

## MSAD ACTIVITIES

After successfully circulating the first issue of MSAD-Newsletter, MSAD presents its second issue. MSAD received various suggestions as well as inspiration from various quarters for improvement in subsequent issues. The editorial team is hopeful that this issue will also be welcome as the earlier one.

The Executive Committee draws attention especially of Manipuri students into workings of MSAD. Publication of MSAD-Newsletter is one such step to bring in an interaction or at least an opening to the public scrutiny what MSAD has done in every last two months. The Newsletter carries at least one short article in every issue to push forward certain questions that we need to debate on and discuss. The editorial team hopes that every article will receive response from the readers in the form of article to be published in the next issue. *(Continued in page 2)*

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### MAPITHEL DAM, DAMN (I)

Mapithel Dam Affected Villagers Organizations (MDAVO) and Citizens Concern for Dams and Development (CCDD) express condemnation against the continued insistence of the Government of Manipur and Irrigation and Flood Control Department (IFCD) to lift the ban on constructions which was imposed on 17<sup>th</sup> March 2008. *(Continued in page 4)*

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### MAPITHEL DAM, DAMN (II)

The Citizens Concern for Dams and Development (CCDD) expresses our strong condemnation with the remarks of Mr. Nongthongbam Biren, Minister, Irrigation and Flood Control Department (IFCD), Manipur over the threats and intimidations to civil societies and Mapithel Dam affected villagers campaigning for sustainable and people friendly development in Manipur during his clarification on the massive cracks appearing at Mapithel Dam of the Thoubal Multipurpose Project. *(Continued in page 7)*

*(MSAD activities continued . . .)*

It will enable us to shape shared understandings on various issues of our times. It is to remind the readers that we need to have an ambience for having talks on the kind of issues we want to draw upon anytime, anywhere, and that MSAD-Newsletter is one small step toward this end.

Following is a brief feature of the MSAD-Newsletter

1. The MSAD-Newsletter creates an information pool consisting of all activities organized, participated and undertaken under the official banner of MSAD in every two months previous to the publication of the Newsletter. However some of the activities that have been missed to publish in the previous newsletter are also mentioned.
2. Its also provides other information, which will be useful to the students for various purposes and also highlights tentative programs to be organized in the next couple of months, if there is any.
3. In every issue of the MSAD-Newsletter there will be, at least, one article of not more than five hundred words, provided the article is already available to the editorial team. Students are encouraged to contribute articles to be published in the MSAD-Newsletter on any topic of their choice. However, the question whether to publish it or not shall be decided by the editorial team of the MSAD-Newsletter.

### MSAD Activities April - May, 2008:

- MSAD participated Convention on Release of Political Prisoner organized by Forum for Democratic Initiatives on 5 April, 2008 at Gandhi Peace Foundation.
- MSAD received a complain letter on 10 April 2008 from a woman from Mizoram who was deserted by a man from Manipur after moving in with him for close to three years. Such an unfortunate case, though it is still considered to remain within the private domain, cannot be left aside as it involves injustice and unfair advantage on the part of either of the parties involved or both of them. MSAD after a scrutiny on the merit of the issue helped both the woman and the man with their parents met in Delhi and set a compromise between them as normally the case under the conduct of MSAD.

- In another case, following a complain dated 13 April 2008 from Micky Chanu who got her husband missing for previous three days, MSAD had pressurized the officer in charge of the nearby police station to quicken the search for the missing man.
- It is brought to the notice that MSAD from time to time organizes talk programs on various issues. The objective is to bring in an effort to collectively participate in talking about questions that we need to raise today, about issues that give us opportunity to think and act coming to terms of the questions we raise and engage with our experience.
- As a part of it, MSAD organized a talk on “Developmental Aggression in Manipur” on 16 April 2008. Discussions on various aspects of the notion of ‘development’, presently received by the official circle in Manipur, brought an awareness to rethink, and resist the dominant understanding of developmental projects in Manipur and models of thought backing this mentality.
- MSAD solved a case of dispute between a landlord and a group of Manipuri students at Lajwanti on 25 April 2008.
- MSAD believes in undertaking any task, even if it appears hard for as small association as MSAD, if it certainly is going to be a little help to those in need. In such one incident, MSAD collected a contribution of a sum of Rs. 7000 from various fellow individuals in Delhi to help Laishram Bobocha and his wife Khundrakpam Sumobala who was in sickbed for as long as three months due to internal bleeding of the brain. After spending around one lakh rupees as hospital fees, which is only a 35 percent of the total fees to be paid to the hospital, Bobocha was not able to afford giving his wife daily doses of drugs, which, if taken regularly for a month, can save her life. She was lying in one corner, starved, while their two children and her husband were leaving their fate to unseemingly one fine day for even a half meal. MSAD did a little to help the family bear the burden.

#### **MSAD activities May-June, 2008**

- MSAD released the first issue of MSAD-Newsletter which is published for every two months on 4 May, 2008.

