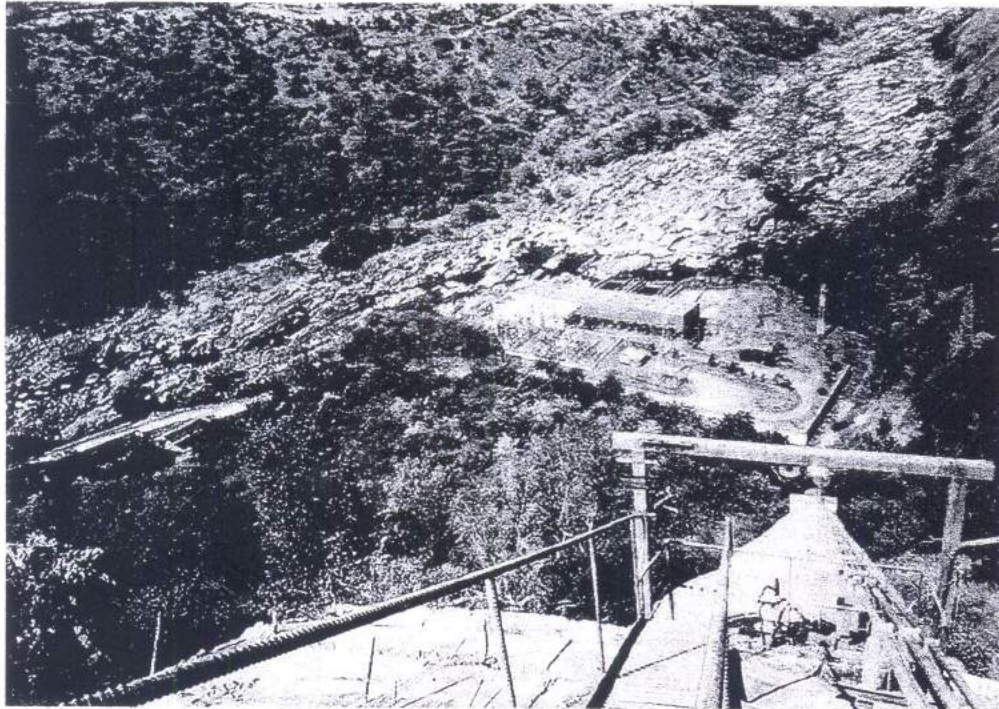


State's power play puts its wildlife in jeopardy

Forest officials reviewing project rejected twice earlier because of the havoc it would wreak on elephants



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Proving its indifference towards environmental issues, yet again, the state government appears to have yielded to a powerful lobby that wants to set up a mini-hydroelectric project in Chamarajanagar district. Interestingly, the State Wildlife Board and the forest department had rejected this very project twice – in 2013 and 2015 – because of the havoc it could wreak on the wildlife of the Gaganachukki-Bharachukki forests, which adjoin the Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary.

But clearly buckling under pressure from the government and forest minister B Ramanatha Rai, top forest officials of the department visited the project site on Saturday to reconsider its feasibility.

The project proponents, from Andhra Pradesh, have been trying to push for the plant for over five years, according to sources in the forest

department. What started out initially as the Madhyaranga mini-hydel project went through some changes and was now known as the Basaveshwara mini-hydel project.

A senior member of the State Wildlife Board told Bangalore Mirror that in 2013, the board had rejected the project following a report by a team of experts led by Anil Kumble (the then vice-chairman of the Wildlife Board), who visited the project site.

"The committee had laid out the impact of the project on wildlife, particularly elephants, which included obstruction of movement for the wildlife, possibility of increased man-animal conflict, and violation of various forest laws. In fact, the committee had suggested that no new project should be permitted, or old ones allowed to renew their lease, in the said area," said a member of the State Wildlife Board.

BM accessed several documents of the State Wildlife Board that unanimously resolved to reject the project,

Government appears to be yielding to powerful lobby that wants a hydroelectric project in Chamarajanagar

twice, under the directions of chief minister Siddaramaiah.

"The Basaveshwara mini-hydel project across the Cauvery by Shivasamudram Power Pvt Ltd has been recommended for rejection. There are already eight projects around the place and the proposed project is within the proposed eco-sensitive zone and is also in the Elephant Home Range and corridor. Hence, the proposal should be rejected and ongoing projects need to be closed after their lease period gets over. CM too agreed and directed to reject the proposal," said the minutes of the Wildlife Board meeting that was held on September 11, 2015.

AGAINST HC VERDICT

Previously, a high-level committee comprising the then additional chief secretary Madan Gopal, Ajai Desai and Sanjay Gubbi, among others, visited the site all over again and submitted a report in January 2015 and recommended the rejection of the project.

Further, the Elephant Task Force set up by the Karnataka High Court of Karnataka said in its report that "penstocks and impounded water can create significant obstacle to the movement of wildlife, particularly long-distance foraging animals such as elephants".

The recommendations were accepted by the high court, which on October 8, 2013, ordered review of clearances granted to all projects that had come up in elephant habitats, and violated the law.

