

Soon, a 20-min cable car ride from Neral to Matheran

A breath-taking journey from Bhutivali village to the hill station just a few weeks away after Neral-Matheran ropeway gets PWD nod

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Reaching Matheran from Neral could be a quick 20-minute affair, loaded with breathtaking views of the valley. The public works department has finally cleared the Neral-Matheran ropeway project, paving the way for the project to take off in next few weeks.

Under the Rs 150-crore project, cable cars will ferry tourists from Bhutivali village at Bhivpuri near Neral directly to the hill station. Private firm Matheran Ropeway Private Limited (MRPL) has been awarded the contract to execute the proposal.

Dilip Kothari, project manager for MRPL said, "The PWD clearance came as a big relief as we had to approach the Supreme Court to get the final go-ahead for this project. This will be one of the longest ropeways in India and will become a major tourist attraction near Mumbai."

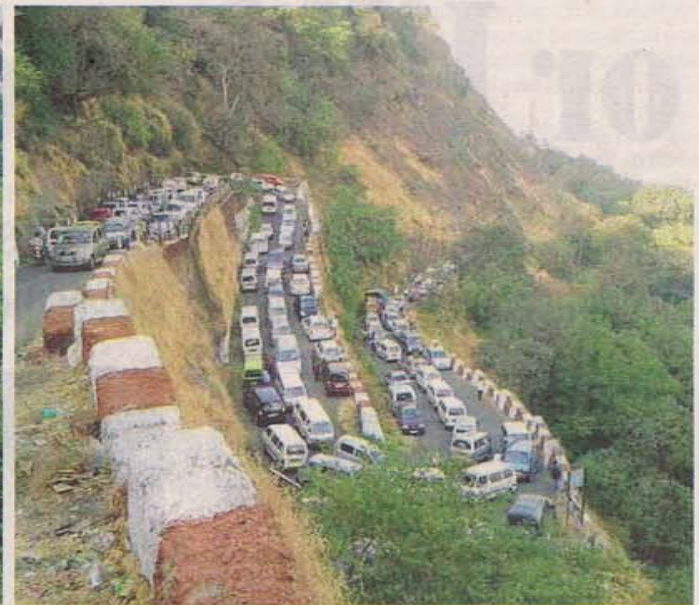
Kothari said the ropeway, once in place, can be operated throughout the year and will feature glass cars with transparent floors, providing exciting view of the valley.

The cable-based transport system will have a length of 4.7 kilometers. The vertical rise of ropeway would be 750 meters from bottom station level. "The ropeway will be divided into two sections, which would allow tourists to enjoy two types of cable cars at a single location. The first section, which will run for around 2.9 km, will feature continuous Gandola kind of cars with capacity of eight to 10 passengers," said Kothari.

He said the second section will have reversible jibback ropeway, operating with two carriers



REPRESENTATIONAL PICTURE



The ropeway will provide an alternative mode of transport which will go a long way in reducing traffic and attracting more tourists

that travel to and fro, for about 1.75 km that can carry almost 60 to 70 people at one go. "We are aiming to transport 500 people per hour to Matheran," he said.

According to Vinay Kothari, managing director of MRPL, they are in talks with three international cable car experts—French firm POMA, Austria-based Doppelmyr and BMF from Switzerland. "We are now awaiting a permission from the forest department that is to be given from Bhopal,

and are expecting to get it in a week or so. The ropeway can be functional within two years," said Vinay.

Santosh Pawar, councillor from Matheran said, "The ropeway will provide an alternate mode of transportation to access Matheran hill station. Its known to be an eco-friendly, noiseless, pollution free, time saving and a unique mode of transportation. It will sure help Matheran attract more tourists."

Another local councillor, Manoj Khedkar, said the ropeway will also solve the issue of car parking at Dasturi naka. "People visiting matheran will prefer to park their cars at Neral itself where facility can be created." The project that was first proposed in 2001 but got embroiled in environmental issues after NGOs raised objections. Meanwhile, Matheran was declared an eco sensitive zone by the SC, prompting the state to ask MRPL to get the apex court's approval.

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