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THE TIMES OF INDIA

'No environment clearance to cut trees of Western Ghats for Yettinahole project'

TNN | Dec 30, 2016, 07:11 PM IST



MANGALURU: The ministry of environment and forest has not given clearance to cut trees in Western Ghats for Yettinahole project, said the minister of state (independent charge) for environment, forest and Change Anil Madhav Dave.

He was speaking to reporters on the sidelines of Lake 2016 international conference on "Conservation and Sustainable Development of Ecologically Sensitive Regions in Western Ghats" organised by Wetlands Research Group, Centre for Ecological Sciences, Institute of Science, Bangalore, Alva's College Moodbidri and Institute of Engineering and Technology in Moodbidri on Friday.

Brushing aside media reports that over 5,000 trees will be axed for the project, the minister said that no such clearance has been given by the ministry.

"The Yettinahole project is not only related to Nethravati river itself. In fact, we are supposed to conserve all the rivers in the Western Ghats. Mangaluru is concerned, Nethravati is almost a lifeline with a strong emotional relation with it. I have come to know that unnecessary activities are going on. We are going to review that. No permission has been given (to cut over 5,000 trees for the Yettinahole project). I have checked my ministry. Not a single letter is there," Dave asserted.

To a query regarding work being continued at Yettinahole, the minister said that is a different thing that the work is being done by the state government. "Central government has not given a single letter or single line in favour of the project. Even though we are living in the federal structure. If anything wrong, we will bring it to the knowledge of the chief minister of the state. The matter was brought to my notice recently, I will review it, but National Green Tribunal (NGT) is there in the project. The matter is almost sub-judice and let the NGT decide (on stopping the project). There is no permission from the central government for the state to cut tree. Hence, I will look everything and act according to it. Make sure that nothing goes wrong with Nethravati. Protection of Nethravati is the ultimate goal," Dave said.

Earlier, during the programme, T V Ramachandra from Centre for Ecological Sciences, IISc Bengaluru, had pointed out in his keynote address that the water availability in Yettinahole project is not 24.01 TMC as projected by the state government. "The water availability in Yettinahole is only 9.5 TMC, 6 TMC is required for people of Dakshina Kannada for drinking and other purposes. Meanwhile, 2 TMC is required for aqua life and only 0.85 TMC will be available to transfer. It is economically not viable to transfer such a small quantity of water by spending Rs 13,000 crore," he said.