

# ‘Govt hiding facts on Yettinahole’

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**Mangalore:** Activists opposed to the Yettinahole river diversion project say that Karnataka Neeravari Nigam Limited (KNNL), the government agency implementing the scheme, was promoting it in a “totally non-transparent manner”.

According to the activists of 14 different NGOs working in the field of conservation, the project had escaped important aspects such as public appraisal, environmental impact and environmental clearance and monitoring, and environmental management.

Yettinahole diversion project is being planned in the Western Ghats and Eastern Plains of Karnataka by KNNL purportedly as a drinking water supply scheme to supply 24 TMC water to Kolar and Chikkaballapur Districts. The scheme involves eight dams in



Western Ghat forests, 250-km long canals, 80-km and 50-km long raising mains, a reservoir that will submerge 1,200 hectares of land and two villages, and more importantly, will require a huge 370 MW of electricity to pump the water.

The project has escaped environmental impact assessment, environmental management plan, public hearing, environment clearance and environmental monitoring, in short appraisal by the Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC) of

the MoEF on River Valley Projects, following misleading claims by KNNL that it was a drinking water scheme, activists say.

The EAC expressed its inability to appraise this scheme since, as per current EIA notification of September 2006, drinking water schemes do not require appraisal, which by itself is wrong and shows the poor environmental governance in India, activist argue.

The import of the EAC's conclusion means that a

scheme with huge socio-ecological costs will not need even an Environmental Impact Assessment.

“The project will be disastrous for the last remaining biodiversity rich forests of Western Ghats, and in any case it is not the most optimum or the least cost-effective solution for the water problem of Kolar and Chikkaballapur districts,” stated a joint statement issued by subject matter experts Ullas Karanth, director, Centre for Wildlife Studies (also the former non-official member of the Forest Advisory Committee, MoEF), Praveen Bhargav from Wildlife First and former member of the Standing Committee of the National Board for Wildlife, TV Ramchandra from Indian Institute of OSciences, noted rainwater harvesting expert Vishwanath Srikataiah and others.