



Mr. Ratan Tata
Chairman, TATA Sons
Bombay House
24, Homy Modi Street
Bombay 400001

February 26, 2009

Dear Mr. Tata,

We the undersigned have been extremely concerned over the development of the Dhamra port, being constructed jointly by TATA Steel and L&T and its potential impacts on the Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary, Bhitarkanika National Park, and the sea turtles, crocodiles and other species of the area. As you are aware, we have been engaged in a process of dialogue with TATA Steel and its partner L&T for the last four months, in the hope that TATA Steel would agree to the need for an independent and comprehensive assessment of the port's potential environmental impacts.

Since this dialogue began, we have been upfront and vocal on the need for the promoters to commit to a suspension of construction work, particularly dredging, for a study of this kind to be truly meaningful.

At the first meeting in Bombay on 23 October 2008, Mr. Muthuraman, the Managing Director of Tata Steel, had reconfirmed that if an independent assessment confirmed that the project poses a threat to the turtles and their habitat, TATA Steel would withdraw.

However, at the recent meeting on February 20, 2009, at the TATA Steel office in Calcutta, the project promoters refused to consider the stoppage of construction and dredging work prior to and during the assessment period (four seasons/one year) thus effectively ensuring that no such assessment can be done. Reluctantly, after almost two hours of discussion, we were unable to arrive at any suitable compromise and thus had to leave the meeting.

After TATA Steel's earlier commitment to withdraw from the project if necessary, we find the reluctance to suspend construction a poor demonstration of TATA's openness to an independent scientific threat assessment, which would inform the future of this port. Further, when over 200 national and international scientists and researchers, including over 25 members of the IUCN's Marine Turtle Specialist Group, have called for a halt to the construction of the port, this position demonstrates a lack of respect for independent science.

Wildlife Protection Society of India

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Against this background, we are left with no choice but to withdraw from the dialogue process at this stage. We do this with utmost reluctance as we were of the belief that TATAs were serious about doing the right thing by the environment. We also believe that the manner in which the project is currently proceeding can do irreparable harm to the area and, eventually, the TATA reputation.

- It is an acknowledged fact that there are major gaps in the impact assessment done for this project.
- It is in keeping with the Precautionary Approach that such assessments be conducted prior to the commencement of any activity that might damage the ecology.
- It is a matter of concern that since the commencement of construction, particularly dredging, in late 2007, there has been no turtle mass nesting at the nearby Gahirmatha beaches. Mass nesting has occasionally failed in the past but the role of the dredging and port disturbance cannot be ruled out and we therefore believe that a precautionary approach is essential.
- Hence it is unjustifiable to us that the project promoters on the one hand acknowledge the need for a fresh assessment, but on the other hand refuse to halt ongoing construction and dredging activities.

We however remain open to a dialogue, but only if TATAs are willing to reconsider their decision to go ahead with dredging. We would also be happy to meet with you personally to discuss this further.

Yours sincerely,



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Cc: Mr. B. Muthuraman, MD, TATA Steel