

Mega Dams and 'Bharat Ratna'



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On December 19, the Assam Assembly adopted an unanimous resolution urging the Central Government of India to confer the highest civilian award 'Bharat Ratna' on Bhupen Hazarika posthumously. There are worthier things to do other than wasting the tax-payers' money in assembly sittings for 'resolutions' of this type. Just as Jitumoni Kalita's winning a dance competition, Debojit Saha winning a singing competition or Ananya Banajyotsna participating in talent 'hunt' shows is not going to help the masses of Assam, so also Assam MLAs begging for 'Bharat Ratna' to Bhupen Hazarika is not going to help the cause of the state and its people.

Bhupen Hazarika was an artist of the masses. His songs echoed concern of the grassroots. The Balladeer's departed soul would be more happy if the Assam Assembly demanded scrapping of the mega dam projects going on in the upper reaches of the Brahmaputra, be it in Arunachal Pradesh or China. Will there be a resolution against mega dams on rivers of Himalayan origin? It seems shares of profit is more important than anything else in the 21st century format of nationalism. Down the last 63 years, nationalism has taken the form of crony-capitalism. The grassroots will be the worst sufferers of this medieval European concept, which will hold profit only among the political class in the coming decades.

The Members of Parliament from Kerala are demonstrating against the 'endangered' scheduled Mullaperiyar dam and demanding its demolition. On the other hand, people's representatives of Assam are busy either begging for perks and awards from the central government. After Arunachal Pradesh, Assam has become the puppet state of the Indian Union. Weak leadership has made these north-eastern states have no choice, no voice. The government machinery of these states have been reduced to be mere extension of central bureaucracy, as if employed in military servitude.

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