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Spare Yettinahole, revive lakes, say ecologists

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Work on Yettinahole project is in progress near Sakleshpur

Bengaluru: Protesters who are opposed to the diversion of water from Western Ghats are planning to file another case in the National Green Tribunal as there are number of loopholes in the allocation of money for the project work. A whopping Rs 1,300 crore is believed to have been spent on purchasing thousands of 14-foot tall pipelines which now lie at Hebbasala in Hassan district.

Protesters are questioning how such a large scale contract was given to a company without calling for global tenders. "We are demanding a thorough probe into the work contracts that are being given for Yettinahole project. The Congress leader from Mangaluru Mr Janardhan Poojary has also demanded a CID probe into the irregularities. Unless the project benefits a few powerful individuals connected with the government, it is not possible to take up the project which has been termed disastrous by the scientists," said Mr Dinesh Holla of Sayhadri Samrakshana Sanchay organisation.

Ecologists are now suggesting that the government look at the alternatives instead of spoiling the sensitive Western Ghats. Dr T V Ramachandra from the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) who

had reported in 2014 that there is not more than 10 tmc water in Ettinahole (water in the all four proposed tributaries put together), said that instead of spending Rs 14,000 crore on diverting Yettinahole river, the government can review the lakes in Kolar and Chikkaballapur districts for less than Rs 400 crore.

“Kolar was once called as Finland of India as it had more than 4,000 lakes. Most of these lakes were encroached upon and some were degraded by illegal sand mining. Who is responsible for such an ecological degradation that the district which had so many lakes has no water now?” questioned Dr Ramachandra.

Ecologists also fear that the government which may fail to draw the estimated water of 24 tmc from Yettinahole, may include Kumaradhara and Netravati rivers in the future. “If you look at the first report by the late G. S. Paramashivaiah, the project was about diverting Netravati river. When the same was opposed by the people in Karavali, the government restricted the project for drawing water from the tributaries of Netravati.

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