

# **Affected Citizens of Teesta (ACT)**

## **Press Release**

**19th July 2011**

In a meeting held on 15th of July, the Affected Citizens of Teesta (ACT) have decided to boycott the upcoming Public Hearing for Teesta Stage IV, 520 MW hydro project which is to be held on the 22nd of July at Namprikdang. The project is located between the already commissioned Teesta Stage V, 510 MW project and Teesta stage III, 1200 MW project which is under construction and nearing completion. Teesta IV stretch is the last free flowing part of Teesta in Sikkim.

In the meeting, members deliberated upon the earlier experiences of public hearings for other projects and how their participation and submissions however relevant and serious had been manipulated by the authorities to suit the companies' procedures in acquiring clearances. The Public Hearings are just a face wash.

It was also decided and resolved that all ACT members whose lands were marked for acquisition by the government for the company will not give their consent and land no matter what the compensation or threat.

However ACT will keep up the protest process on, through various means of campaign in the state and in the national and international levels.

For record and for those interested in the matter it must be remembered here that NHPC the company which has been allotted the project has been no better than the private companies, in violating conditions and promises made to people. Rangeet and Teesta V have shown enough evidences of their callousness.

We would like to mention that when the State Pollution Control Board notified the Public Hearing for Teesta IV, 520 MW project, ACT had requested the Forest Department and NHPC to publish in local papers reports on fulfillment of the Specific Conditions contained in the Environmental and Forest Clearance relating to 510 MW Teesta Stage V. Among the many conditions, NHPC was required to carry out Compensatory Afforestation schemes in 260 Hectares of degraded forest land. It was also asked to give 122 hectares of non-forest land to the forest department to compensate 147 Hectares of forest land acquired by NHPC. There was a civil suit for Rs. 14.00 crores filed in the District Court against NHPC for damages caused to forest.

Apart from these the much talked about butterfly park has not come into existence in spite of crores of money being spent on its construction and reconstruction and the fish ladders and the hatcheries and ponds for the natural free moving fish species.

The oustees from Teesta V also never received the 0.10 Hectares of land for agriculture which is one of the Specific Condition of the Clearance, leave out the other minor special grants that are mentioned in the clearance conditions. The company also denied employment opportunities to local people despite the conditions imposed by the MOEF.

We would also like to point out to NHPC that, unlike mentioned in the EIA for Teesta IV, where it is mentioned that Lepchas migrated from Assam and Myanmar, the Supreme Court of India has declared the Lepchas as the original indigenous people of Sikkim.

Lastly we would like to appeal to all concerned to take part in further campaign in future to save this last free flowing stretch of Teesta the pillar of ecology and culture of Sikkim.

Tseringmit Lepcha, General Secretary II, Affected Citizens of Teesta