Fresh biodiversity study of proposed dam sought

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The Centre has recommended a biodiversity study of the proposed 3,097 MW Etalin Hydroelectric Project in Arunachal Pradesh by a credible international institute since the current environmental impact assessment was found to be “completely inadequate”.

The Forest Advisory Committee of the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) had recently discussed the diversion of 1,165.66 hectares of forest land for the construction of the mega project in the State’s Dibang Valley district by Etalin Hydroelectric Power Company Limited.

The project, estimated to cost ₹25,296.95 crore, is proposed to be completed in seven years but would entail felling 2,80,677 trees and threatens the existence of six globally-endangered mammal species. The area also has 680 species of birds, which is about 56% of the total avian species found in India.

Rich biology

The committee advised caution in pursuing the project since it falls under the “richest bio-geographical province of the Himalayan zone” and would be located at the junction of the Palaearctic, Indo-Chinese and Indo-Malayan bio-geographic regions.

The panel also sought the views of the National Tiger Conservation Authority as the area is a big cat habitat with 12 tigers and eight clouded leopards having been spotted.