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New panel to study Gundia

By By Our Correspondent

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Jan. 30: Environmentalists and locals of Western Ghats can breathe easy for another two months with the Central Empowered Committee (CEC) taking a very close look at the state government's move to implement the controversial Gundia Hydel project.

Karnataka Power Corporation Limited (KPCL) which is the implementing agency for the project, was confident about securing the clearances from the ministry of environment and forest(MOEF) but has now been asked by the CEC to appoint elephant expert Prof. R. Sukumar of the Centre for Environment Studies, Indian Institute of Science (IISc) to take up another Western Ghats assessment study.

When asked about the status of the project, KPCL managing director S.M. Jaamdar told this newspaper that the study would further delay the project. "This does not mean that the project will not come through. The Committee has asked for the report by March. We are positive that the MOEF clearance will come through," he added.

Prof Sukumar said that the 15-member team, headed by him and Dr Karthik Shankar, has already begun work. "We have been asked to study the bio-diversity of the project site and submit a report on the impact it will have on flora and fauna. The study will take 8 weeks after which the report will be given to KPCL," he said.

The power project, which will have two generating units with a capacity of 200 MW, will be built across the Gundia River. The foundation stone was laid at Yettinahole, about 18 km from Sakleshpur, in May this year by Chief Minister B.S. Yeddyurappa even though the environment clearance hadn't come through.

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