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'Government had given nod for 136 mini hydel projects to generate 931 MW power'

Don't allow any projects in Western Ghats: NGOs

Mangalore: Sep 23, DHNS:

Nagarika Seva Trust and Dakshina Kannada Parisarasaktara Okkuta urged the Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel led by Madhav Gadgil not to recommend Gundia power project as well as other mini hydel power projects in the Western Ghat region.

In a memorandum submitted to the Madhav Gadgil during his visit to Gundia, the NGOs said that the government had given nod for the setting up of 136 mini hydel power projects to generate 931 mega watt electricity in Dakshina Kannada, Udupi, Uttara Kannada, Kodagu, Shimoga and Chikmagalur region. The power distribution lines of these projects will destroy a large area of forests in the Western Ghats, they said. The memorandum said: "No development projects in Western Ghat region should be allowed as the development works have already put lot of pressure on the sensitive Western Ghats."

Referring to the NEERI report submitted to the Supreme Court, the NGOs stated that desulphurisation plant will affect the Western Ghat region. Referring to the move on river Nethravathi diversion project and joining of other rivers of Western Ghat (Saubhagya Sanjeevini project), the memorandum said it will considerably damage the entire Western Ghat region. "The project is totally unscientific and against nature. A special committee comprising environment experts should be constituted to look into the project proposal and the project should be put on hold," the memorandum urged.

The effluents and gases from projects such as the SEZ and the proposed Petroleum, Chemicals, and Petrochemicals Investment Region (PCPIR), would gradually burn the Western Ghats. Till a comprehensive study on the carrying capacity of the region is done, the 5,000-acre MSEZ and 74,000-acre PCPIR should be put on hold, they demanded.

Stating that there was no shortage of power in Karnataka, the memorandum said that whatever shortage was there, could be met by running the existing power plants efficiently.

The area under forest is less than 19 per cent in Karnataka. Principal Chief Conservator of Forests had said that though there was target to cover 33 per cent under forest region, the progress in reaching the target is not satisfactory. By handing over forest land to the development works, the government is going against the Forest Act. Hence, no land should be given for Gundia power project, it added.
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Tel: +91 (80) 25880000 Fax No. +91 (80) 25880523