

Industrial park may impact Indian forest & river

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The Punjab, India cabinet has approved an industrial park near the Mattewara forest range and Sutlej River in the Ludhiana district.

The approval has triggered protests against the project, according to Mongabay.

Part of the proposed project touches the bank of the Sutlej River, confirmed Ludhiana Deputy Commissioner Varinder Kumar Sharma in a statement.

According to the former chairman of the Punjab Pollution Control Board (PPCB), Kahan Singh Pannu, there was no policy of not permitting industries close to water bodies, but this project would make way for such a policy.

“Mattewara Industrial park planning reflects that the state has not fully realized the repercussions of setting up industry on river banks,” said Gurpreet Singh Chandbaja, convenor of Bhai Ghanaiya Cancer Roko Society, Faridkot.

Chandbaja reported that state water bodies got polluted mainly because of the setting up of industry along the drains and rivers and that although PPCB set up CCTV cameras to keep an eye on them, the outcome did not change.

According to the Forest Survey of India’s state of forest report from 2019, Punjab’s recorded forest area is not more than 6% of its total geography. The extent of reserved and protected forest area is 2.34%, or 1181 square kilometers against a total geographical area of 50362 square kilometers.

Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh released a statement saying that the state will not take an inch of forest land to develop the park and it will have proper common effluent treatment plant (CETPs) to deal with industrial waste.

“On the critical groundwater situation, raised by Rajinder Singh of Patran, Captain Amarinder said an Israeli company had been appointed to look into it and find solutions,” said the statement. “In addition, the state had established a water regulatory authority and had launched the ‘Paani Bachao, Paisa Kamao’ scheme for direct benefit of the farmers.”

A group of activists and NGOs including Eco-Sikh have served a legal notice to the state government on Jul. 20, asking it to halt the project because it will disturb the area’s ecological balance.

There will be a proper environmental assessment before the project takes off, reported Mongabay. The industrial park will shift the local industries out of Ludhiana’s city limits, which does not conform to the city master plan.

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Source: <https://www.wwdmag.com/industrial-water/industrial-park-may-impact-indian-forest-river>