Minister's statement comes three days after the Karnataka Government opposed the move in the Supreme Court, citing the potential harm to Asiatic Elephants, Tigers and other wild animals. Veerendra Kumar had asked about the Centre's stance on building an elevated road over the forest to overcome the ban on night travel in the stretch.

Responding to this, the Minister said, "The Government of Karnataka had opposed construction of the road or lifting of the nine-hour night traffic ban on NH-212, which passes through Bandipur Tiger Reserve. In fact, we have suggested strengthening the alternative route passing through Thithimathi-Gonikoppa-Kutta and reach Kerala."

The proposal to build four elevated corridors, each 1-km long, on National Highway 766 by the National Highway Authority of India as part of the Bharatmala project had united activists under the banner of 'Save Bandipur'. They held multiple protests against the move.

In August 2018, the activists were first alarmed after a communication between the Ministry of Road and Transport Secretary Y.S. Mallik and the Karnataka Chief Secretary was leaked. The letter spoke about how Chief Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy and PWD Minister H.D. Revanna had verbally agreed to the project during a meeting with Union Minister of Road, Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari.

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The activists also opposed the proposed reversal of night traffic ban (9 pm-6 am) on the 25 km stretch of National Highway 212 in the Bandipur Tiger Reserve corridor and petitioned Gadkari and Kumaraswamy.

The existing traffic ban has been in effect since 2009 when the Karnataka High Court banned traffic flow after dark while hearing a case pertaining to roadkills, where at least 215 animals were run over between 2004 and 2007.

For the night, commuters currently use a 30-km detour of the Hunsur-Gonikoppa-Kutta-Manandavadi Road.

An open letter to Rahul Gandhi

Meanwhile, several environment activists from Mysuru have written an open letter to Congress President Rahul Gandhi on the rampant destruction of environment. Here is the letter:

Dear Mr. Rahul Gandhi,

We write to you with the hope that you will use your good offices to stop the rampant destruction of forests in Karnataka. At the time when natural calamities have become as common as flu due to man-triggered global warming, road-widening projects inside wildlife reserves are expected to consume 21 (twenty one) lakh trees in Karnataka.

Yes, we do need development. But certainly not at the expense of pristine forests which are the source of life, not only in the Western Ghats region, but throughout Southern India.



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government in Karnataka is determined to go ahead with the project.

We bring to your notice that there is an existing railway line from Hubli to Goa. As such, there is no necessity for this ill-conceived railway line project. If this project is to be taken up by the H.D. Kumaraswamy-led coalition government, as many as two lakh trees are to be felled. This line will traverse through the ecologically sensitive Western Ghats, destroying the mega-diversity and hydrology of the entire system rendering all rivers dry. We are hopeful that you will stop this project in the larger interest of all of us.

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Thanks and regards

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