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Final test awaits Hubballi-Ankola Rly line



Niranjana K N, DH News Service, Bengaluru, SEP 06 2018, 23:16PM IST | UPDATED: SEP 07 2018, 02:26AM IST

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Amidst debate over damages to the Western Ghats across Karnataka, the controversial railway project

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If the committee accords its approval to the project, in violation of several rules, it will result in the diversion of 595.64 hectares of dense forest across Uttara Kannada, which has relatively the highest forest cover in Karnataka.

The project, despite the reservations by the Karnataka Forest Department (KFD), had obtained clearance from the regional empowered committee of MoEF.

Several agencies, including the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) that oversees tiger conservation in India, had opposed the project citing fragmentation of elephants' migration path and obstructing the connectivity of tiger reserves along the Western Ghats.

According to documents made available to *DH* under RTI, the railway project has violated several rules.

“The project has not obtained any approval by the state board for wildlife despite the fact that standing committee of National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) insists on the recommendations by the state board for wildlife.

Further, as per the Wildlife Protection Act 1972, there is no scope for any project proponent to appeal against the opinion of any statutory authority. But in this case, despite the NTCA's objection, the agency has been asked to carry out inspection yet again and thus violating the provisions of the Act,” explained Giridhar Kulkarni, who has carried out various conservational works in the project area.

The apex court, in its judgement, on the Lafarge project in Meghalaya had ordered not to entertain

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meeting. This amounts to a clear violation of the guidelines and judgment by the SC,” yet another activist pointed out.

Documents with *DH* revealed that the railway project is repeatedly rejected by multiple agencies and committees comprising PCCF Karnataka, MoEF Regional Office (Bengaluru), Forest Advisory committee, MoEF New Delhi, Central Empowered Committee and NTCA. “We have already witnessed two major ecological disasters in Kodagu and Kerala due to deforestation, increased tourism and infrastructure activities. Approving this railway line would also unleash the similar effects in the pristine Ghat region of Uttara Kannada,” Giridhar pointed.

The project cuts through deciduous and evergreen forests in Karwar, Yellapur and Dharwad division affecting several wildlife sanctuaries and Kali Tiger Reserve in the region. The biodiversity impact assessment of the project had also highlighted the negative impact on flora and fauna.

Western Ghats

Hubballi

Ankola



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Vinay Paramanand · 9/8/2018 1:44 AM

I am sure there is a workaround for building a railway line connecting Hubli and coastal Karnataka. Sagar has a railway station and there is a proposal to connect that line to the konkan line. Constructing railway path from Hubli to Sagar would not cause as much damage as it would to Ankola. We need to think of alternatives by keeping our environment first. This is for our future and our kids.

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ganapati nayak · 9/7/2018 9:35 AM

No need of this train which is going to damage forest. People in Uttara Kannada dist have concern for environment but bayalusime people have no such concern, they may come to loot forest resources if train connects Bayaluseeme and coastal karnataka.

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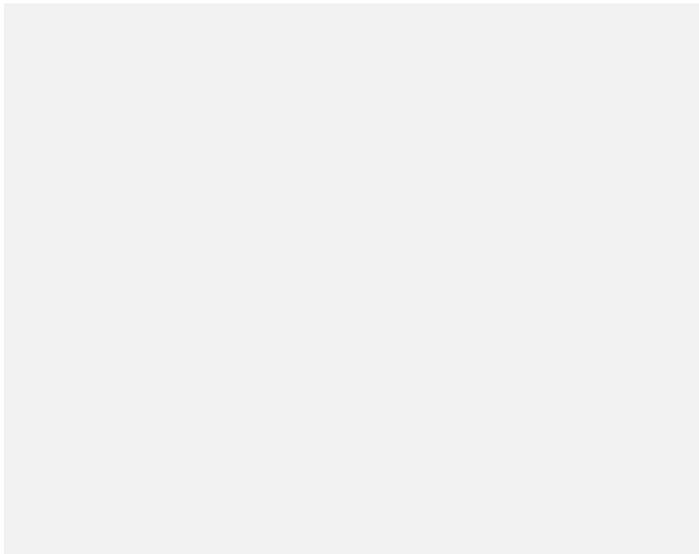
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