



Karnataka seeks diversion of 125 acres forest land for Sharavathy pumped storage plant

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Since the forest land falls within the biodiversity rich Western Ghats and houses several endangered species, the diversion requires approval from the National Wildlife Board.

New Delhi: The Karnataka Government has submitted a proposal to the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests seeking permission to divert 125 acres of forest land to set up Sharavathy hydro pumped storage plant in Shivamogga district.

As per the proposal, a total of 125 acres of forest land in Shivamogga, Sagar and Honnavar forest range is required to implement the project. Since the forest land falls within the biodiversity rich Western Ghats and houses several endangered species, the diversion requires approval from the National Wildlife Board.

While insisting that there is no plan to build a new reservoir for the project, the state government also said that another 215 non forest land is also required. Around 15,000 trees have to be cut and alternative land for compensatory forest has been identified, the proposal said.

The state also said that residents of four villages will be rehabilitated and alternative land for rehabilitation has also been identified.

The Central Electricity Authority (CEA) recently approved the detailed project report of the hydro pumped storage plant- 2,000 MW Sharavathy. The Karnataka Power Corporation Limited (KPCL) will implement the project.

A pumped-storage project involves two reservoirs, one on top of a hill and another at the bottom. Excess electricity is used to pump water uphill to the upper reservoir. When electricity demand spikes, the water is released to the lower reservoir through a turbine, generating power.

The project involves repeatedly pumping water through eight hydropower plants with capacities of 250 megawatts each. The project, which will come up with an investment of Rs 8,005 crore, will be the country's largest pumped storage power generation unit.

As per the proposal, the project will be implemented downstream of Linganamakki and Gerusoppa reservoirs and involve construction of an underground tunnel and the eight power-generating units, said the official.

The project proposal was first prepared in 2017 by the then Congress government headed by Siddaramaiah.

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