

[Back](#)

[New Delhi](#)

Decision on Gundia power project only after panel report, says Centre

Sujay Mehdudia

Jairam Ramesh says clearance has not been given for the controversial project



UNDER THREAT:This picturesque valley could vanish once the Gundia hydro project is taken up at Hongadahalli in Sakleshpur taluk of Hassan district.

NEW DELHI: Asserting that final approval has not been given to the controversial 200 MW Gundia hydel power plant in Karnataka, the Centre on Tuesday said any decision would be taken only after the Western Ghats Ecology Expert Committee, headed by Madhav Gadgil, submits its report.

Reacting to reports that Gundia power project had been given the go-ahead after the Karnataka Government agreed to drop Hongadhala dam from the project reducing land requirement for its construction, Union Environment and Forests Minister Jairam Ramesh said no such green signal had been given to the Gundia power project.

“The Environmental Appraisal Committee (EAC) of the Ministry has recommended this project to be cleared subject to various conditions. However, the EAC has said the Ministry might consider the recommendation of the expert panel headed by Mr. Gadgil before giving environmental clearance to the project,” he added.

The project has been hanging fire for the last few years following protests from environmentalists who alleged that it would threaten the fragile ecology of the Western Ghats.

Mr. Jairam said the expert panel would look at the development and environmental issues in the context of biodiversity in the Western Ghats. The Ministry would take a final view on the project only after the panel submits its report.

Under the first phase of the project, Karnataka Power Corporation Ltd (KPCL) has proposed building a major dam between the Hongadahalla and the Betta Kumari rivers. Also, there was a plan to build barrages across the Hongadahalla, the Keeri and the Yethhinahalla to feed the hydro power plant at Horibetta.

Sub-group's visit

However, a sub-group constituted by the EAC which visited the proposed site objected to the project, saying that major portion of the proposed land as forest cover of moderate density appeared to be secondary growth forests.

While the KPCL claimed that revenue land or private land would be submerged for construction of Hongadhalla storage dam, the sub-group called for its deletion and sought a fresh land use breakup of the total land required at each site from the state government.

Besides, solid waste from the labour camps should be collected in bins and no dumping of solid waste would be allowed near any water body or a stream to exclude any health hazard problem to the community, the panel said.

© Copyright 2000 - 2009 The Hindu