

Construction of Tipaimukh Dam opposed by COPE



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Daya Nath Singh 13 April 2010 8261 views

Hundreds of people representing Bengali, Manipuri, Naga, Khasi, Reang, Dimasa and other communities living in southern part of Assam district staged demonstration in front of Deputy Commissioner's office at Silchar last week demanding total scrapping of controversial Tipaimukh Dam to be constructed on Barak River. During the demonstration they shouted slogans condemning government's attitude and demanded immediate scraping of this project. Pijus Kanti Das, Secretary General of Committee on Peoples and Environment (COPE) and a number of leaders from different organizations and groups joined the demonstration before the DC's office.

It may be mentioned that the people, both in Manipur and neighboring country Bangladesh are strongly opposing this project for a long time, but the NHPC, Sutlej Jal Vidyut Nigam and Manipur government are signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to start this 1500 MW project.

The demonstrators later sent memoranda separately to the President, Pratibha Devi Singh Patil, Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, Union Minister for Forest and Environment, Jairam Ramesh, Assam Chief Minister, Tarun Gogoi and Manipur Chief Minister, O Ibobi Singh through DC, Cachar. In these memoranda they raised few pertinent issues and expressed their concern about the impact on people and environment emanating from the construction of Tipaimukh Dam at the upstream of Barak River.

They observed that during recent days, lot of hue and cry is being registered opposing the construction of a 'water bomb' at Tipaimukh. A handful of protests have been witnessed in Manipur, Mizoram, Barak Valley of Assam, besides many other from neighboring country Bangladesh.

They believed that there should be an extensive downstream environmental impact study from the proposed dam site up to sea-mouth and it should be jointly conducted at the initiative of the Government of India and Bangladesh, where experts from Non Government Organizations, particularly, from the environmental outfits, IITs and Universities, must be included to assess the possible detrimental impact on the environment and life of inhabitants in catchment areas at large. Without downstream impact study, if a clean-chit to the project is given it would be detrimental for both environment and people at large and poor rural people of both in India and Bangladesh in particular.

They further mentioned that the proposed dam falls at the confluence of Indo-Burma, Indo-Malayan and Indo-Chinese biodiversity hotspot zone. These areas are characterized by the presence of a large number of plant and animal species, like tiger, hillock gibbon, hornbill, turtle, dolphin etc. many of which are not seen or seldom witnessed in other parts of the world. A large number of them have been categorized as endangered and threatened as the IUCN Red Data Book and the Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972. Once the dam is constructed, these innocent endangered and threatened species would have no other alternative, but to perish. Moreover many of the tribal people including Hmar, Zeliangrong, Kuki, Mizo and others who have been living there for generations will have to leave the place for ever. Under such a situation the construction of a dam at the proposed site cannot be taken in favor of biodiversity conservation.

The COPE strongly believed and observed with deep concern that this rock filled 390 mts long and 1628 mt high dam to be constructed at the earthquake zone-V, wherein there will be constant pressure of water, if for any reason cracks, the entire civilization of the whole of downstream will be washed down in no time. The age old Barak-Surma culture will live in the history only. Besides the above mentioned burning issues, other important impact like flush floods, water scarcity, crop cultivation, navigation siltation, ecological imbalance and river pollution, extinction of aquatic life forms, livelihood change and the likes are never the less important frontier areas that deserve careful and serious attention before construction of the dam. They urged to consider all the matters seriously and looking the entire issues from the pro-environment and pro-human point of view to scrap the proposal of construction of Tipaimukh Dam, the life time curse for the inhabitants of Barak-Surma Basin.

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