

PRESS REPORTS

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Courtesy of THE Cyprus Mail

Stop putting environment before human lives. By Jacqueline Theodoulou

PARLIAMENT yesterday ordered the immediate submission of an environmental impact study by the Agriculture Ministry on the Limassol-Saittas highway.

The House Communications Committee yesterday blamed delays in presenting the study, carried out by the ministry's Environment Service, for delaying the road's construction.

The official word from the Service was that there were concerns over the environmental effects the road would have and that more time was needed to examine the matter in depth.

Furthermore, a suggestion was made for the new highway to have four lanes until the village of Alassa, whereas the initial planning said the road would have four lanes all the way up to Saittas.

But Deputies of the Limassol District and mukhtars of the area's surrounding communities stressed the significance of upgrading the existing road, which according to data submitted to the committee, has seen an excessive number of road accidents, many of which were fatal.

Speaking after the meeting, Yiannakis Thoma of AKEL, who is also chairman of the House Agriculture Committee, called on the Service to position itself on the matter as soon as possible, while he also called on the state to maintain the Limassol-Saittas road in its top priorities, "despite the financial problems brought on by the international financial crisis".

Thoma pointed out that the large number of traffic accidents as well as technical and financial studies indicated the necessity of the new road.

"Despite the decisions made by the previous government, the road's construction has remained untouched for the past two years and this is due to the Environment Service," he said, adding: "At a time when people are being killed, shrubs are being put before human lives."

Thoma said it was time to replace road death funerals with a good road. "The non-construction of the road would mean the desertification of Limassol's mountain communities," he pointed out.

DISY deputy Andreas Themistocleous stressed the need for the road to be set as a top priority. "Neither does the lack of money excuse further delays, nor can the Environment Service stand in the way of creating the road," he said.

"In proportion to its size, this road has the most road accidents and indeed road deaths of all other roads in Cyprus. It is unthinkable that some people are claiming that the environment is above everything, even human lives," said Themistocleous. "The request of all deputies and all community leaders in the area is that procedures for the road's construction are sped up."

Following the meeting, Pelendri village Mukhtar Nicos Patsiaouros said the Limassol-Saittas road was crucial in order to keep the rural areas alive. "For us it is a matter of life and death," he stated.

In response to the Environment Service's concerns, Patsiaouros said residents in the area were there exactly because they cared about the environment.