
Gopalpur Port expansion hits Olive Ridley turtle hurdle

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BS reported that the expansion of Gopalpur port in south Orissa's Ganjam district has hit the green hurdle with environmental activists and wildlife experts fearing that the port's expansion may spell doom for the famed Olive Ridley turtles.

An expert team from the union ministry of environment is scheduled to visit the site very soon to assess the impact of the port's expansion on the turtles that move in thousands every winter to the mouth of the Rushikulya River about 17 kilometres from the proposed site of the port. The Rushikulya river mouth is considered to be the second largest nesting site of the Olive Ridley turtles in the world.

An expert team of the State Coastal Zone Management Authority had earlier visited the site. The SCZMA is yet to clear the proposed project. Gopalpur Port Limited a consortium of three companies, proposed to develop the Gopalpur port in phases with an investment of about INR 2,000 crore.

The company which has already completed its first phase of work is now ready to start the second phase work at an estimated cost of INR 950 crore following which the port can handle four million tonnes of cargo. The environmentalists feared that the mass nesting of the Olive Ridley turtles may vanish as the port dredging would lead to fast erosion of the sea beach.

Mr Biswajit Mohanty noted environmentalist said that "The port expansion will adversely affect the mass nesting of the Olive Ridley turtles."

Mr MM Maharana director of GPL said that "The mass nesting site of the turtles is far away from the port site. As per our assessment, there would be no impact of the port's expansion activities on the turtles."

(Sourced from Business Standard)

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