

Sethu project may be delayed, says Pachauri

M R Venkatesh

MAMALLAPURAM (TN): The controversial Sethusamudram Ship Channel Project (SSCP) to deepen the seas off Rameshwaram in South Tamil Nadu that may pave the way for a direct navigable link between the East and the West coast, could be delayed further as the Environmental Impact Study (EIS) would be submitted only in the middle of next year.

Speaking to reporters on Thursday after initiating work for a new science park 80 km away from Chennai, the head of the six-member committee appointed by the prime minister to study the project, Rajendra Kumar Pachauri, said the study needs to be conducted over a 12-month period to collect all parameters, including wind velocity, wave movements, sea conditions, turbidity etc.

"Unless we come up with all the data, we will not be able to take a position on the SSCP," Pachauri made clear when asked about what he thought of the project's environmental viability amid serious green concerns.

Pachauri also stated that the panel was carrying out the EIS in full-swing along the contentious areas where the canal was proposed to be built.

Pachauri's observations made it clear that forward movement in the project is unlikely before June 2011, despite the Centre's assurances to the Supreme Court that the committee had been asked to submit the report "as early as possible".

The prime minister had appointed the panel in July 2008 to take a thorough re-look into the project following environmental and religious opposition to it.

Pachauri, who heads the Nobel Prize-winning United Nation's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), was here for the stone-laying ceremony for 'Marg Science Park', a world class facility developed by the GRK Reddy-headed 'Marg Limited'.

The facility would be used to carry out frontline research in life sciences, biotechnology, Nanotechnology and agriculture sciences. Its first research centre named after the late Union Minister C Subramaniaym, who had played a key role in India's first 'Green Revolution'.

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