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61600 **Nayachar: Onward to an Environmental ...**

sukla.sen

Feb 8, 2009

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[Nayachar is a young riverine island at the confluence of the Haldi River and the Bay of Bengal, in the East Medinipur district of West Bengal, on its southern/coastal fringe - a rich but delicate biological treasure-house. The industrial township of Haldia, on the mainland, is just across the river.]

I. http://samachar.in/West_Bengal/'Petrochemical_hub_would_devastate_Sundarbans'_77101/

'Petrochemical hub would devastate Sundarbans'

February 07, 2009

Kolkata: Fisherfolk and green activists have voiced serious concern over the government's go-ahead to a petrochemical hub in Nayachar in West Bengal, saying it would cause immense ecological damage in the nearby world-famous Sundarban mangrove forests.

The Nayachar island being a deltaic estuary zone of the Hooghly river, they say the project would contaminate the water, which is home to a large variety of aquatic life and feeds the mangrove forests that are home to the Royal Bengal Tiger.

"We are astonished that in conceiving and going ahead with this petroleum, chemical and petrochemical investment regions (PCPIR) project, the government has paid scant attention to the ecological devastation that such a project is going to inflict on the area," National Fishworkers' Forum (NFF) chairperson Harekrishna Debnath said.

The chemical hub project at Nayachar in East Midnapore district got the nod at a meeting between the state government and a high-powered committee in the national capital Feb 3.

"If the project comes up at Nayachar, the entire region would get affected by its toxic chemical discharge," Santanu Chacraverti of the NGO Direct Initiative for Social and Health Action (DISHA) told IANS.

"Not only would it disturb marine life but these poisonous chemicals

would also enter the Sundarban creeks and affect the bio-diversity of the large mangrove swamp."

"The entire mangrove forest is criss-crossed by water channels and there is a huge possibility that this water will get polluted by the Nayachar project.

"The project will endanger a large number of people who earn their livelihood out of this deltaic estuary. It'll cause immense environmental menace," Chacraverti added.

Debnath said the area where the project is expected to come up is of immense ecological importance.

Nayachar is located within 10 km of the Sundarbans biosphere reserve and within the Hooghly-Matla estuarine zone, a region which is undoubtedly one of the world's richest in terms of biodiversity.

The region is the spawning ground of a vast array of marine life forms, including numerous commercial varieties of finfish and shellfish. The Hooghly-Matla estuarine and coastal waters of West Bengal provide livelihood to over 250,000 fishermen.

Nayachar is located about 200 km from Kolkata. As part of the Man and Biosphere Programme (MAB), the government of India had declared the entire 9,630 sq km of the forest as the Sundarban Biosphere Reserve in 1989.

"The petrochemical industry is hazardous and accident prone. The plan to locate such an industry in the Haldia region, especially processing industries in Nayachar, constitutes a horrible assault on ecology, livelihoods and resources," Debnath said, terming the state government's effort to bag the final clearance as 'ignoble'.

"It is also of great concern that the government, in planning 'developmental' schemes, avoids consultation with citizens and in planning the PCPIR it did not discuss its plans with the fishermen in the state," Debnath said.

He pointed out that the area provides food and nutritional security to tens of millions in West Bengal and the neighbouring states.

The fishermen's committee also called upon all concerned citizens to voice their protest against the petrochemical industry which would affect the coastal ecology.

Nayachar, a stretch of land measuring 12,500 acres on the river bed of the Hooghly, was handed over to the Prafulla Chandra Roy Chemical Complex (PCRCC). It is a joint venture company in which the West Bengal Industrial Development Corporation (WBIDC) has 49 percent stake and the New Kolkata International Development (NKID) has 51 percent share.

The NKID is a consortium formed by Unitech Ltd and the Salim Group of Indonesia with each partner holding 40 percent stake. Indonesian firm Universal Success holds the remaining 20 percent.

The NKID entered into an agreement with the West Bengal government on July 31, 2006, for developing mega infrastructure projects in the state.

(Soudhriti Bhabani can be contacted at soudhriti.b@...) (IANS)

II.

<http://www.expressindia.com/latest-news/buddha-smiles-haldia-gets-what-nandigram-threw/419019/>

Buddha smiles: Haldia gets what Nandigram threw
Sabyasachi Bandopadhyay Posted: Feb 04, 2009 at 0224 hrs
Kolkata *Central panel gives nod for the giant chemical hub at

Nayachar*

After the fiasco at Nandigram and companies like Tata Motors and DLF pulling out of the state, Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee today got a reason to cheer when the empowered committee of Union secretaries headed by Cabinet Secretary KM Chandrashekhar cleared the state government's proposal for setting up a PCPIR (petroleum, chemicals and petro-chemicals investment region) at Haldia and bordering Nayachar in East Midnapore district.

The empowered committee today held a meeting with a delegation of state government officials comprising chief secretary Asok Mohan Chakrabarti, commerce and industries secretary Sabyasachi Sen and executive director of WBIDC Nandini Chakrabarty, where the state government officials clarified all the queries from the committee members.

The chief minister could not suppress his joy as the news reached him. "It is a great news for the people of the state. I am quite happy," Bhattacharjee said at Writers' Buildings.

The state government has already set up a committee headed by former ONGC chairman Subir Raha to advise it on the technical aspects of the project. "We have already submitted a report to the government saying that the chemical hub is quite possible at Nayachar. We have already had two meetings and we are going to visit Nayachar for the second time next week," Anandadeb Mukherjee, member of the committee, told Indian Express.

The government has hired Jurong Group of Singapore as consultant for the project. West Bengal becomes the third state after Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat to get the PCPIR from the Centre.

What is state's plan?

According to the Central government requirements, a PCPIR has to be set up on an area of 62,000 acres of land and 40 per cent of it has to be the processing zone, which comes to about 25,000 acres.

While at Haldia there are 15,000 acres of processing zone, Nayachar, across Haldi river, has 10,000 acres of land on which the chemical hub will come up. A bridge will be constructed across the river to connect Haldia and Nayachar.

For the chemical hub, while the Indian Oil will be the anchor investor, Acharya Prafulla Chandra Chemical Complex, a joint venture of NKID of the Salim Group and WBIDC, will be anchor developers. The project will go to the Cabinet, possibly in March, for the final approval. However, the strings attached to the approval mean an environment impact study will have to be done before the project takes off.

The state government earlier planned the project at Nandigram but it had to beat a hasty retreat because of violent protests from farmers there that claimed 30 lives so far. On March 14, 2007 14 people were killed in police firing. Ten people are still missing.

Last December, the CPI lost in the Nandigram Assembly by-election the seat to Trinamool Congress, which spearheaded the anti-land acquisition movement.

At Nayachar, which is a vested land, there are about 1,500 fishermen who will be provided with alternate living. "It is a very small population of some fisherman," Commerce and Industries secretary Sabyasachi Sen said in Delhi. "But we are committed to providing them with alternate

livelihoods."

Some of the land on the island comes under the coastal regulation and the project will not be extended to those mangroves, according to officials.

The project, of which a refinery is the first step, will generate more than 10 lakh jobs and attract investment of more than Rs 100,000 crore, Sen said.

The Centre will pump in a total of Rs 2,508 crore and will be responsible for building infrastructure, including roads, deep sea port, airport, rail and telecom, while the state government will look after the water and electricity needs, Sen added.

[Non-text portions of this message have been removed]