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NH-169 widening: Greens hope to save 400 trees

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Mangaluru: Environmentalists have expressed confidence in saving at least 400 trees, out of the 2,616 trees that are proposed to be felled in Mangaluru forest division.

According to an estimate, more than 3,000 trees will be axed, for the widening of the 18.5 km stretch of NH-169, between Bikarnakatte and Mijar. Following a public hearing held at the Mangaluru range forest officer's office on June 15, the forest department, along with National Highways Authority of India officials, conducted a survey on the stretch on Monday.

Environmentalist Dinesh Holla said, "We want to save as many trees as possible. The transplantation of trees undertaken by environmentalist Jeet Milan Roche so far, has seen a good success rate. We are for development, and understand the needs of the city, and our efforts are only to save trees and protect them, especially in the wake of climate change. We are confident that at least 400 trees can be saved. We have also requested the forest department to provide details of the trees planted for every tree axed. Range forest officer Prashanth Pai said that the trees would be cut, only after carrying out an inspection, and making sure that no bird's nest with fledgelings or eggs are in the trees. We are raising a cause that is above politics, and the public must join hands to fight climate change, that even Mangaluru is witness to," he said.

Several people in favour and against axing the trees, gathered at Kulashekar. Corporator Shakila Kava said that the public is facing hardship because of narrow roads, and the Union government has sanctioned necessary funds for road widening.

The forest officials have said that efforts will be made to save a maximum number of trees. A report will be submitted to senior officials for further action. The meeting saw heated arguments among those in favour and against the felling of trees.