

OPPOSITION TO YETTINAHOLE PROJECT INTENSIFIES AS ORGANISATIONS UNITE

By Sridhar Vivan & Deepthi Sanjiv, Bangalore Mirror Bureau | Oct 3, 2015, 04.00 AM IST



Form federation to ensure initiative, aimed at diverting floodwater from west to east, is scrapped

The water wars are slowly raising their head in Karnataka. The agitation against the Yettinahole project, meant to provide water to parched areas in southern parts of the state, is intensifying. Meanwhile, in Mangaluru, the newly floated Nethravathi Nadi Samrakshana Okkoota (NNSO), a federation of various likeminded organisations, has invited a team of activists from Kolar and Chikkaballapur region to visit the spot.

Speaking to reporters in Mangaluru on Friday, activist Shashidhar Shetty said, "A team of activists from Chikkaballapur will visit Yettinahole project region soon to understand the ground situation. Let them conduct a study and realise for themselves the manner in which they have been fooled by the government. This will force the people of parched districts to understand the project and join us in our protest and demand suitable alternative to provide drinking water for them. Yettinahole project is a sham," Shetty said.

The scheme for diversion of flood water from Sakleshpur (west) to Kolar, Cikkaballapur (east) is also known as Yettinahole project. In its first phase as per the project report, the Karnataka Neeravari Nigama Limited plans to draw 24.01 TMC of water to cater to the needs of people in Tumakuru, Bengaluru Rural, Kolar and Chikballapur districts. The project will have eight weirs at various places in Yettinahole.

Sahyadri Sanchaya convener Dinesh Holla said many organisations in Chikkaballapur have expressed their willingness to join the fight against the Yettinahole project.

A study by Ramachandra TV, Vinay S and Bharath H Aithal from the Energy and Wetlands Research Group, Centre for Ecological Sciences, Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru, on environmental flow assessment in Yettinahole states that Yettinahole catchments receive annual rainfall of 3,000 - 4,500 mm, according to the department of Statistics. The total runoff yield from the catchments is estimated to be 9.55 TMC in contrast to the estimated 24 TMC in the DPR (detailed Project report prepared by Karnataka Neeravari Nigam Limited) or 22 TMC (as per Karnataka Power Corporation). The inflated values of water yield in the catchment would only lead to the failure of water diversion scheme similar to Telugu Ganga Project. Implementation of the project would affect the livelihood of dependent population (current users in Yettinahole catchment) and would not benefit the likely beneficiaries in arid regions of Karnataka. Strangely, none of the elected representatives from Dakshina Kannada claimed that they have read the report.

The Okkoota on Friday announced that it has decided to intensify its protest. They will hold a rasta roko - jail bharo protest against Yettinahole project in Mangaluru on October 15 from 10.30am. Thousands of people from Dakshina Kannada, Udupi and Sakleshpur are expected to take part in the protest that will be held at Mahaveer Circle (Pumpwell Circle). The circle is the intersection of Mangaluru - Bengaluru and Maharashtra - Kerala national highways.

Members of over 100 organisations that oppose Yettinahole project are expected to take part in the protest.

According to Dr Niranjana Rai, general convener of the Okkoota, a meeting will be held at Roshni Nilaya on October 4 to discuss the fight against Yettinahole project.

Dr Rai said all gram panchayats in Dakshina Kannada district have been requested to adopt a resolution opposing the project. While 43 gram panchayats have already adopted the resolution, the remaining gram panchayats and taluk panchayats have been requested to join the movement, and in this way send a strong message to the government.

Mangalore Bar Association president S P Chengappa said the association is willing to constitute a team of experts so that the legal fight moves in the right direction. "We will commence taluk-level awareness meetings for advocates soon," he said.

Several organisations came forward with innovative campaigns. Some have offered to provide banners, so that it can be put up on private land. Alwyn Noronha, an activist, said about 50 office-bearers of various organisations would meet and they would plan a door-to-door campaign. Plans are also to have tableaux during the dasara celebrations opposing the project. In addition, people would be provided with jaggery and water to create awareness about the project.

Violation by government

Dr Niranjana Rai said the Karnataka Neeravari Nigam Limited (KNNL) has violated the undertaking given to National Green Tribunal, Southern Zone. "KNNL, in an undertaking, had agreed to stop all works related to Yettinahole project till the hearing is complete. However, the contractors have been carrying out various construction works at the site which is a violation of rules by the government," Rai said.

BJP to hold padayatra

Strangely, the BJP, forgetting that former chief minister D V Sadananda Gowda was also responsible for the implementation of the project, has decided to hold a padayatra against Yettinahole project. Dakshina Kannada MP Nalin Kumar Kateel and other leaders will lead the padayatra that will commence from Mangaluru on October 10 and reach Yettinahole on October 13.

Cycle rally

Cyclists from Mangaluru have decided to join the ongoing protests against the Yettinahole water diversion project by holding a mega cycle ride on October 4. The Save Netravathi Ride, expected to be attended by at least 60 cyclists from Mangaluru, would be flagged off by environmentalist Dinesh Holla in front of the City Corporation office at 6 am on October 4. The ride would pass through PVS Junction, Bunts Hostel, Bendore, Kankanady Circle, Pumpwell Circle, Netravathi Bridge and Ullal before stopping at Netravathi's confluence with Arabian Sea. Members of Mangalore Cycling Club and Mangalore Bicycle Club, both informal associations of enthusiastic cyclists together having over 500 members, have joined their hands for the ride.

We want Yettinahole, say protesters from drought-hit districts

Scores of volunteers took out a protest in Bengaluru on Friday demanding a comprehensive river plan to feed the parched areas of Bengaluru rural, Chikballapur and Kolar districts. The agitators took out a protest rally from Mahatma Gandhi statue near Anand Rao Circle and tried to picket the Chief Minister's office. However, they were stopped by the police and a few were arrested. Later, they met minister Roshan Baig and said there were around 3,500 lakes in the drought-affected districts which needed to be filled up with west flowing rivers, Cauvery, Tunga Bhadra or Krishna. As it has been back-to-back droughts in the peripheral districts of Bengaluru, the water table has depleted considerably and government should act fast, said Shivaprakash Reddy, who was leading the protest.

GALLERIES