

Manipur Fishers Union Fume as NHPC Seeks Extension for Controversial Loktak Hydro Project



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Imphal: The All Loktak Lake Areas Fishers Union, Manipur (ALLAFUM), is up in arms against the National Hydroelectric Power Corporation Limited's (NHPC) attempt to extend the lifespan of the Loktak Hydroelectric Project by 25 years without addressing long-standing environmental and human concerns.

In a scathing press release issued today, ALLAFUM questioned NHPC's motives for seeking the green light from the Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change without consulting the Manipur government and the thousands of fisher and farmer families who have borne the brunt of the project's impact since its 1983 inception.

The union pointed fingers at the Ithai Barrage, a key component of the project, as the "bone of contention" for four decades. They accused NHPC of ignoring ecological and human disasters like declining fish populations, siltation, pollution, and biodiversity loss, all allegedly stemming from the barrage's operation.

"NHPC must clarify to the people of Manipur how they plan to rehabilitate the affected populace and restore Loktak's near-natural state, now labeled as 'ageing rapidly,'" demanded Oinam Rajen Singh, Secretary of ALLAFUM. "Unless NHPC addresses these issues transparently, any extension plans are unacceptable."

The Loktak community paints a grim picture of dwindling fish stocks, a direct consequence of the barrage's impact. They lament the lake's rapid degradation, citing issues like siltation, pollution, and the disappearance of vital native vegetation.

ALLAFUM urged the Manipur government to prioritize the grievances of the affected communities before considering any extension for the Loktak hydro project. They demanded that NHPC be held accountable for addressing environmental and human concerns before seeking an extension without public support.

With this fiery press release, the Loktak fishing community has reignited the debate surrounding the controversial project, raising crucial questions about its long-term sustainability and ethical implications. Their demands will undoubtedly put pressure on both NHPC and the Manipur government to address the concerns of those most affected by the project's operations.

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