

River linking in India will only profit engineers: Hutchison

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Veteran journalist Robert Hutchison is not very optimistic of the ambitious river- interlinking in India as he fears that people who will only profit from such projects are the engineers in charge of the major consortiums tasked with executing the work.

"Does India have that kind of money to spend on something so controversial? It seems to me whenever man attempts to improve on nature with massive engineering works the results invariably are catastrophic," Robert Hutchison, whose new book "Garden of Fools" has just hit the stands, told PTI in an interview.

He describes "Garden of Fools", published by Palimpsest Books, as essentially a work of historical fiction based upon fact. It is woven around the construction of the sacred Ganga canals under the guidance of an engineer under East India Company, Proby Caudey, and throws fascinating light on the social and administrative structure in India during the Raj. His long affair with the Himalayas and memories of the Raj brought him into fiction writing from the journalist's daily beat.

In this fictional account of the remarkable engineering work, Hutchison undertakes a detailed research into the lives of real people who lighted up the mid-19th century social scene in British India. "The events referred to in this book are real, and the reaction of the characters to them, representing some of the great undertakings that shaped 19th century India, follow closely the historical records that have been handed down to us," he says.

He also says that the construction of the sacred Ganga canals can be in no way seen as a precursor to the riverlinking concept in India. "Cautley had no intention of altering the environment. He simply conceived a way of taking a portion of Ganga's water to higher ground and let gravity pull it back to the river, irrigating fields and paddies along the way. There was little or no loss of water to evaporation and the canal's excess flow was returned to the river downstream." (PTI)

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