

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
DEVELOPMENT OF NORTH EASTERN REGION
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:5101
ANSWERED ON:13.08.2014
CONSTRUCTION OF MEGA DAMS
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Will the Minister of DEVELOPMENT OF NORTH EASTERN REGION be pleased to state:

- (a) whether several mega dams and other unsustainable development policies and projects in the North Eastern Region have resulted in widespread dispossession/loss of land, extension of flora and fauna and demographic impact on the people of the region;
- (b) if so, whether the increasing involvement of international financial institutions in the region in different projects is also a cause of concern;
- (c) if so, the reaction of the Government thereto;
- (d) whether the Government is not giving attention to the concerns of the people of the region; and
- (e) if so, the steps taken or being taken by the Government to save the region from devastation and address the concerns of local people in commissioning of projects?

Answer

The Minister of State (Independent Charge) of the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region [General (Dr.) V.K. Singh (Retd.)]

a) No specific information is available regarding widespread dispossession/loss of land, extinction of flora and fauna and demographic impact on the people of the north eastern region (NER) on account of any mega dam and other development policies and projects in the North Eastern Region.

Development of any hydro electric project (HEP), whether in NE Region or elsewhere, does involve acquisition of land, however, majority of the projects in NE Region, presently under construction or under planning being Run-of-River type require very little storage and as such, the land requirement in these projects is likely to be very less.

(b) and (c) As per available information with Ministry of Power, five Hydro Projects (above 25 MW) totalling to 2810 MW are under construction in NER and 10 projects totalling to 2622 MW are under construction in Sikkim. Out of the above HEPs under construction, North Eastern Electric Power Corporation Limited (NEEPCO) has signed a loan agreement for Pare HEP with KfW, Germany for 80 million euro with soft rate of interest under Indo-German Financial Cooperation on 11th December, 2008. The status of funding in Pare HEP is as under:-

Cumulative receipt of fund up to June, 2014 : Rs. 617.54 crores
- Net Budgetary Support = Rs.131.17 crores
- External Commercial Borrowings = Rs.486.37 crores
Cumulative expenditure of fund up to June, 2014 : Rs.876.27crores
(provisional)

(d) Government is seized with the concerns of the people of the region. Hydro power development in the region will facilitate economic development of concerned States in addition to following benefits that are likely to accrue to the people in the form of:

- i) Compensation for the Land to be acquired,
- ii) General Development of the Area including Road and Communication Infrastructure, setting up of Educational Institutions, etc.
- iii) Upgradation of Skills and Creation of Job Opportunities,
- iv) Boost to Tourism & Fisheries,
- v) Irrigation and Drinking Water Supply,
- vi) Flood Moderation Benefits and
- vii) Availability of other benefits under Local Area Development programme envisaged in Hydro Policy-2008 as given below.

The Government has taken several policy initiatives/measures to tap the hydro potential and to boost hydro power development in the country which will facilitate economic development of concerned States/Region. The details are given below:-

I. National Electricity Policy:

The policy lays maximum emphasis on full development of the feasible hydro potential in the country which will facilitate economic development of States, particularly North Eastern States, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir. Since the hydel projects call for comparatively larger capital investment, debt financing of longer tenure has been recommended. The State Governments have been advised to review procedure for land acquisition and other approvals/ clearances for speedy implementation of hydro projects. Full support of Central Government has been extended for hydel development by offering the services of CPSUs like NHPC, NEEPCO, SJVNL, THDC etc.

II. Hydro Power Policy - 2008: Salient Features (including subsequent changes):

Hydro Power Policy, 2008 has been notified by Govt. of India on 31.3.2008. The relevant salient features of the policy are given below:

- i) For 10 years from the commercial operation date (CoD), developer to provide 100 units of electricity per month to each project affected family (PAF) - in cash or kind or a combination of both.
- ii) Project developer assists in implementing rural electrification in the vicinity of the project area and contributes the 10% share of the State Govt. under the Rajiv Gandhi Gramin Vidyudikaran Yojana (RGGVY) scheme.
- iii) Additional 1% free power from the project for a Local Area Development Fund, - regular revenue stream for welfare schemes, creation of additional infrastructure and common facilities.
- iv) The State Governments are also expected to contribute a matching 1% from their share of 12% free power.

