

Montenegro: The Tara River is covered in concrete and gravel, and locals announce a lawsuit against the Chinese company

The Tara river bed is filled with concrete and gravel, and the flow is partly altered. Landfills are growing, and institutions have no plan to rebuild this section of the river, according to the Non-Governmental Sector Affirmation Network (MANS). The locals of Mateshev announce lawsuits against the Chinese.

Tons of concrete, metal structures, high concrete columns and the memory of the former natural course of the Tara River, the Tears of Europe. Yesterday, journalists, as well as environmental activists, found this situation at the construction site of the Bar-Boliari highway, Vijesti reports.

The civil sector claims that, after a year when the public first reported the destruction of the riverbed on the route "Tara 1" and "Tara 2", the situation has changed and is now much worse. Landfills are growing and institutions have no plan to rebuild this part of the river. The Tara trough is filled with concrete and gravel, and its flow has partly changed. Due to the high temperatures, the water level is low, so this once powerful river has turned into a stream. The question is how long it will take to recover.

A year ago, the Non-Governmental Sector Affirmation Network (MANS) first alarmed the public about the destruction of the river bed and stream of the Tara River during the construction of a section of the highway near Mateshevo. They recorded from the air that the flow of the river had changed, the bed was partly displaced, and the construction machinery was taking gravel and sand from the river. The footage also shows that the riverbed is piled up in a part where the pillars for the bridge are located.

The CRBC company, which builds the highway, the Ministry of Transport, and other state bodies, at the time claimed that everything was done in accordance with regulations and projects.

However, photographs taken these days testify to the further destruction of the riverbed.

"It is high time for the Government, first and foremost the Prime Minister, and the line minister, to do something to remedy the situation in the field. First of all, I believe that there must absolutely be a responsibility. And until someone goes to jail, we will not have a different practice in this part of the construction site," said the director of the Research Center" Dejan Milovac "yesterday.

Milovac said the aim of the last visit was to convince representatives of the civil sector and the media, whether any recommendations from the domestic public, but above all the European Parliament, the European Commission, and especially UNESCO, were implemented in the field.

Unlike last year, the European Commission mentions Tara in its 2019 report on the chapter 27 - Environment and climate change.

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Brussels urges Montenegro to take urgent action to preserve and enhance the ecological value of protected areas, including the Tara River.

“The situation we have seen now is the fact that the state did not follow the recommendations, except that it was not sanctioned. We have seen that all those landfills discovered by MANS over the past year are still very active. Neither the Government nor CRBC have done absolutely anything to change that, “Milovac noted.

MANS has previously filed criminal charges against Sustainable Development and Tourism Ministers Pavel Radulovic and Transport and Navigation Osman Nurkovic because of the situation on this highway. In addition to the line ministers Radulovic and Nurkovic, the criminal charge also charges Nikola Medenica, director of the Agency for the Protection of the Environment and the Environment, and Alija Kosuta, director of the Directorate for Inspection Affairs, along with responsible persons at CRBC.

The complaint alleges that Radulovic, Nurkovic, Medenica and Kosuta, through abuse of office and failure to exercise official authority, directly contributed to the Chinese company committing more criminal acts in the area of pollution and environmental damage, by allowing CRBC without any control and sanctions, the construction waste is deposited directly on agricultural land, thus violating the environmental Impact Assessment Study of the Highway.

Milovac said that Montenegro, as a state, had not sent a message that the destruction of Tara was a criminal act.

“Ozon” NGO director Aleksandar Perovic told “Vijesti” that the site visit was aimed at making sure everyone was aware of the extent of the destruction of the protected Tara River facility.

“Definitely, whoever sees with their own eyes what has been done here, it is clear to him that there was no policy – sustainable protection, reducing the negative impact on biodiversity, on the river ecosystem and the populated area.”

Perovic concluded that it is not yet known how many generations will pay for the damage suffered.

“The damage has been done, which has yet to be assessed. One very important segment of all this is to inform the public about environmental issues during the preparation, implementation and finalization of such a large project. I have to say that we have reasonable suspicion that this is a deliberate policy of the Government to hide all relevant information on the quality of the environment, especially those that have been prescribed by various studies to be made available to the public, “Perovic said.

The state has declared most documents concerning the highway project – a top secret.

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The lawsuit against the contractor of the highway, the Chinese company “CRBC”, is also announced by locals Mateševa Dragan Adzic and Perica Boskovic, as they claimed to have devastated their properties near the Drska River, which is a tributary of the Tara.

According to “Vijesti”, the authorities from the Ministry of Agriculture and the Municipality of Kolasin were invited to visit them and make sure their properties were destroyed.

Adzic said he allowed the material from the excavation at Tunnel 19, which is the last on the highway, to be unloaded on his property, but with the promise that he would be moved later.

“However, there is nothing to do now, they have made an embankment, which supposedly protects our property from water from Drska river. But it was just a hoax to unload construction waste into several thousand square meters of my arable land, ”Adzic said.

Boskovic pointed out, however, that no one had asked him for permission to unload construction waste onto his property.

“I did not sign or allow anyone to do this. I had a few tons of potatoes from this property, planting onions, carrots. Now I can’t do any of that, “Boskovic pointed out.

He explained that the villagers now have the greatest fear that their properties will be flooded due to the deposition of materials, that is, when heavy rainfall comes, it will spill over to their land. Drska river, when it starts to melt snows, gains great strength and cannot be restrained. Which is why the villagers are asking that their properties be restored.

Source: politika.rs