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Gundia Hydro Electric Project: Panel may recommend sustainable development

'Energy not at the cost of ecology'

Ronald Anil Fernandes, Hongadahalla (Gundia Project site, Hassan dist), DHNS :

There is a need for energy security, but not at the cost of ecology and environment, said Dr G V Subramanyan, Advisor to Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF), after visiting Horibetta, Bettakumeri and Hongadahalla, the proposed sites for Gundia Hydro Electric Project (GHEP) to be constructed in Hassan and Dakshina Kannada districts, on Thursday.



In fact, the team's visit is the first in the series of visits to study Western Ghats region. Terming the beauty of Western Ghats as unparalleled, he stressed the need to maintain balance between energy security and ecology.

Explaining the objective of Western Ghats Ecology Panel constituted by the MoEF to study the Western Ghats, he said the expert panel would assess, study and

recommend for rejuvenation and to ensure sustainable development of Western Ghat region. The study would also help to demarcate the area to be notified as ecology-sensitive area based on scientific assessment.

March 2011 deadline

Speaking on the occasion, Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel Chairman Prof Madhav Gadgil clarified that the panel is only an advisory body to make recommendations and a final decision on the Gundia project will be taken by the MoEF. The panel will submit its report by March 2011, he said.

Terming the proposed site of Gundia project as the "last remains of the original Western Ghats rain forest," Prof M D Subash Chandran, a scientist from IISc and Member of Biodiversity Board of Karnataka, said the project passes through very rich endemic land, where endangered animal species move around freely and the hill tops and many slopes having luxurious grass lands favourable for wildlife.

Interestingly, the panel members, during their very short visit to the dense forests in Horibetta, where the 7.8 km underground headrace tunnel and 3.1 km tailrace tunnel will pass through about 100 metres underground, could find several rare species of trees.

They include Mesua Ferrea (Naga Sampige), Calophyllum Aomestosum (Surhonne), Elueocarpus (Rudraksha), Myristieg (Rampatri), Tree ferns (Cyathea), Pinanga dicksonii (Kadadakke), Dipterocarpus (Gurjan) and many more.

Other experts in the team included panel member Vidya Nayak, Niraj Kathri and Amith (both deputy directors, MoEF), Bio Fuel Task Force Chairman Y B Ramakrishna, Western Ghats Task Force member Ranjan Rao Yaradoor and IISc Scientist Dr Harish Bhat.

Expert panel

It may be recalled that the MoEF had referred the Gundia hydel power project to the Western Ghats Ecology Expert panel, under the chairmanship of Prof Madhav Gadgil to look at the development and environmental issues in the



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context of the ecologically-significant, bio-diversity-rich and environmentally-sensitive Western Ghats region, on July 13, 2010.



The Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC) has considered this project thrice since 2008 and in its June 30, 2010 meeting in Delhi, finally decided to scrap the Hongadahalla dam from the scheme. Now, the total land requirement has decreased from 1,041 ha to 478.96 ha (private land 71.98 ha, forest land 113.22 ha and revenue land including river course is 293.76 ha).

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By: Pramod V Murthy
 On: 17 Sep 2010 11:41 am

the western ghats is not only home for many endemic species of plants and animals but is a very significant ghats which brings timely rains and a huge supplier of oxygen. Also our gov must be aware that if the rain forests acts as a barrier for many hurricanes and also if one tries to divert a river or a stream which is running froms millions of years, there could be a disaster which will result in the massive floods. We humans are trying to dig our own graves by trying to control the beautiful and very peaceful mother nature. Most importantly, our gov should turn their attention on the wealthy industrialists(or power thieves) who are enjoying enormous amounts of energy by bribing the officials. and i dont understand why we are not trying to upgarde our other power stations which are already running. Hope the cost of bringing in the best technology to the existing power plants does not cost more than starting a new project which by all means takes more than a decade to kick OFF and a decade more to start production and by that time the power demand will be more than 10 times the current demand. In my opinion: 1. modernize all the outdated machineries at the existing power plants. 2. Conduct a strict power audits. (OH GOD Why this is not happening?) and cancel all the licenses of the accused. 3. water recycling is very important. 4. At micro scale, all the residential and industries should be mandatorily be a sustainable. 5. The glittering ads and marriages. Pls stop!

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