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Gundia power project needs review

Special Correspondent

Jairam Ramesh raises environmental issue with Karnataka Chief Minister

1,900 acres of forest will be drowned

Forestry clearance yet to be obtained

NEW DELHI: Asserting that environmental and forestry clearance should not be taken for granted, Minister of State for Environment and Forests Jairam Ramesh has written to Karnataka Chief Minister B. S. Yeddyurappa that the 400 MW Gundia hydel power project posed serious environmental concerns and a review of the entire project needs to be done without delay.

In a letter to the Chief Minister, the Minister has stated that he had got information and representations from non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society organisations that the proposed 2 x 200 MW Gundia hydel power project of the Karnataka Power Corporation (KPC) in Hasan district was going to drown almost 1,900 acres of thick forest in the already endangered Western Ghats along with all its fauna. "This is something that both Karnataka and our country can ill-afford," he states. Further, he said he had been informed that the foundation for the project was laid on May 26 even though environmental and forestry clearance from the Union Government had not been obtained. "I am sure you will agree with me that it would not be proper to have the foundation stone laid in anticipation of obtaining environmental and forestry clearance. I do not think that environmental clearance should not be taken for granted any longer. We have to go through the process as laid down by law and we should not consider this process a routine formality," he further adds.

"I am well aware of the urgent need to increase Karnataka's power generating capacity but I am sure you will agree with me that this should be at the cost of ecological security and biodiversity conservation. A balance between the two must be struck. This I know is Karnataka's own priority," the letter concludes.

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