

WHO SAYS HAMPI IS ENDANGERED?

SANGEETA CAVALE
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RENOWNED historian Prof S Settar is optimistic that Hampi, which was declared an endangered World Heritage site by UNESCO three years ago, will soon be in the clear. A member of the high-powered committee on Hampi, constituted by the government of Karnataka, Settar, who has written books on Hampi, points out that the world

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famous ruins were declared endangered by the junior staff of UNESCO who have "little experience and vision." The construction of a controversial bridge across the Tungabhadra river has been the bone of contention for several years. In fact, a foot bridge which was built was later dismantled as it led directly to the Virupaksha temple complex. But the second bridge is a necessity even though its design is questionable, says Settar. Generally, world heritage sites in earthquake- or hur-

ricane-prone areas, war-torn regions and regions where massive urban development has taken place are declared endangered. According to Settar, visiting professor at the National Institute of

while the bank on which the first capital of the Vijayanagar empire, Anegondi, is located is far less developed. In fact, the local inhabitants of Anegondi feel neglected and left out. The bridge is

the public. The bridge leads directly to an ancient archway and making a deviation would ensure that the arch is not affected.

"Local needs must be met and both sides of the river should be developed simul-

ative role, he says. Each temple complex is enclosed within iron or brick barriers which is totally unnecessary. The Archaeological Survey of Karnataka has its office right in the middle of the Lotus Mahal. An



Prof S Settar

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Advanced Studies (NIAS) in Bangalore, Hampi does not fall into any of these categories. It was during the tenure of Veerappa Moily that a hanging bridge was constructed at the cost of Rs 4 crore to connect the right bank of the tumultuous Tungabhadra with the left bank. The left bank is prosperous with rich sugarcane and banana crops,

about 90 per cent complete but work was stopped four years ago as environmentalists declared that it might affect the ruins.

Settar says this bridge is not going to endanger any monument in any way, provided only light weight vehicles are allowed to ply on it and that a road deviation is first completed before opening the bridge to

taneously," asserts Settar. He argues that "whatever is left of the Hampi ruins is, after all, due to the efforts of generations of local inhabitants. Environmentalists should not take a narrow view," he adds.

Even the so-called protectors of the site, the Archaeological Survey of India and of Karnataka have not really played a pos-

extension behind the Virupaksha temple has been converted into a slum and named after the politician who donated the land. Settar believes that the lands between monuments which are owned by locals should be taken over by the government after providing them with alternative arrangements.

sangeeta_cavale@indiatimes.com