Sethusamudram Ship Canal Project

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Sethusamudram Ship Canal Project (SSCP) will link the Gulf of Mannar and Bay of Palk in the southeastern coast of India. This 360 km long and 300m wide shipping canal will provide a continuous navigable route cut through Adam's Bridge, a natural chain of shoals to avoid circumnavigating Sri Lanka. Conceived as early as 1860 by Alfred Dundas Taylor, it recently received approval of the Indian government. Government of India plans to break limestone shoals called Ram's Bridge as part of implementation of this project.

The canal will save 20h of ship journey and considerable amount of fuel. But a busy continuous navigation in this region will offset and trigger devastating ecological imbalance, affecting the lives of millions of fishermen and many endangered organisms (fishes, coral reefs, seahorses, algae and other marine plants) of the subtropical, shallow Gulf of Mannar. The Gulf of Mannar and Bay of Palk support a delicate ecosystem, with the second highest marine biodiversity on the earth.

Evaluation of the environmental/ecological impact of a maritime project is based on a detailed study of geological, biological, physical and chemical oceanographic parameters. According to an estimate, SSCP dredging may displace around 9.7 millionm3 bulk of rock, shoal and sediments, making the water column highly turbid till the project is completed.

A multi-level approach to monitor the marine ecosystem and evaluate the risk assessment of the region needs to be carried out. Risk assessment data should be collected from satellite imageries to molecules. On the other hand the security of both countries is in the danger. The narrow canal would put the ships moving through it at a greater risk of attack by terrorists active in the region.

Some organizations are opposing damage to Ramasethu on religious, environmental and economical grounds. Many of these parties or organizations support implementation of this project using one of the 5 alternative alignments considered earlier without damaging a structure considered sacred by Hindus. The Supreme Court of India had already directed the authorities not to damage the Setu in any manner while carrying out dredging activities.

The objectives of the study are: Be familiar with the concepts of the issue and its components. Become familiar with the role the economy and politics plays in the issue. Be able to describe various levels of social organization including groups, formal organizations and bureaucracy and larger forms of organization like community, society, and the world-system.

Qualitative research methodology was employed in this research. Case studies, surveys, and literature surveys helped in gathering data. The conclusions were drawn after careful analysis of data using appropriate statistical techniques.

Key words: Sethusamudram Ship Canal Project, Gulf of Mannar, Bay of Palk, Gulf of Mannar, Risk assessment

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