

BULLET TRAIN GETS GREEN LIGHT VIA FLAMINGO HAVEN, NATIONAL PARK

Relevant for: Environment | Topic: Biodiversity, Ecology, and Wildlife Related Issues

Google Maps image locates Thane Creek Flamingo Wildlife Sanctuary and the Sanjay Gandhi National Park.

A committee, chaired by Union Environment Minister Harsh Vardhan, has accorded wildlife clearance to the Mumbai-Ahmedabad high speed train corridor that encroaches upon a flamingo sanctuary and the Sanjay Gandhi National Park, the home to leopards, in Mumbai.

The proposal involves diversion of 3.2756 ha of forestland from the Thane Creek Flamingo Wildlife Sanctuary and 97.5189 ha of land close to the boundary of the forest's protected area.

The project for one of India's first 'bullet trains' was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Japanese counterpart Shinzo Abe in Ahmedabad in September, 2017. It is expected to be ready by 2022.

A wildlife clearance is a critical part of the forest clearance process. A person privy to the process said forest clearance wasn't part of the original agenda of the meeting.

"In some cases, a file can come in through the intervention of the Chair [in this case, Mr. Vardhan]. This was one of those projects," said the person, who didn't want to be identified.

The project was accorded wildlife clearance on 10th January, according to records of the meeting.

The TCF in Thane, Mumbai, came into being August 2015 and the 1,690-hectare bird haven — 896 hectares of mangrove forests and 794 hectares of a water-body — is on the western bank of the creek, between the Airoli and the Vashi bridges connecting Mumbai and Navi Mumbai.

Apart from the creek, the proposal also involves diverting 32.75 ha of forestland and 77.30 ha of non-forestland from Sanjay Gandhi National Park and from 0.6902 ha of forestland and 4.7567 ha of non-forest land from Tungreshwar Wildlife Sanctuary.

While according clearance, the National Board of Wildlife-- the apex body tasked with according permissions to allow forest land to be diverted for industrial development-- has laid pre-conditions for the bullet train project. These include paying Rs 10 crore (2% of 500 crore—the component of the project in Mumbai) for habitat improvement of the sanctuary, barricading the work site to ensure that no debris fall outside the project area and '...providing site and funds for penal plantation of at least 5 times the number of mangroves plants anticipated to be lost in this project..'

Largely funded by a soft loan by Japan, the Rs 1 trillion Mumbai-Ahmedabad bullet train project has a track-length of 508 km, and will originate at the Bandra Kurla Complex, Mumbai and terminate at the Sabarmati, in Gujarat. The length across the State of Maharashtra will be 155.64 km 4.3 km across Dadra & Nagar Haveli. The total length across the state of Gujarat would 348.2 km and would pass through the districts of Ahmedabad, Kheda, Anand, Vadodara, Bharuch, Surat, Navsari, and Valsad in Gujarat.

END

Downloaded from crackIAS.com

© **Zuccess App** by crackIAS.com

CrackIAS.com