

KMSS asks state power minister to 'stop lying'



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Daya Nath Singh 28 July 2011 7866 views

Reacting to the recent 'blatant lies' of the Assam Power Minister, Pradyut Bardoloi, Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti (KMSS) leader Akhil Gogoi made it clear that he is not opposed to the demand and need of power for the state, but he wanted to know the 'secrets of the deal' which made the state government to ignore all the facts related to the geographical and environmental needs of Assam.

Addressing the media persons in Guwahati recently, the RTI activist, Akhil Gogoi said that the power minister had given the history of Lower Subansiri Project. He said an unknown fact of this history was that the Central Electricity Authority (CEA) report of October 2001 gave rank 'C' to 2000 MW Lower Subansiri project, which was taken up in a hurry. He added that the CEA preliminary ranking study of the nationwide potential of hydroelectric schemes examined 168 projects in the Northeast, out of which 149 were given ranks A and B indicating higher priority for taking up.

Lower Subansiri project was not in the first 149 projects and was in fact given rank 'C' primarily due to the inter-state dispute. He questioned why the project was pushed forward in a hurry despite being identified as a priority project? An impression had been given by the minister that the Inter-ministerial group (IMG) on NE Hydro had been set up as a result of the concerns about impacts of dams raised by Assam government. The IMG was only formed to evolve a suitable frame work to guide and accelerate the development of hydro-power in the North Eastern Region. Its only aim was to accelerate hydropower in NE. While the IMG report did not recommend basin wide studies in Subansiri and Siang basins, Gogoi alleged that the people of Assam were being misled by referring to this decision as a 'progressive step'. In fact in an ongoing case in the Green Tribunal (formerly National Environmental Appellate Authority) it was justified granting clearance to the 1750 MW Demwe Lower project without the completion of full Lohit river basin study by citing the recommendation of Inter-ministerial Group report, which is being portrayed by Assam Govt as being progressive.

The KMSS leader said that the Assam Expert Committee (IIT Guwahati, Gauhati University and Dibrugarh University) met the Expert appraisal Committee on river Valley and Hydro-electric projects of the MoEF on December 11, 2011. Subsequent to that they invited them to Gerukamukh for further discussions, but this invitation was not acknowledged by the EAC or MoEF and there has been complete silence for the last six months. He alleged that instead of logically completing the discussion between the multi-disciplinary Assam Expert Committee and multi-disciplinary MoEF's EAC, the Centre again handed the issue to two engineer-dominated committees only. The Assam Expert Committee has thus been purposely bypassed because it did not serve 'dam lobby's purpose'.

Gogoi alleged that the power minister himself had taken lead in forming this new committee and now he should also take moral responsibility for disowning this committee. He asked the minister to know that the dam construction was not only a matter of civil engineering. All branches of science and social sciences have their own role. He warned that the dam lobby does not want to understand this fact.

The KMSS leader made it clear that his organization was not against large dams, but even for those who are pro-dams in Assam, is not it logical to argue that till all the demands of Government of Assam are satisfied in black and white (legally and written form), they should ask for a moratorium on dams in the region? The power minister makes hypothetical claims they have no concurrence from Government of India as yet and he asked to stop 'telling lies'.

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