

India's Adani to start work on mine near Great Barrier Reef

June 6 2017, by Martin Parry



The mine has also been slammed by environmentalists who say it will hurt the Great Barrier Reef, a World Heritage-listed biodiverse site stretching along Australia's northeastern coast, which is already threatened by climate change.

Indian mining giant Adani on Tuesday said it will start work on a huge US\$16 billion coal project that environmentalists warn will damage Australia's Great Barrier Reef.

Billionaire chairman Gautam Adani said in Townsville that the board had made its "final investment decision" which marked the "official start" of the Carmichael coal mine, destined to be one of the world's largest.

The controversial project—the biggest investment in Australia ever by an Indian company— encountered numerous regulatory and legal hurdles, leading to seven years of delays, with a lease finally granted last year.

It has also been slammed by environmentalists who say it will hurt the [reef](#), a World Heritage-listed biodiverse site stretching along Australia's northeastern coast, which is already threatened by climate change.

"Now the time for waiting is over and the time for doing is beginning," said Federal Resources Minister Matt Canavan.

The development proposes exporting coal to India from a massive open-cut and underground coal mine 160 kilometres (100 miles) northwest of Clermont in central Queensland, home to the reef, via a 189-kilometre rail link to port.

The conglomerate, which had delayed final approval due to uncertainty over royalty payments, forecasts it will produce 60 million tonnes of thermal coal a year for export.

It also estimates it will generate 10,000 direct and indirect jobs, with pre-construction works starting in the September quarter of 2017.

Poverty and disadvantage

Adani hit out at activists who have challenged the project for years, accusing them of exploiting legal loopholes to stall development.

"We have been challenged by activists in the courts, in inner city streets, and even outside banks that have not even been approached to finance the project," he said.

"We are still facing activists. But we are committed to this project. We are committed to regional Queensland and we are committed to addressing energy poverty in India."

Canavan also brushed off activist concerns, saying they should remember the "quarter billion Indians who don't have electricity at all".

"It is about providing a benefit to those people to have electricity and bring them from the suffering of poverty and disadvantage," he said.

"That does a lot more for the world, our globe, our environment, than anyone tweeting in air-conditioned rooms in Sydney who might be opposed to it."

Earlier this year a group of prominent Australians urged Adani to abandon the mine.

Signatories to an open letter included former Australian Test cricket captains Ian and Greg Chappell, Pulitzer Prize-winning author Geraldine Brooks, Australian-based British comedian Ben Elton, and rock group Midnight Oil.

They cited public opposition, risks to miners' health, the potential impact on the reef, and India's reputation as reasons not to proceed.

Environmentalists said Tuesday Adani had yet to reveal how it would fund the mine, with numerous banks ruling out finance for the project.

Greenpeace Australia called it "toxic" and a "disaster for the climate",

while WWF-Australia chief Dermot O'Gorman warned of a risk to the reef.

"Carbon pollution from burning coal is the single largest cause of global warming," he said.

"The Australian and Queensland governments should be investing in actions that protect the reef, not a new mine doomed to fail, that will hasten the reef's destruction."

The reef—already under threat from farming run-off, development and the crown-of-thorns starfish—is in the grip of a second successive mass bleaching event this year, which has been blamed on global warming.

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