

Wildlife overpass plan gets final go-ahead

Approval given after change in alignment of four projects, including bullet train, that will pass through SGNP, Tungareshwar sanctuary

RANJEET JADHAV

ranjeet.jadhav@mid-day.com

THE proposal to build a wildlife overpass has finally received the nod of the sub-committee appointed by the State Wildlife Board (SWB). This comes after the design of the four major upcoming infrastructure projects, which will pass through the Tungareshwar Wildlife Sanctuary (TWS) and Sanjay Gandhi National Park (SGNP), was changed to make the alignment parallel, bringing them closer.

“Several infrastructure projects will pass from the border of SGNP and TWS, and to ensure unrestricted movement of wildlife, the sub-committee has given approval for the crossing,” D J Singh, assistance conservator of forest at SGNP, told mid-day.

Four major infrastructure projects will come up in areas bordering SGNP and TWS — 10-lane Virar-Alibaug multimodal corridor, bullet train, Diva Panvel rail line and Delhi-Mumbai Dedicated Freight Corridor.

‘The sub-committee was constituted to suggest the wildlife overpass between SGNP and TWS so that the upcoming infrastructure that will pass close to the forest patch does not hamper any wildlife movement’

Kishor Rithe, Wildlife Conservationist



The overpass will be built between Tungareshwar Wildlife Sanctuary and Sanjay Gandhi National Park. **REPRESENTATION PIC**

According to the initial design, the alignment of the four projects was at a distance from each other and that would have caused more disturbance to the wildlife, said a sub-committee member.

Wildlife Conservationist Kishor Rithe, who is on the panel, said, “The sub-committee was constituted to suggest the wildlife overpass between SGNP and TWS so that the upcoming infrastructure that will pass close to the forest patch does not hamper any wildlife movement. We asked the project proponents to design the alignment in such a way that the projects pass parallel to

each other and they have planned it that way.”

The sub-committee appointed for the construction of the overpass met on January 13 and cleared the project. The panel will now submit the proposal to build a 30-metre-wide bridge during the next meeting of the SWB which will give the final go-ahead.

Experts say the bridge, a first in India, will help reduce fatal road accidents, which will not only save wildlife but human lives, too. Over the years, several vehicle-animal collisions have taken place on the busy highway in the area.