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Forums, experts oppose river projects

They feel diverting west flowing rivers will affect life in coastal region, Joida bandh on July 8

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KARWAR: Kali, Sharavathi and Aghanashini rivers are the lifeline of Uttara Kannada district. But, the government is planning to link these rivers with other east flowing rivers in the state to feed other regions. The plan of the government is being condemned by many organisations, experts and locals in the coastal district.

Many organisations, scientists and like-minded people are holding awareness meetings against the plan of the government in Kumta, Honnavar and Joida. They have decided to oppose the

government's decision to divert west flowing rivers, which will affect the life of coastal region and environment. Even people in Joida have given a call for Joida bandh on July 8.

There is a proposal by a few politicians to lift a few tmcs of water from Kali river to Malaprabha and Ghataprabha rivers which will help people in Bagalkot, Belagavi and other districts. People in Joida are not getting drinking water from Kali river and even the state government is not worried to provide river water to them. Therefore they have called for Joida bandh to oppose lifting of Kali water to other rivers.

Dr MD Subash Chandran, a scientist from IISC, who participated in a meeting in Kumta, said diverting rivers will reduce water flow into the sea which will affect coastal and estuarine ecology. Seawater will gush into the river if the flow is reduced and salinity will increase in water bodies of the coastal region. Fields will get damaged if salinity increases, besides affecting fishing, he said.

Many experts opined that for the last one decade, rainfall has been decreasing in the Western Ghats. As a result, the quantity of water in rivers has drastically reduced. Ironically, coastal and Malnad regions are facing acute shortage of drinking water during summer months.