

**CITIZENS' PROTEST  
AGAINST SAHARA MEGA-TOURISM PROJECT IN SUNDERBAN**

To -

Kolkata 2 October 2004

Shri Buddhadeb Bhattacharya  
Chief Minister of West Bengal

Respected Chief Minister,

We are some of the citizens with a shared concern about the proposed Sahara Mega-Tourism Project in the Sundarbans , who had the opportunity to participate this day the second October, 2004, in the consultative meeting on the issue organised by some voluntary organisations and individuals with some track record of working in the area. We have reasons to believe that this project has received quite enthusiastic approval of and is in partnership of the State Government of West Bengal. It is indeed a matter of national shame that it was a London- based voluntary agency with impeccable international credentials - Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) - that examined all aspects of the proposal and urged 'the Government of West Bengal to reject the proposal as it is currently presented.' The Agency also expressed its 'serious concerns about the environmental and social implications of this project'. A copy of the summary of the EIA briefing and a few other pertinent papers are attached for your considered scrutiny.

It would be an affront on your intelligence and environmental sensitivity to recapitulate the strategic natural importance of one of the largest and most fragile deltaic regions on the globe with its treasure trove of innumerable bio-diversity and 'gene bank' elements and as the home of the largest mangrove assemblage on earth. However, its basic role in regulating various aspects of the land, water, and tidal salinity related equilibrium in the entire Hugli-Ganga basin, including Kolkata and this State, is less appreciated. The disastrous consequences on the local dwellers and their loss of land and livelihood based on the unique land-water system are too nightmarish a scenario even to contemplate.

Considering all these aspects the Sundarbans have been declared to be a natural 'World Heritage Site' and the declared sanctuary of the dwindling Royal Bengal Tiger. Large parts of it also fall under the regulatory regime of the Coastal Regulation Zone.

We are indeed bemused by a recent report in the 'Ananda Bazar Patrika' (which was also widely circulated on the internet) that the project has been put on hold by the State; and second, a prompt rejoinder in the 'Ganashakti' refuting the Ananda Bazar report. We would expect your government to place all the facts and documents about the project in the public domain, without any delay. With the increasing social emphasis on human rights and rights to information the Sahara project does call for total public transparency.

Certainly, this intrusive and exotic mega project would bring in considerable capital - but at the price of one of the most vital natural functional zones not only in our country, but also on earth!

We appeal to your well-known sense of ecological sustainability to drop this ominous proposal with its inescapably irreversible and disastrous consequences forthwith.

Confident as we are about your favourable consideration of our appeal, we convey our gratitude for this.

With respectful regards,

Response/communication address:

**DISHA**

**20/4, SIL LANE, KOLKATA 700015**

**More than 40 concerned citizens and representatives of Fishworkers' Organisations and NGOs registered their signature with the protest letter.**