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# Rs 13,000 crore Yettinahole diversion project hits yet another hurdle

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BENGALURU: While Karnataka is involved in a legal battle with Tamil Nadu over sharing of Cauvery water, another shock awaits the state, this time from the Yettinahole diversion project.

A fresh study conducted by a team of the Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru headed by TV Ramachandra concluded that the Rs 13,000-crore project doesn't hold much water to quench the thirst of the parched districts of Kolar, Chikkaballapur, Tumakuru and Bengaluru Rural.

Calling it "an ecological blunder", the study by Ramachandra, Barat Aithal, and S Vinay through spot visits and using the latest technology, including remote sensors, found that Yettinahole can generate only 9.5 tmcft of

water against 24 tmcft as claimed by the state government which is awaiting environmental clearance to go ahead with project.

The study, Environment Flow Assessment in a Lotic Ecosystem of Central Western Ghat, was published in international journal Hydrology Current Research. The Karnataka government, some experts and leaders seeking project implementation had slammed its earlier findings saying it lacked conviction.

The government has already spent Rs 1,690 crore for the project and set up a dedicated authority to oversee its implementation. The project is now temporarily halted following a green bench order besides widespread protests in the coastal belt as the Yettinahole project aims at diverting 24.01 tmcft of water from Nethravathi's tributaries.

The report highlights alterations in the catchment integrity (land cover) or water diversions would result in variation in the natural flow, affecting the biodiversity of the riparian and aquatic habitats, and more importantly, people's livelihood dependent on fishing in the downstream.

The sustainable option to meet water requirements in arid regions, the study points out, would be to rejuvenate existing lakes and ponds, reuse treated waste water, recharge groundwater resources, plant native species of plants in the catchment areas and implement soil and water conservation through microwatershed approaches.

Sources in the water resources department, however, said they will not give much credence to the report but wait for the one by an expert committee set up by the government. On June 9, 2016, the government formed a panel under the chairmanship of Central Water Commission former chairman A K Bajaj. "The committee met just once but nothing much has happened after that. I partly endorse the views of the fresh report prepared by IISc scientists that Yettinahole cannot generate 24 tmcft of water and it greatly affects the ecology," said environmentalist Yellappa Reddy .