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Work on Gundia project to begin

Staff Correspondent

HASSAN: Chief Minister B.S. Yeddyurappa will lay the foundation for the first stage of the 400-MW Gundia hydroelectric project at Yethhinahalli in Sakleshpur taluk on May 23 Saturday.

Minister for Power K.S. Eshwarappa, Minister for Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Shobha Karandlaje and Transport Minister R. Ashok will also be present on the occasion.

According to senior officials in-charge of the project, the Chief Minister would address a public meeting in Sakleshpur after laying the foundation for the project. According to the officials, 200 MW of power would be generated in the first stage of the project. Work on the second stage would be taken up later. When the project is completed it would generate 613 million units of power a year, they said.

Members of Malnad Janapara Horata Samiti are planning to stage a black flag demonstration on Saturday to oppose the Gundia project

President of the samiti H.A. Kishore Kumar told *The Hindu* here on Tuesday that if the project was implemented, it would not only destroy the Western Ghats, but will also affect rainfall pattern in the region.

Mr. Kishore recalled that the samiti had urged the Government not to accept the Environment Impact Assessment report for the project prepared by the Institute for Catchment Studies and Environment Management as it was prepared in a hurry.

He said the project, which was expected to generate 400 MW of power, involved the construction of weirs across the Yettinahole, the Kerihole, the Hongadahalla, and dams across the Bettakumari and Hongadahalla rivers.

Water would have to be transferred from these rivers through a tunnel to the Bettakumari balancing reservoir from where it would be carried to the underground powerhouse at Gundia to produce power. If this was permitted, a huge forest area would have to be destroyed. The movement of heavy vehicles and blasting of rock would further destroy the ecological system, he said.

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