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## IISc scientist turns crusader, writes to PM on 'disastrous' Tadadi port project

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**Subash Chandra NS** | Updated on: 5 May 2017 11:30 PM



**Bengaluru:** Upset over the state government's decision to construct a port at the ecologically sensitive Tadadi region, a scientist from the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) has written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to intervene and stop the project.

With repeated requests to the state government to stop the Tadadi port project going in vain, Dr TV Ramachandra, Senior Scientist and Co-ordinator, Energy and Wetlands Research Group (EWRC), Centre for Ecological Sciences (CES), IISc, has now written to the PM.



In two emails, dated March 17, 2017 and March 24, 2017, which have been accessed by Bfirst.in, the hydrologist says there would be serious social, economically, and environmental consequences if the port is allowed to be built.

Reminding PM Modi about his talk in March, 2017, which was attended by the scientist, Dr. Ramachandra in his emails says he wants to avert a likely disaster in an ancient river due to the "senseless decision makers in Karnataka".

"On behalf of people of my district, my colleagues and other stakeholders, I seek your intervention to stop the proposed port project at Tadadi, Kumta taluk, Uttara Kannada district. I am sure as saviour of 'Ma Ganga' you would do the needful immediately," says the scientist.

Comparing Aghanashini with river Ganga, Dr Ramachandra points out that similar to Ganga, Aghanashini is also known as 'papa nashini' and is one of the oldest rivers in the world. "It is one of the ancient rivers, about 90 million years (older than River Ganga). The estuary, endowed with potentially rich fishery is an abode of mangroves and marsh vegetation, with productive mudflats and bivalve beds and nurseries for marine fishes and a live museum of birds, both endemic and migratory," says the scientist.

"The estuarine rice fields have been here till the recent years centres of production of rare salinity tolerant rice strains cultivated in a traditional manner by thousands of farmers here. The same fields are later on used for capture of fishes and crustaceans, especially shrimps of immense value in international market," he says and adds, "The project will spell a disaster to over 6000 families, who are dependent on the estuary for their livelihood (fish, bivalves, sand, salt) of Rs 11 lakhs per hectare. Construction of a port at the ecologically sensitive Tadadi would deprive these families their livelihood and right to live."

Further explaining about its biodiversity significance, the scientist says that the estuary is rich in mangroves (14 species), mangrove associates (about 40 species), bird fauna (over 120 species), fish (almost 80 species), edible bivalves- including oysters (8 species), crabs (at least 30 species) and so on.

"Due to the immense biodiversity, livelihood importance and high heritage value (for the local communities), Aghanashini estuary was aptly considered by Karnataka Biodiversity Board to be declared as Aghanashini Biodiversity Heritage Site, as per Biodiversity Act-2002," the email says.

The letter also points to its historical significance. Dr Ramachandra says, "Apart from it being known as Sanikatta salt movement during Mahatma Gandhi's famous Dandi March, it also has several inscriptions and Pagori, which merits conservation and protection from any senseless developmental activities."

Mentioning that there are already two existing ports at Belekeri and Karwar, the email alleges that Tadadi

port is being planned just to "gobble up" land resources. "Insensitive and colonial mindset bureaucracy is ruthless and have resorted illegal means to threaten local people (through muscle power and intimidation)," he says.

### **The violation**

Mentioning that the region is prone to erosion, the scientific community says that such places as per norms should be avoided for construction of ports and harbours.

"Port structures etc are to be avoided at least 5 km on either side of eroding locations. Location of ports should be avoided around 10 km on either of ecologically sensitive areas, estuaries and lagoons of biodiversity importance as accretion/erosion may lead to changes in morpho-dynamics of the inlets causing reduction in tidal water flow in water body," the email says.

### **Appeal**

The scientist says that the Karnataka Industrial Development Board (KIADB), which acquired the land from farmers through coercion, should return the land to owners as per the Land Acquisition Act since the land was not used for intended purpose.

"Sir, you were chosen by us to eradicate corruption and injustice to downtrodden sections of the society. Request you to 'DROP THIS SENSELESS PROJECT' and reconstitute the Environment Appraisal Committee at the Ministry. The present appraisal committed appears to lack competence as they have given clearance without understanding the imminent implications of ecologically disastrous port at Tadadi in Karnataka," states the email.

"Sir, in case you need additional details, we would be happy to provide you and discuss with you. Look forward for an effective sensible action from you. Please intervene immediately to stop looting of natural resources and an attempt to deprive local community right to live," says Dr. Ramachandra.

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