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Hydel project across Gundia river finds no favour with expert panel

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The controversial Gundia hydro-electric project, which aims to generate 200 mw of power daily, is in for more opposition. A study - Biodiversity, Ecology and Socio-Economic Aspects of Gundia River Basin - has objected to the state government's pet project proposed to be built across the Gundia river.

Terming the project short-sighted, the study said that it was "ecologically unsound and economically unviable".

The report is a setback to the project that had been hyped to address the state's power crises.

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The report reaffirmed the 'hottest hotspot' status of Gundia river basin due to the presence of four critically endangered species - slender loris, grey-headed bulbul, elephants and Malabar pied hornbill - and 14 endangered animal species. The Gundia river is an important tributary of Kumaradhara river, originating in Sakleshpur taluk, Hassan.

The study was conducted by the Energy and Wetland Research Group, Centre for Ecological Sciences, Indian Institute of Science and the CES Technical Report 122 on an invitation from Prof Madhav Gadgil, chairman, Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel.

Gadgil is slated to visit the site along with a team of experts before presenting his suggestions. "Our role is to give inputs. We are looking at the protection of Western Ghats. We will take a comprehensive look at the project," said Gadgil.

He added that apart from Gundia, the team will also examine other projects proposed in the Western Ghats.

"A conclusion of all the visits will be made by March 2011," said Gadgil. A meeting of the Western Ghats Task Force was held on Wednesday wherein suggestions were made to map the ecological sensitive areas for conservation.

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Credit: Bosky Khanna

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