

888 trees to be axed at reserve forest in Vellore for Bengaluru-Chennai Expressway

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CHENNAI: The four-lane Bengaluru-Chennai Expressway, which will be passing through Magimandalam reserve forest in Vellore division, is likely to result in the felling of 888 fully grown trees including 110 red sanders.

The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) has submitted an application to the Regional Empowered Committee (REC) here seeking recommendation for diversion of 5.42 hectares of forest land for the expressway project.

As per the submission made by the Vellore district forest officer, a total of 888 trees were marked to be felled, out of which 778 were miscellaneous trees having girth class more than 31 cm and 110 were red sanders which are 40 years old.

The forest department reported that though the forest area to be diverted does not fall under any sanctuary/national park, tiger reserve or elephant corridor, the area has fauna like spotted deer, wild hare, porcupine, leopards etc. The Vellore forest division recommended the proposal with a condition that underneath passage be provided during the execution of the road work such that the animals can move without any obstruction from one side of the highway to the other.

NHAI officials said the Central Empowered Committee of Supreme Court has approved the request for felling of trees. Considering all this, the regional empowered committee deliberated the requirement of forest area for the project in its 47th meeting held earlier this month in Chennai and recommended the project for a period of 30 years with certain specific conditions.

Importantly, the committee opined that the state forest department may carry out translocation of trees instead of felling wherever feasible and plant an equal number of red sanders trees to be felled in the nearby forest areas at the cost of the NHAI.

Considering the presence of important flora and fauna in the area, the committee said NHA shall get the wildlife mitigation plan prepared by a competent agency and it should be approved by the Chief Wildlife Warden. Besides, underneath passages at appropriate places may be constructed to prevent deaths of wild animals and ensure safe movement of wildlife.

The committee also directed the NHA to display warning signs about animal movement at vantage points and speed regulations shall be imposed in consultation with the Chief Wildlife Warden.

Source: <https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/tamil-nadu/2021/may/29/888-trees-to-be-axed-at-reserve-forest-in-vellore-for-bengaluru-chennai-expressway-2309166.html>