

Work on animal passage corridor over SGNP and TWS to start in November

The overpass will be similar to Singapore Animal Overpass

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WORK ON India's first and largest animal passage corridor over the Sanjay Gandhi National Park (SGNP) and Tungareshwar Wildlife Sanctuary (TWS) will begin in November.

The three major infrastructure projects—Mumbai-Ahemadabad bullet train, Mumbai-Delhi Dedicated Freight corridor and the big-ticket Alibaug-Virar multimodal corridor, running parallel to each other, would be passing through the SGNP and TWS and hence to ensure that the wildlife is not adversely impacted due to these projects, the corridor will be constructed.

According to the plan, the overpass will be similar to the Singapore Animal Overpass. Spread across 103 sq km, the SGNP in the northern suburbs of Mumbai is home to 1,300 plant species, 274 bird species, 35 species of mammals, including some 50 leopards, and 170 butterfly species.

The Tungareshwar Wildlife Sanctuary is around 85 sq km of protected area connected to the Nagla block of SGNP and Tansa wildlife sanctuary. The sanctuary is home to mammalian

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species like leopards, wild boars, rhesus macaques, four-headed antelopes among others.

Officials said that initially the Dedicated Freight Corridor Corporation of India (DFCCI), which is constructing the Delhi-Mumbai freight corridor, had proposed the overpass for animals and it was envisaged that the overpass will be 30 meters long and 8 meters wide. When the DFCCI sent a proposal for the same to the wildlife authorities, they asked to increase the size to 110-metre-long and 30-metres-wide as per their standard.

Later the same area was also selected for two other major infrastructure projects – the Mumbai-Ahemadabad Highspeed Rail corridor and

Alibaug Virar Multimodal Corridor between SGNP and TWS.

An official said the approval for the corridor proposed was granted by the office of Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Maharashtra State earlier this year in February and accordingly the drawing and design were completed.

DFCCI, the implementing agency, had then sent the drawing for approval to the Commissioner of Railway Safety (CRS) and after getting the approval from them the execution on the same will be started in November and is expected to be completed around June 2022.

“The overpass will offer a smooth passage for movement of wildlife in the affected areas. Its design will match the natural vegetation of the surrounding areas, and elements like rocks, logs and water bodies will be added to make the animals feel at home. Restrictions will be imposed on the use of heavy lighting in the area and high-quality noise barriers will be erected so as to ensure that the level stays within safe ambient for the animals,” said an official, adding that the final approval will be received within 45 days.