III National Rehabilitation & Resettlement Policies:

National Rehabilitation & Resettlement Policy 2007 addresses the need to provide succour to the assetless rural poor, support the rehabilitation efforts of the resource poor sections, namely small and marginal farmers, SCs/STs and women who have been displaced. Besides, it seeks to provide a broad canvas for an effective dialogue between the Project Affected Families and the Administration for Resettlement & Rehabilitation (R&R) to enable timely completion of project with a sense of definiteness as regards costs and adequate attention to the needs of the displaced persons. The rehabilitation grants and other monetary benefits proposed in the Policy are minimum and applicable to all project affected families. States where R&R package are higher than proposed in the Policy are free to adopt their own package. The objectives of the Policy are to minimize displacement, to plan the R&R of PAFs including special needs of Tribals and vulnerable sections, to provide better standard of living to PAFs and to facilitate harmonious relationship between the Requiring Body and PAFs through mutual cooperation.

A new 'Right To Fair Compensation & Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation And Resettlement Act, 2013' has been enacted for more participation of local people in the matter of Land acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement, etc.

(e) Environment and Ecological aspects involved in construction of hydro projects are being looked after by Ministry of Environment & Forest (MoEF) at the time of clearance of Detailed Project Report (DPR) and the construction of hydro projects is taken up only after necessary clearance are accorded by MoEF.

As per the revised EIA notification issued by MOEF in Sept., 2006, Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) study for the hydro projects is required to be carried out by the project proponents as per the guidelines of MOEF. The Terms of Reference (TOR) for EIA study have to be got approved by the project proponent from MOEF at the Scoping Stage itself. In addition, as per TOR framed by MoEF for preparation of EIA Reports for hydro electric projects, the study area shall include the catchment area, the submergence area and the project area to be acquired for various projects appurtenances, area within ten km. from main project components i.e. dam, power house etc. EIA study shall also include assessment of downstream impact on water, land and human environment due to drying up of the river in the stretch between dam site and power house site.

Land for the hydro project is procured by the developers through the State Governments and after getting necessary clearances, the construction of a project is started with consent of State Government. Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) and Environment Management Plan (EMP) studies are also carried out and all the issues are taken care. Further, public hearings in the project area are held by State Pollution Control Boards and views of public obtained, based on which, Environment & Forest clearance to the project is given by the State and the Central Governments. The construction at the project is started only after getting the Environment & Forest clearance.

Wherever tribal population is affected, the clearance from Ministry of Tribal Affairs is also taken before taking up construction of the project.

Thus, development of hydro-electric projects would have no environmental degradation effects if the EIA studies and Mitigation Measures brought out in EMP are carried out by the developers and ratified/ implemented by MoEF and associated Ministries.

All requirements of maintaining minimum flows in the river and also maintaining free flow stretch are also being taken care of by the respective developers. Further, the Cumulative Environment Impact Assessment studies have already been initiated/ carried out by Central Water Commission (CWC)/Ministry of Environment & Forests (MOEF) in respect of some of the other major basins of North-

eastern Region including Lohit, Bichom, Siang and Subansiri basins while studies in respect of Dibang, Kameng and Teesta Basin are also likely to be awarded shortly by CWC.

Further, before a hydro project is taken up for implementation, extensive studies/ investigations are carried out and all the statutory clearances are obtained. Techno-economic examination/ evaluation of various aspects including Geological, Geo-technical and Seismological aspects involved in implementation of HE projects is carried out by Central Electricity Authority (CEA), Central Water Commission (CWC) and Geological Survey of India (GSI) in respect of the projects to be concurred by Central Electricity Authority (CEA). In addition, necessary approval is accorded by National Committee on Seismic Design Parameters for these projects in respect of the site specific seismic design parameter studies.