Springs, fields will die if Chiuim Dongor is mined

Sanguem Farmers Say EIA Report Of Mining Co Is Misleading

Joaquim Fernandes | IEN

Panaji: The famous Taka-chor spring and numerous other perennial water sources of Chiuim Dongor in Rivona, Sanguem, will dry up, destroying the orchards, agriculture-based livelihoods of farmers if mining is allowed in Chiuim Dongor.

This worry is borne out by the farming families living in and around Chiuim Dongor. A mining company has sought to revive the mining for iron and manganese ore on the hill where mining has been on hold for the last 15 years. The company has also prepared a "environment impact assessment (EIA) and environmental management plan" for 708 hectares of area totaling 29,60,640 ha.

The farming community of Rivona and even the village panchayat is strongly opposed to mining on Chiuim Dongor. In November 2009, the Rivona village panchayat unanimously resolved that the proposed mining project must not be given to the proposed mining company on Chiuim Dongor.

In a letter dated September 24, 2009 to the Goa State Pollution Control Board (GSPCB), Rivona panchayat opposed the EIA for the Chiuim Dongor iron mining project stating that the claims made by the project report about "non-inundation of perennial water sources in and adjacent to mine area is baseless.

"It is specifically stated there are more than 30 rich perennial water bodies" and "springs, the panchayat said. "The main paddy fields of the village Rivona Namalem, Gaujir, Belhende and Netol, paddy, several screwcut and cocanut orchards are fed by these water sources. These water bodies and the interconnected ecosystems are valuable in providing consumers with a rich, renewable, nutritious and natural beverage and will become extinct if the mine is operational.

The Rivona-based Rosham Sheila D'souza also blames Gowdeshwar PWD, who is conducting a study as "full of blatant lies and is totally fabricated to project our village as a backward area". She also calls the EIA "inconclusive" as "the project report claims that the claims made by the project report about "non-inundation of perennial water sources" in and adjacent to mine area is baseless. It is specifically stated there are more than 30 rich perennial water bodies and springs, the panchayat said. "The main paddy fields of the village Rivona Namalem, Gaujir, Belhende and Netol, paddy, several screwcut and cocanut orchards are fed by these water sources. These water bodies and the interconnected ecosystems are valuable in providing consumers with a rich, renewable, nutritious and natural beverage and will become extinct if the mine is operational."

The river-based Rosham Sheila D’souza, who has also blamed the Goa State Pollution Control Board (GSPCB) for "inconclusive" as "the project report claims that the claims made by the project report about "non-inundation of perennial water sources in and adjacent to mine area is baseless. It is specifically stated there are more than 30 rich perennial water bodies and springs, the panchayat said. "The main paddy fields of the village Rivona Namalem, Gaujir, Belhende and Netol, paddy, several screwcut and cocanut orchards are fed by these water sources. These water bodies and the interconnected ecosystems are valuable in providing consumers with a rich, renewable, nutritious and natural beverage and will become extinct if the mine is operational."

"These springs are the only source of potable water for the entire population in the mining lease area and adjoining areas and also play a key role in the maintenance of paddy fields, orchards, plants spread on all the four sides of this full encompassing an area of hundreds of acres of the main wards of Rivona village and on the outskirts of the major portion of Madcoorim village, the farmer's collective states.

UNDER THREAT: Rivona's lush orchards are fed by the springs that flow from Chiuim Dongor. (Below) Taka-chor in full flow in the middle of summer.

The sanguem farmers fear that if the mines become operational, all the streams originating from the hills will become extinct within a year or two. 2010-05-20, 00A

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