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THE TIMES OF INDIA

Gundia hydel power project is illegal, its impact catastrophic: protesters

TNN, May 25, 2009, 11.59pm IST

Bangalore: Citizen groups have described the government's move to launch work on the 200-MW Gundia hydel power plant as catastrophic.

Save The Western Ghats campaign, the Appiko movement, and Bangalore-based Kenneth Anderson Nature Society are up in arms against the 'illegal' project. They said KPCL, by going ahead with the project without clearance from the ministry of environment and forests, is acting in violation of the Forest Conservation Act, 1980.

"According to the Act, it is mandatory to get permission for diversion of more than 40 hectares of forest land. In this project, the government has admitted the need to clear 700 hectares," Save The Western Ghats Campaign convener Panduranga Hegde said.

The protesters stressed that destruction of the Western Ghats will not only cause decimation of biodiversity, but also accelerate impact of global warming. "The silence of the Western Ghats Task Force is a clear indication that the government got the green signal from them," he added.

KANS members said the environment impact assesment report for the project shows technical irregularities. "The area has several endangered animals, birds and vegetation as recorded in studies by the Indian Institute of Science and Wildlife Conservation Society. Gundia is one of three locations in Karnataka where the Travancore flying squirrel is found. It is also an important habitat for the endangered slender loris," KANS president Laxmeesha Acharya said.

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