Despite the HC order and its own officials' rejection, the state government has insisted that its top officials revisit the site and provide necessary permission for the project.

HOW IT STARTED

The energy department had allotted 4 MW hydel power project to Shivasamudram Power Pvt Ltd, way back in 2002. In 2011, the Karnataka Renewable Energy Development Ltd recommended enhancement of the capacity from 4 MW to 24.7 MW, with a plant adjacent to the existing Ranganathaswamy small hydel project.

However, the committee headed by the then principle secretary of forest department, R Sridharan, had consulted electrical experts from Visvesvaraya College of Engineering for a detailed opinion and they too revealed that it was difficult to generate the desired quantity of power.

Acknowledging that the team of senior officials had visited the site on Saturday, principal chief conservator of forests (Wildlife) BG Hosmath said: "It was true that the project was turned down twice in the past. The government had constituted a review committee to look into the project and as part of the committee, we have visited the site and will submit a report to the government. Based on the findings, the government will take a final decision."

Kerala's summer power plans may go awry

N.J. NAIR

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: The alleged indecision of Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (PGCIL) in sanctioning transmission lines and the delay in installing a new transformer at the Madakkathara substation could upset the Kerala State Electricity Board's power management plans for the summer.

Rattled by the failure of the northeast and southwest monsoon's, the board is

striving hard to limit its daily hydel power generation between 7 MU and 8 MU and enhance it to 14 MU a day when the summer demand peaks. This generation plan has been worked out to ensure that the reservoirs in the State would have a carry-over storage of water for generating 550 MU till the monsoon sets in by June 2017.

The reservoirs at present have water only to generate 2016 MU. During a normal monsoon year, as in 2013 or 2014, the reservoirs had stor-

Board's purchase plans could be upset by delay in sanctioning of transmission lines

age to generate 3,300 MU. Last December, the reservoirs had enough water for generating 2,745 MU. But the situation has turned worse since then. If the summer showers also fail, the situation could be come even more grim.

Board sources told *The Hindu* that considering the deficit, the board had struck power purchase agreements in advance. The State is expected to get 1,400 MW from the central generating stations. A power purchase agreement for sourcing 400 MW will expire in February, 2017. A pact was inked for buying 150 MW from January 2017. A conditional agreement was struck for 200 MW and lines were sanctioned too. Subsequently it signed another pact for carting 200

MW more. But the 'dithering' of the PGCIL in sanctioning lines could upset all these plans.

The board is understood to have deposited adequate funds with the PGCIL for installing a transformer at the Madakkathara substation. But the corporation is yet to launch the work. The delay has foiled the KSEB's plans to jack up the inter-State transmission capacity from the current 400 MW and overcome a potential crisis during summer, sources said.

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Govt readying to set up hydel project in elephant corridor

BENGALURU, DHNS: The state government is gearing up to set up a mini hydel project next to the Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary, an elephant corridor, even as cases of jumbos straying out of forest areas in search of water and food and getting killed are on the rise.

The proposed mini-hydel project will violate the directions issued by the Karnataka High Court in 2008 that no projects can come up in and around elephant corridors. Taking suo motu action to ensure that there is no destruction of elephant corridors, the court had formed the elephant task force.

The proposed project near Gaganachukki-Bharachukki waterfalls in Malavalli taluk of Mandya district was opposed by several agencies in the past. However, the government now seems to be keen on reviving the proposal. It recently asked senior officials of Forest department to visit the proposed project spot and submit a report. Under pressure from political bosses, a team visited the area. The project is just 200 metres from the waterfalls.

"Based on the recommendations of the state government, a committee comprising Principal Chief Conservator of Forests P Suresh and B J Hosmath and other senior officials visited the place. The commit-

Another tusker electrocuted

A 15-year old tusker was electrocuted in Srivipapura village in the Nelamangala forest range on Sunday. Bengaluru Rural Deputy Conservator of Forests, B Mahesh Kumar, said that the young elephant was found dead in the early hours. On Thursday midnight, a 40-year-old-tusker was electrocuted in Maddegowdanaddi. The tusker had come in contact with a solar fence when it strayed out of the forest in search of food, said Ramanagara Deputy Conservator of Forests D Manjunath.

In both the cases, the Forest department and the police are filing cases against the farmland owners for using high tension wires, which is against the wildlife rules.

tee members were directed to visit the location and submit a project feasibility report," a Forest department official told DH.

"The committee has inspected the place. It will hold a meeting in three to four days. Based on the recommendations made at the meeting, a report will be prepared and submitted to the government," the official added.

"It is unfortunate that when there is water crisis in Karnataka and, man-animal conflicts are increasing, the government is pressing for power generation projects on forest borders. Increasing urbanisation has led to the death of three elephants on the outskirts of Bengaluru in the last 10 days," an official said.

The project, experts opine,

will not only lead to further depletion of water table but also curtail water supply to Bengaluru.

In the past, the hydel project had met with opposition from many quarters, including the State Wildlife Board. Cricketer and former vice chairman of Wildlife Board Anil Kumble had rejected the government's proposal. Kumble is still a member of the board. The board had also pointed that the project will lead to man-elephant conflict.

