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Gundia power project opposed

Staff Correspondent

Samithis decide not to allow KPCL to carry out detailed survey

- *Project detrimental to eco-sensitive Western Ghats*
 - *It will displace people and also endangered species*
 - *KPCL sources say project is economically viable*
 - *They say vital information has been shared with the concerned*
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HASSAN: The 300-MW Gundia High Head Scheme (GHHS) proposed by Karnataka Power Corporation Limited (KPCL) in Hongadahalli village of Sakleshpur taluk in Hassan district has run into rough weather with the Malenadu Janapara Horata Samithi (MJHS) deciding against allowing KPCL authorities to conduct a "detailed survey" to implement the hydel scheme.

Addressing presspersons here on Friday, the samithi leaders made it clear that they will not allow KPCL authorities to carry out the survey.

They, however, said that they would adopt non-violent methods to stop the authorities from conducting the survey.

The samithi president, Kishor Kumar, said they are opposing the proposed scheme as it is detrimental to the eco-sensitive Western Ghats.

It will displace a large number of people and affect several endemic and yet to be discovered species.

He also said KPCL authorities have failed to share vital information on the impact of the project.

Pressure

The convenor of the Jeevapara Janapara Horata Samanvaya Samithi, Dharmesh, said the region, which is rich in biodiversity, is under great pressure from roads, highways and railway tracks and the implementation of hydel scheme will further harm the eco-system.

The leaders have said despite repeated requests KPCL, which carried out "quick" surveys and "impact assessments" to ensure "minimum" ecological loss" in the region, is refusing to divulge information on economic and social costs of the project.

Economically viable

Nevertheless, sources in KPCL claim that the scheme is economically viable because of the high

head, high power potential, heavy rain in the area and minimum submersion of land.

The sources also said the corporation has shared whatever information available on the matter with those concerned.

There is nothing for the corporation to hide and KPCL made a video presentation on the proposed project at a public meeting in Sakleshpur recently.

The corporation has done a pre-feasibility study on the proposed project and it has not carried out any other survey.

The corporation is willing to share any information on the project in future also.

Doubts over intention

Disputing the contentions of the corporation, the leaders alleged that though the project is aimed at generating 300 MW initially, KPCL intends to expand the project in three phases to generate 600 MW, by making use of the Kumaradhara and the Kempuhole rivers.

Though KPCL has provided pre-feasibility report, it is not an "authenticated" document.

Though the document claims that the project will submerge 431 hectares of virgin forests and 256 hectares of agriculture land in the backwaters, it has not considered damage to forestland while drawing transmission lines.

According to experts who have studied the pre-feasibility reports, KPCL has left out many important aspects while making the study. Though the Sakleshpur MLA, H.M. Vishwanath, sought an official copy from KPCL, the authorities failed to oblige him.

The MLC, B.R. Gurudev, who has opposed the project, has extended support to the Malenadu Janapara Horata Samithi, they said.

The president of the Hassan District Science Forum, M.C. Dongre, said the Rs. 530-crore project has failed to tabulate ecological costs.

The Western Ghats is one of the world's biodiversity hotspots.

Streams crisscrossing the region are rich in fish and fauna and the local communities depend on the natural wealth for livelihood. The hydel project will definitely damage this biodiversity.

The joint-convenor of the Jeevapara Janapara Hoarata Samanvaya Samithi, Ravi Kumar, observed that with the implementation of the project, the self-sufficient community, which is living in harmony with nature for the last several centuries, would become a destitute.

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