



Greens take up cudgels against Tadadi project

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Bengaluru, DHNS: The Centre for Ecological Sciences (CES) of the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) on Sunday wrote a letter to Ujjwal Kumar Ghosh, the Uttara Kannada Deputy Commissioner, opposing the construction of a port at Tadadi, Aghanashini estuary.

The letter comes a day ahead of the public hearing to be held by the government, with regard to the project, at Aghanashini.

The letter says that the State government should also undertake a carrying capacity study of the region, before giving approval for the project to be executed by the Centre.

"Aghanashini provides 92.93 per cent of the income from estuary fisheries. The annual revenue is Rs 412 crore and 94.64 per cent of this comes from aquaculture activities in the estuarine belt. This is a highly eco-sensitive region," Prof T V Ramachandra of the CES told Deccan Herald.

A copy of the letter written, which is with Deccan Herald, refers to the carrying capacity assessment report of Uttara Kannada district prepared by IISc and Karnataka Biodiversity Board and submitted to the State government in 2009.

According to Ramachandra, the annual income from Aghanashini estuary fisheries is Rs 12.07 crore. The Aghanashini estuarine villages have bivalve collection with a total income of Rs 5.7 crore. Total revenue from shell fish collection is Rs 7.35 crore, comprising of bivalves, clams, oysters, mussels and other molluscs. About 186 hectares of the estuary is used for bivalve harvesting. The annual income per hectare from bivalve harvesting is Rs 3.06 lakh. Shell mining is done on 100 hectares per year, of the total area of 809.73 hectares. The shell mined is worth Rs 7.65 lakh per hectare per year.

The proposed port site, which is with the Karnataka Industrial Areas Development Board falls under Coastal Regulation Zone-1. Mangroves in this region act as a shield against cyclones, tsunami. The Ministry of Environment and Forests has emphasised on mangrove protection. Another threat to the estuary is from the proposed ultra mega power plant project. Environmentalists have joined hands with residents in Aghanashini who oppose the project. They have also opposed the 'Feasibility Study for Development of Port at Tadadi' report prepared in 2009 by the Infrastructure Development Corporation (Karnataka) Limited, based on which the government is going ahead with the project, stating that it is industry friendly.

Suresh Heblkar, Eco-Watch, too had written to the deputy commissioner, opposing the port project. The Aghanashini river festival was organised by Eco-Watch in February 2014 and during its inauguration, Tourism Minister R V Deshpande had assured locals that there will be no commercialisation and the area will be well protected.

"Cementing and commercialising will spoil the 99-million-year-old biodiversity. There is the Karwar port, around 50 km from Tadadi, from where mines, minerals and granite are exported. The Matkal port can be used too. Apart from the estuary, Kaggai rice and paddy are grown here. These are unique to the region which will be lost if the project is implemented," Heblkar said.