

# Kolar, Chikkaballapur together have 130 tmcft of water: IISc

Team finds mismanagement of water sources and forest areas in Kolar region; suggests consultative mechanism to tackle water issues

## Yettinahole: NGT issues notice to government

Mangaluru: The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has ordered notices to the state government and the Forest Department over diverting 13.93 hectares of forest land for Yettinahole river diversion project. The bench ordered notices during the admission of activist K N Somashekar's appeal on Tuesday. Somashekar had filed an appeal challenging the diversion of the forest land. The bench observed that the respondents will be held responsible if trees in the forest area are cut illegally.

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WHEN wetland experts from the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) raised their concerns over the Yettinahole water diversion project, several farmers from Kolar region had protested. They had said that scientists do not know the ground realities and are not considering the deficient rainfall that the region has been witnessing for the last few years.

Just a few months after the protests, the IISc team took up an extensive water table study in Kolar region (covering Kolar and Chikkaballapur districts) and the study findings are an eyeopener. As-

essment of water yield (rain, lakes, etc) shows that a total of 129.7 tmcft of water per year is available in Kolar region (Kolar district - 63.8 tmcft, Chikkaballapur district - 65.9 tmcft), which highlights that there is sufficient water available in the region, provided water harvesting strategies are adopted.

The study says Kolar receives an average of 690 mm rainfall annually (figures are based on the analysis of 116-year data -- 1901-2015) obtained from Indian Meteorological Department. The trend has remained similar for many years.

"All that is required is sensible planning of natural resources. Land use analyses show that the forest

cover in the district is 6.5 per cent and waste land is about 38 per cent. The extent of wasteland in the district highlights the mismanagement of land resources in the region," said Professor T V Ramachandra, head of Energy and Wetland Research Group, IISc.

"The government should initiate a consultative mechanism through brainstorming sessions involving all stake holders -- unbiased subject experts, critics, public (likely to be affected) and officials. This has to be done before approving any large-scale projects, which is likely to threaten people's livelihood with the serious economic and environmental implications. The so-called pub-

lic meetings before the projects are of no use. Why should ₹1,200 crore be spent to divert a river from the Ghats to feed areas that are located miles away?" he said.

"Recent proposals by overenthusiastic consultant-engineer-contractor nexus have come out with claims of 500 tmcft in Netravati river while the actual water yield in Netravati is lower than 238 tmcft. The proposal aims to waste public money and has completely ignored low-cost sustainable options. We need interventions that are environmentally sound, technically feasible and also economically attractive compared to the proposed large-scale projects such as river diversion," he said.

## Study Recommendations

- Decentralised rainwater harvesting through lakes
- Rejuvenation of existing lakes through desiltation and integrated watershed treatment and management
- Effective soil and water conservation through watershed management by planting native saplings and grass in the catchment, while ensuring at least 30-40% native green cover in each lake catchment
- Phasing out monoculture plantation of exotic species like eucalyptus
- Incentives to farmers growing crops in semi-arid region
- Restrictions on water-intensive crops in the region