

## Eco report on Mysore expressway challenged

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The first public hearing on the controversial Bangalore-Mysore Infrastructure Corridor (BMIC) will be held here tomorrow here even as an NGO fighting against the project has come up with a fresh offensive against it, based on the Environmental Impact Assessment Report submitted by the project promoters, to the Karnataka Pollution Control Board.

The NGO, Samrajyashahi Virodhi Okkuta-Karnataka (Anti-Imperialist Federation), claimed in a press release here today that the details of the project given in the executive summary of the environmental impact assessment report, which has to be made available to the public under law, does not reveal a true picture. It also charged the promoters, the Nandi Infrastructure Corridor Enterprises, with incorporating false details in the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Report.

It said though the EIA has to be prepared keeping in mind all other alternatives avail-

able, the possibility of doubling the Bangalore-Mysore railway line was not taken into consideration at all. Instead, the report said that doubling or upgradation both railway and roads between Bangalore and Mysore was not possible at all.

This, according to the Federation, is false information because the National Institute of Advanced Study (NIAS) had come out with a report which said that the doubling of the railway line could be taken up at a cost of Rs 460 crore. Chief Minister S M Krishna himself had recently written to the Centre seeking the doubling of the railway line. Moreover, the Centre had already sanctioned doubling of the railway line between Bangalore and Ramanagara. All these facts were suppressed in the report which was submitted to the Pollution Control Board in September 1999, the NGO claimed.

**UNDERPASSES:** Another major discrepancy in the EIA, according to the Federation, is the details given on the number of underpasses and overpasses along the 111-km closed highway to help village folk on the route to cross the highway. Originally, the promoters propos-

ed only 47 underpasses. When there was public protest on this count, the company announced that there would be one underpass for every 500 metres. However, the EIA report once again put the number of underpasses at 47, the Federation said.

**LAND CLASSIFICATION:** The Federation also stated that the EIA inaccurately mentioned that a major portion of the total 20,173 acres of land being acquired for the project was not agricultural land.

The classification of land taken into account was 30 years old, and since then, the nature of land use had undergone perceptible change. What was classified as dry land then had now come under borewell irrigation. The EIA has not accounted for this aspect.

Similarly, according to EIA, 4,440 acres of government land is dry land, but it did not say whether this dry land consists of grazing grounds (gomala) or granite quarries. Quarries would be a source of income for the promoters, but whether this aspect has been accounted for while fixing land rates was not clear, the Federation said.