

## Locals of Khokana, Bungmati oppose expressway project

Locals of Khokana and Bungmati have protested against the Kathmandu-Tarai expressway project, saying it would destroy arable land and damage their cultural and religious sites.

The locals have also complained that the project offered them too little compensation for their 'valuable' land.

Proposed projects such as outer ring-road, Bagmati corridor and a transmission line would pass through Khokana and Bungmati. Locals said if these projects took off, they would be robbed of their land which was the only source of livelihood.

"What's more, these projects will also destroy our cultural and religious sites," said Gyan Bhagat Maharjan, 69, a local.

"Moreover, if we are robbed of our land, how will we feed our families?" he asked.

The expressway will pass through Ku-Dey and Sikali hillock, destroying more than 60 per cent of the historic sites. K-Dey is believed to be the origin of Khokana locals.

The Kathmandu-Tarai expressway project will also acquire land plots owned by local *guthis* like Tau Guthi, Salan Guthi and Jagu Guthi. Without regular income from the land, the *guthis* won't be able to give continuity to their annual festivals.

Similarly, around 16 *ropani* land owned by Macchendra Nath Guthi will also be acquired for the construction of the expressway. Locals said around 42 households of Khoyacha tribe who depended on the land of Macchendranath Guthi for their livelihood would be highly affected.

The project has determined different rates of compensation for the landowners.

In Khokana area, the expressway project will pay Rs 4.4 million per *ropani* for land touched by roads, Rs 3.6 million per *ropani* for land touched by dirt roads and Rs 2.5 million per *ropani* for land not linked by roads.

Likewise, in Bungmati area, the project will pay Rs 4.1 million per *ropani* for land linked by roads, Rs 3.3 million for land linked by dirt roads and Rs 2.4 million for land not linked by roads.

Suraj Maharjan, a local activist, said the government should follow the Environmental Impact Assessment report, which has suggested re-routing the expressway to avoid passing through agricultural land and historic sites of Khokana and Bungmati.

Section 5.8.1 of the Environmental Impact Assessment states that by aligning the expressway on the west bank of the Bagmati River, it could avoid going through the valuable agricultural land of Khokana and through the village of Danuargau.

The Nepali Army is undertaking the Kathmandu-Tarai expressway project. NA Spokesperson Gokul Bhandari said, “We will hold a meeting with all stakeholders very soon and address the demands of the locals.”

Source:- <https://thehimalayantimes.com/kathmandu/locals-of-khokana-bungmati-oppose-expressway-project/>