

NICE bend in the road

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will mean that the Madiwala Tank, fed by Gottigere Lake, will lose its important water source.

The report points out that surface water quality may be affected adversely by highway construction and operation. "Once construction has been complete and the roadway is open to traffic, constituents derived from vehicles and other sources can accumulate on the road surface. Rainfall washes these materials from the highway pavement, and runoff transports the substances into surface waters."

Prof Rao's 27-page report, submitted to NICE on October 18, says that Alignment A (road off the lake) holds a clear advantage when pitted against Alignment B (road over the lake) on three counts—environmental impact, hydraulic and hydrologic studies and engineering standards. On environmental impact, the report says, "Alignment-A has minimal to small impact whereas Alignment-B has significant impact on the environment."

The report recommends a "proper drainage system" as part of Alignment

A to effectively drain out even peak flood discharge from the catchment beneath the road, without affecting the lake's ecological balance.

"For the Alignment B, the impounding capacity of the lake will be reduced substantially and can affect significantly the ecological balance of the lake," the report says. It adds that though both the alignments satisfy road geometry parameters, Alignment B could reduce the impounding capacity of the lake "drastically" due to bridges and constructions like toll plazas on the road.

"The report done by an expert at the IISc, one of the leaders in the field, shows that the realigned road works best in preserving the lake. Reverting to the original alignment plan means an environmental disaster," says Ashok Kheny, MD, NICE. "KSPCB had given the go-ahead for the new plan, but later backed out saying that the design was in violation of the original plan. Even in the letter stating withdrawal of consent, there's no mention of details of the alleged violation," says NICE spokesman Manjunath Nayaker.