

Dibang dam in morass of controversy



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The brouhaha over the mega dam at Gurukamukh refuses to die down. Yet another hydel project in Arunachal Pradesh takes the centre-stage of growing [controversy](#). This time the epicenter is none but the [Dibang](#) valley that triggers the fear of disaster in the entire north eastern region over the move to build a mega dam by NHPC to generate more power.

Talking to Assam Times, North East Dialogue Forum secretary U Nobokishore said that the Narendra Modi government at the Centre was believed to have cleared the Asia's tallest ever mega dam to generate 3000MW of hydro electric power. According to Nobokishore, the Centre has awarded the contract to NHPC even two years after the Manmohan Singh Government refused to clear the project. He said that the controversial project will violate the rights of the indigenous people over the natural resources. The project on the pipeline has posed a serious threat to the Mehau [Wildlife](#) Sanctuary as the NHPC is in the process to acquire a huge portion of the sanctuary to build the World Bank-finance mega dam which is racial discriminatory to the north east and its people, said the NEDF leader. He said, "several organizations have been opposing the [Dibang](#) Dam fearing downstream disaster. Even these organizations, mostly, were allowed to depose before the public hearing at Roing. Is not it an example of violation of UN Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples and ILO convention -107?"

Talking of their demands he said that a high level internal expert panel should be set up against NHPC who was awarded the contract. "The government must respect and protect the rights of the indigenous people over their land, forest, water," he said. He said, "we demand a research on social, economic and cultural impact on the upstream and downstream areas of the proposed mega dam by engaging neutral expert from Arunachal Pradesh, Assam or [Manipur](#)."

NEDF further charges NHPC and Centre with violating the mandate of UN Special Rapporteur of Indigenous People, UN Committee on Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Special Rapporteur on Business and Human Rights by allowing the mega dam construction. “The government must protect its people against human rights abuses by third parties. The corporate responsibility to respect human rights. This is apart from the access by victims to effective remedy, both judicial and non-judicial. But the government is remaining a mute spectator,” said Nobokishore. Why the Arunachal Pradesh government is unable to provide electricity to the people through mini-hydro project instead of mega dams? What forces it to reach pact with NHPC? Only a thorough probe will clear the doubts, said the rights activist.

Meanwhile, the joint campaign by North East Dialogue Forum, People’s Platform Secretariat, Village Women Coordinating Committee, People’s Action for Development, Social Action Committee against the mega dam seems to have gathered momentum with overwhelming response from the various parties and organizations. Notably, during his stint as Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh laid the cornerstone of the project on January 31 in 2008. The World Bank was to finance the project for business. But it would force the Idu-Mismi people to sacrifice their rights and interest.

The [Dibang](#) dam is planned on concrete gravity, located in the Lower [Dibang](#) Valley District of Arunachal Pradesh. Later, it will be the largest and the world's tallest Concrete Dam, standing 288 metres (945 ft) tall which is expected to provide up to 3000MW of hydro electric power and also assist in flood control in the [Dibang](#) Valley. [Dibang](#) Multipurpose Project (3000MW) was conceived on [Dibang](#) river which originates from the snow-covered southern flank of Himalaya close to the Tibet border at an altitude of more than 5000 metres. The river emerges from the hills and enters the plain area near Nizamghat in Arunachal Pradesh, from where the river flows a distance of 50km to meet the Lohit River. The total catchment area of [Dibang](#) up to the Dam site is 11276 sq km which lies entirely in India. The project is located in the Lower [Dibang](#) Valley District of Arunachal Pradesh. The submergence area of the dam site is home to endangered birds of the State such as Black Parrot Bill, March Babbler, [Manipur](#) Bush Quail, white Winged Duck, Large Whistling, Griffin Vulture, Grey Heron, however, such endangered animals are also going to be effected greatly by this dam.

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