

Attention - Nirmala Karunanam

सार्वदेशिक आर्य प्रतिनिधि सभा  
WORLD COUNCIL OF ARYA SAMAJ



दयानन्द भवन 3/5 आसफ अली रोड  
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New Delhi,  
13/01/09

✓  
**Mr. Vijay Sharma,**  
The Principal Secretary  
Ministry of Environment and Forests  
Government of India.

Dear Mr. Sharma, जमस्ते !

As you must be aware that Gahirmatha in Orissa receives thousands of unusual guests in the form of Olive Ridley turtles who congregate and nest in the coastal waters *enmasse* - a phenomenon termed as 'arribada'. These turtles have been displaying this interesting migration to our motherland since times unknown and have been the centre of study and research of marine zoologists. Unfortunately we have been extremely nefarious hosts to these creatures and hundreds of thousands of them have been killed in the last decade due to illegal mechanised poaching, commercial trawling, construction of beaches, pollution as well as oil exploration activities off shore.

The government should have taken immediate and extreme steps to ensure that these activities which result in the death of our myriad guests should be stopped, and stand by our noble tradition of honoring the guest as God (अतिथी देवो ऋते). Instead the government has given green signal to the construction of Dhamra Port which is perilously near to the Bhitari Ranika Sanctuary, India's second largest mangrove forest and less than 15 Kms. from the turtle nesting beaches at Gahirmatha Sanctuary. This would jeopardize the existence of not only the Olive Ridley but also the sublime and rare range of flora and fauna abundant in the region - which includes rare species of reptiles and amphibians. One such species, the amphibian Fejevarya Carnivora, is the first record of the Indian mainland. Recently Greenpeace released a critique that exposes serious and fundamental flaws in the Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) conducted for TATA'S Dhamra Port project in Bhadrak, authored by Dr Paul Johnston and Dr David Santillo of Exter University U.K.

We at the Arya Samaj strongly stand by the Vedic thought of Integrity of Creation, i.e., 'Live and Let Live', as all the creatures in the world have

interdependence and have every right to share this planet with us in harmony and respect. We have absolutely no right to destroy the habitat of any creature in the name of development.

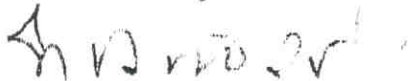
Commercialization or development should not come at the cost of the extinction of one the most beautiful species of turtles. The government should shed its myopic viewpoint of immediate profit which would prove to be abysmal not only to India but to mankind as a whole, more so because the Government of India has already stated its commitment to protect these turtles by becoming a signatory to the Indian Oceans and South East Asian Marine Turtle Memorandum of Understanding of 2006. The development of the Dhamara Port is in violation of the guidelines issued by the Ministry of Environment and Forests in 2003 in the Manual on Eco (Turtle) Friendly Coastal Development produced together with the United Nations Development Fund, Wild-Life Institute of India and the Madras Crocodile Bank Trust which states that **"No ports, harbours and jetties should be planned within a range of 25 Kms from any important nesting and congregating site."**

Keeping the Ministry's primary responsibilities towards wildlife and endangered species and protected areas in mind, I would like you to update me on the action taken by the Ministry to ensure that the wildlife and environment of the Dhamara area is being protected.

Looking forward to your reply,

21/8/20

Yours sincerely,



(Swami Agnivesh),  
President

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