

490 trees to be retained on NH bypass

STAFF REPORTER THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, October 12, 2015



NHAI officials and members of Tree Monitoring Committee inspect the Kazhakuttam-Mukkola stretch of the NH-66 bypass to identify the trees to be retained ahead of the widening works.-Photo: S. Mahinsha

Objections to tree felling was hindering road-widening work

It has been decided to retain the 490-odd trees that are present along the central median of the Kazhakuttam-Mukkola stretch of the NH-66 bypass. As per official statistics, there are 4,725 trees on the 26.7-km stretch. A joint inspection held on Sunday managed to break the existing impasse in the issue. The participants of the inspection included officials of the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI), members of the Tree Monitoring Committee G. Shankar and Sridhar Radhakrishnan, and representatives of the Hyderabad-based KNR Constructions Ltd., which bagged the Rs.845.24-crore project. The trees coming within the 2.5-

metre-wide utility corridor will also be retained. This is considered feasible since the portion will have an earthen surface, with the width of the corridor extended up to 4 m in certain reaches. Following detailed deliberations, the NHAI officials and representatives of the contracting firm agreed to the environmentalists' demand to preserve trees which came between the 5.5-m-wide service road and the utility corridor.

While the contractor's representatives reasoned that retaining such trees would affect the development of the service road, it was decided that a call on these trees would be taken at a later stage. As a result, the inspection team arrived at a consensus to maintain trees that were present up to 60 centimetres from the edge of the service road for the time being. Objections that were raised against felling trees along the stretch and the delay in shifting the public utilities have affected the progress of the project, being undertaken on Engineering, Procurement, Construction (EPC) mode with a time-frame of 24 months. While the contract came into effect on June 12, the work is yet to get into full swing. The latest developments are expected to provide impetus to the much-delayed project.

Source: <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-kerala/490-trees-to-be-retained-on-nh-bypass/article7752209.ece>