

If the problem of the copper mine collector “Veliki Krivelj” at Bor is not resolved soon, an international environmental catastrophe of priceless proportions could occur, according to the leaders of the cities of eastern Serbia. They fear that by breaking a collector of wastewater full of toxic substances, they would threaten the Danube coast to the Black Sea and destroy thousands of hectares of arable land.

“The problem of the collector over the Zaječar hangs like a Damocles sword, because, if its breaking would take place, Zaječar would be exposed to ecological disaster and, therefore, the lives of more than 50,000 inhabitants of this city,” said Mayor Boško Ničić.

Outraged that this problem has not been solved so far, Ničić reminds that the World Bank, under the most favorable conditions, gave a loan of 31 million dollars for the construction of a collector in 2010, but the realization never occurred.

Vladimir Veličković, Mayor of Negotin municipality, says that by building a new collector in RTB, Bor eliminates an environmental accident that would permanently destroy thousands of hectares of arable land along the Danube.

“If there would be a breakdown of collectors, thousands and thousands of hectares of arable land in the vicinity of Negotin would be permanently destroyed,” Veličković said.

He also emphasized that Negotin municipality is ready, within its possibilities and powers, to provide all necessary assistance to the realization of this project.

The current collector, which is actually a waste water tunnel containing several million cubic meters of toxic substances, among which arsenic, mercury, nickel and other heavy metals, extends below the pit of the copper mine “Veliki Krivelj” and is in a very bad condition. It was estimated that his breaking of toxic matter would spread rapidly to the Timok River, and then to the Danube.

Experts warn that considerable damage has been observed on the collector, and due to heavy rains there could be a breakdown of the dam and flooding of the flotation reef, which would cause an environmental disaster.

The collector was built in the 1980s when the copper mine “Veliki Krivelj” from the RTB group extends through the “non-active fields” of the company.

According to the Institute for Mining and Metallurgy, the owner of the collector is the state, but it is allocated to use that Institute which provided logistic, monitoring and control during the construction of the never-completed project of the new collector with the World Bank loan.

The executive director of the Institute, Borivoje Stojadinović, reminds that the maintenance of the collector-tunnel has been taken over by RTB Bor, which has so far invested significant funds.

Stojadinović estimates that due to the condition of the collector, it is necessary to build a new one, which will be safe and which will safely implement the Kriveljska Reka to Timok and to the Danube.

“It is very important that the new collector be done as soon as possible, because its breaking would cause a great environmental international accident of unimaginable proportions. That is why it got into its construction and it is good that the state allocated money in the budget for this year”, Stojadinović said.

The General Director of RTB Bor Blagoje Spaskovski said recently that he was sorry that the World Bank funds were not withdrawn for the completion of the job.

As “Večernje Novosti” recently wrote, the Ministry of Mining in the next two years has set a billion dinars for the construction of a new collector for the collection and drainage of wastewater from RTB.

In 2010, an agreement was reached that the World Bank loan of 30.9 million dollars, recovers this collector, but without a valid reason from that deal - was canceled, and the bank withdrew a loan agreement for Bor in 2014.

The Ministry of Energy, Development and Environmental Protection announced at that time that they, within their competencies, did everything necessary for the preparation of a new investment project for the construction of a waste water collector in Bor, according to the procedures of the World Bank.

“Instead of using the 30.9 million dollars loan approved by the World Bank to use a new collector in RTB Bor, we spent almost as much money for urgent repairs to the old tunnel,” the Ministry of Energy announced at that time.

It was then emphasized that the money from the World Bank loan for the construction of a new collector could not be withdrawn nor used for the rehabilitation of the old one, since the old collector is not the subject of lending.

The recent decision of the Government of Serbia to allocate one billion dinars, local authorities in eastern Serbia point out, gave hope that the problem will be resolved.

The Mayor of Zaječar, Boško Ničić, is pleased that the Government has recognized the problem of worn-out collectors and identified the necessary funds for its resolution.

Aleksandar Milikić, the Mayor of Bor, is also pleased to announce that this municipality will invest 33 million dinars for solving the problem of municipal wastewater.

“The local budget envisages 26 million dinars for the development of the project and establishing the factual situation and collectors of the Bor river,” said Milikić.

He also emphasizes that the budget defined additional seven million dinars for these purposes, when it comes to the river flowing through the village of Brestovac.