In 2015, the secretary, Forest department, too had opposed the project stating that it will destruct wildlife habitat. In September 2016, a wildlife board meeting chaired by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah too had refused to give permission for the project.

Indian Express 19/12/16

NO CAUVERY WATER DUE TO TUSSELE BETWEEN AGENCIES

The daily issue faced by the allottees is the lack of supply of Cauvery water despite the initial deposit payment of ₹1,29,500 fully paid as charges for BWSSB and BESCOM. "We have paid a total of ₹1 crore and ₹3 lakh as deposit charges to BWSSB. Now the BWSSB wants us to pay ₹60 lakh extra if we want Cauvery water. We are only using borewell water," a resident said.

BWSSB Engineer-in-Chief Kemparamaiah said the Board had revised its pro-rata charges with effect from April 2016 after nine years. "If the water bill payment had been made before March 31 this year, the old rates would have been effective. However, if payment had been made by them later than that date, the new rates will come into effect," Kemparamaiah said.

Bengaluru Mirror

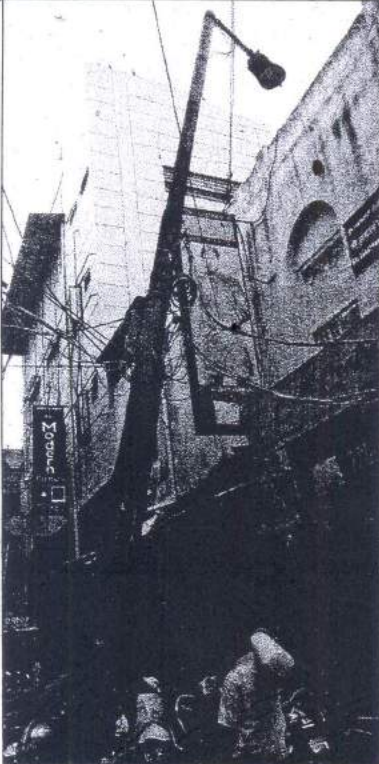
State's powerplay puts wildlife at risk

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Leaning pole worries DS Lane residents



HANGING DANGER: This streetlight pole on DS Lane, Chickpet, is not in the position it is supposed to be. The leaning pole in the middle of the street could fall anytime soon and harm citizens. — Lalith Sofadiya

WALKERS' NIGHTMARE: 1st Main, 9th Cross, Venkatramaiah Layout in Bhuvaneshwari Nagar has become unmotorable. Potholes and broken slabs make manoeuvring through this stretch a Herculean task for motorists and pedestrians alike. This road hasn't seen any repair in the recent past. Will the authorities wake up now? — Mohammad Rafiq Anwar

POTHoles TROUBLE WALKERS ON VENKATRAMAIAH LAYOUT ROAD



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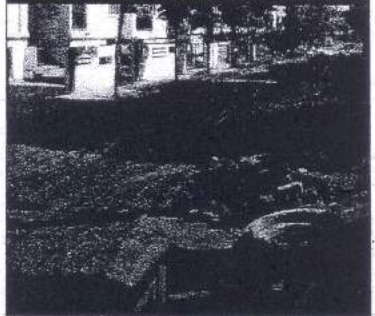


Be A Smart TOI Citizen Reporter

Keep mobile phone's GPS on while clicking & sending pictures

Describe exactly where and when picture was taken, giving street names and other locators

THIS BACK-BREAKING STRETCH IS MUNNEKOLALA RESIDENTS' NIGHTMARE



WALK AT YOUR OWN RISK: Gaping holes, construction material and heaps of garbage make a deadly combo for residents of Munnekolala. When it rains, it pours. Sai Baba Temple Road, Manjunatha Layout, Thubarahalli, has been in a pathetic condition for the past two years, but the authorities seem to be in slumber. — Ankur Sharma

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Tusker found dead, villagers seek protection

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: A 15-year-old tusker was found dead in Srigriripura near Nelamangala forest range on the outskirts of Bengaluru.

Mahesh Kumar, deputy conservator of forests, Bengaluru Rural, said it appears to be an electrocution case; the exact cause will be known after the postmortem results. "We got the news from villagers at 7am. We completed the postmortem in the evening and are waiting for the results," he told TOI.

Following the incident, villagers staged a

dharana against forest officials and demanded protection from wild animals. They accused officials of not doing enough to tackle the human-animal conflict.

This is the third elephant death on the city's outskirts in the last 15 days. On Thursday, a jumbo was electrocuted at Madegowdana Doddi, Kanakapura. The 50 year old had wandered out of the forest in search of food and got trapped in an electric fence. Over a week ago, wild elephant Sidda succumbed to leg injuries at Manchanabele dam in Magadi after a long struggle.

Disruption in water supply

Water supply will be affected between 8 am and 1 pm on December 20 and 21 in several parts of the city due to maintenance work being taken up by Bengaluru Water Supply and Sewerage Board, a press release said.