

HIGHWAY THROUGH AMAZON



Sneha Adhikary

M. Sc. 2nd Year

Department of
Environmental Science

Asutosh College

Amazon rain forest known as the lungs of the Earth is under threat now. The 6.7 million square kilometer (2.6 million square miles) rain forest which is home to hundreds of endemic and endangered species and is one of the biodiversity hotspots is being cut down to make space for a four-lane highway through the forest for the upcoming COP30 meeting on climate change.



The new highway that is being made through the amazon rainforest (Source: BBC)

In the city of Belém, Brazil, the government is making the highway with the aim to ease traffic to the city, that will help to host more than 50,000 people - including world leaders - at the conference in November. According to the state government it is a “sustainable” project but local people and conservationists have different opinions. Lush rainforest towers on each side of the half-constructed road serve as a reminder of the area's past. The cleared terrain, which extends over 13 km (8 miles) through the rainforest into Belém, is covered in huge piles of logs.



Fallen Tree Logs in the Amazon rainforest (Source: BBC/ Paulo Koba)

Two disjointed protected woodland zones are left by the route. Scientists worry that it will cause ecosystem fragmentation and interfere with wildlife migration. Many animals can face fatal accidents while trying to cross the road. Ecosystem fragmentation can lead to destruction of habitat and loss of lives of animals living in the forest. The forest will be more accessible to people which will lead to more pollution and endangerment of different species of flora and fauna.

Local people who live in the forest, their livelihood is dependent on the forest resources. One such farmer who harvest Açaí berries says that his harvest has already been cut down and he has no other means to earn money. The government haven't paid them any compensation either. The locals also fear that with the upcoming connectivity more people will come and more deforestation will follow, with that one day their own land will be taken away in exchange of money to build more modern infrastructure. In a time where the global temperature is increasing rapidly, and the COP meetings that are specifically held for climate change, at that time cutting down the biggest rainforest on Earth -that helps in adjusting global climate -just for "beautification" comes off as a null void. The question arise is it even worth to spend millions of dollars to fly out high ranking officials to pen and paper meetings when the ground reality and the Subject of the meeting itself is being destructed, being undermined.

snehaadhikary448@gmail.com
