

KARNATAKA

## Concern over threat to Neolithic site from NH work

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BALLARI: FEBRUARY 11, 2017 00:42 IST

UPDATED: FEBRUARY 11, 2017 00:43 IST



Historians and naturalists are apprehensive that a neolithic ashmound at Budi Kanavi (Budikanama Pass), between Ballari and Hospet, might be threatened by the proposed upgrade of NH 63 into a four-lane road, if the present alignment is not changed.

Ravi Korishettar, archaeologist, and Santosh Martin, naturalist, have submitted a memorandum to the Deputy Commissioner urging him to intervene immediately to save this “most important historical and archaeological site in southern India.”

This site represents a pastoral community’s settlement dating back to about 5,000 years ago.

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the centre of a series of ashmounds located at Banghaxanu, Kurugodu, Toranagaru, Gadigaru, Kurekappa and Halkundi in the district.

The district administration is in touch with the project director of NHAI to seek deferment of the work.

Deputy Commissioner Ramprasath Manohar said that the project director is expected to visit the spot on February 14 when he will discuss the steps to to preserve the site.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, Mr. Korishettar pointed out that Budi Kanavi is the largest among 300 sites known from the districts of Ballari, Chitradurga, Raichur, Kalaburgi, Vijayapur, Bidar, Mahbubnagar, Anantapur and Kurnool in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. Archaeologists from across the globe visit the mounds from time to time, especially those who are engaged in unravelling the rise of agricultural way of life in India.

Prof. Korishettar said that the ashmound is protected by the Commissionerate of Archaeology, Museums and Heritage, State government.

The site was found in the 1840s by Captain Newbold and Colin Mackenzie (the first Surveyor-General of British India).

In the 1880s, Robert Bruce Foote was the first geologist who identified the site as being a Neolithic agro-pastoral community and compared this formation with Zariba mounds in Africa.

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Printable version | Mar 28, 2022 1:47:36 pm |

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