- On 11 May 2008, MSAD organized a group discussion on “Manipur Constitution Act, 1947”. The discussion revealed various aspects of the constitution. Participants explored political context and historical importance of this document in the modern history of Manipur.
- On 3 June, MSAD successfully led to strike a compromise between some students from Manipur and some locals of Murnika involved in a scuffle.
- On 16 May, MSAD released a press note against the Government’s insidious project to arm villagers of Heirok and Chajing. MSAD maintains a strong position to oppose any attempt which would transform civilian population into condition of violence by both government and rebels.
- MSAD participated sit-in-protest organized by the All India Coordinating Committee, People’s Democratic Front of India at Jantar Mantar on 30 May 2008.
- A group discussion was organized on 18 June at Arts Faculty, DU with an objective to shape and imagine a viable politics that can engage with the eruption of various questions circulating around the famous ‘June 18’. The participants enriched the discussion by directing the concerns towards thinking ‘18 June’ as resistance to dominative modes. Finally the volunteers pay homage to those who laid their life for bringing in an art of politics, to resist, talk and live together.
- Following an Executive decision on 26<sup>th</sup> May MSAD organized between 27 May and 29 May a three day counseling programme for DU aspirants from Manipur.
- And finally, MSAD is pleased to announce that this year’s Freshers’ Meet will be organized on 3 August 2008. It was resolved in a meeting of the Executive Committee on 22 June.

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*(Mapithel Dam, Damn (II) Continued . . .)*

Lifting of the ban shows that the Government did not consider rightful demands of the dam affected villagers. One can see the demands of the villagers published in local dailies on 9<sup>th</sup> May 2008. The decision to lift the does not take into account of the survival issues of the affected villagers under the project. Still worse part is absence in the project of any substantive policy for

resource management both at the levels before and during construction. It does not give any provision for dam affected villagers to get access to the decision making process related to Mapithel project.

#### **To remind...**

Construction of Mapithel dam started without taking free, prior and informed consent of villagers. It violated the norms of traditional method of decision making of the villagers inhabiting the project area. Construction commenced without preparing arrangement for creating alternative means of livelihood of the affected villagers, both in upstream and downstream portion of Thoubal River.

The 1993 Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) and the Rehabilitation and Resettlement Program 1998 are framed in an environment of threats and intimidations. The authority did not conduct a holistic impact assessment with due participation of affected peoples. It is utterly irrational on the part of the project authority to formulate rehabilitation agreement without having an assessment of full impact of the dam. The MOA 93 and the R&R 98 are framed before Manipur has a rehabilitation and resettlement policy for development projects.

Number of families and affected peoples are projected on the basis of 1986 assessment, which is incomplete and cannot be the basis for implementation of any rehabilitation agreement or policies. Government's compensation plan is only for submergence portion which is a violation of the 1993 Agreement. The dam was built with poor safety norms as the Government's own Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) report clearly indicates. This has been substantiated by testimonies of dam workers and corroborated by the recent break on the spillway wall. When the citizen took to go ahead for inquiries for safety assessment of the dam, they got threats to be arrested for raising the issue.

We are now aware that the dam breaks due to lack of poor quality and earthquakes. It is responsible for the decline of fisheries, crop failure due to change of water flow and reduced nutrients, and water pollution in downstream portion. There are also instance of sudden release of water resulting into deaths and destruction downstream.

#### **Violations...**

The Ministry of Environment and Forest, Government of India, instructed in a letter written to the Chief Secretary, Government of Manipur, on 28<sup>th</sup> December 2006 to stop further violation by Mapithel Dam construction, noting that the Thoubal Multipurpose project failed to obtain Environmental and Forest clearances as required under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 and Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 respectively.

Threats and intimidations to villagers, arbitrary arrest and torture of more than 200 villagers preceded Mapithel dam construction in February 1991. During construction, the area is heavily militarized only to give physical and mental threats to the villagers. The militarization continues with a cabinet decision of the Government of Manipur on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2008 to deploy more military to facilitate construction of the dam. The cabinet decision of 25<sup>th</sup> April 2008 to commence construction of the dam had clearly undermined the purpose and rationality of formation of an Expert Review committee of 18<sup>th</sup> January 2008.

Now IFCD and other two construction companies, Ansal Properties and Industries Limited and Progressive Construction Limited, are holding on further construction, even fixing dates for completion in 2009. However, dam affected villagers are still on the protest to demand review of the project. They paraded protest rallies on 12<sup>th</sup> April 2007 and 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2008 at dam site.

The Dam, which began in the early 80s, has escalated project cost from Rs.47.25 crores to Rs 715.81 crores at the price level of June 2007. It is paradoxical to increase the cost of construction while the compensation amount is still unchanged from the 1980s.

This coffer dam has now locked the Thoubal River and it has threatened livelihood of the villagers. The dam has not only led to submergence of agricultural land along the Thoubal River in the upstream portion but has also created serious shortages of water and subsequent interrelated impacts in the villages along the downstream such as Tumukhong, Itham, Moirangpurel, Laikhong, Saichang, Chaningpokpi, Bongyang, Bewlalandm Morkon, Songphel, Molnom in Imphal East and Senapati Districts of Manipur.

We should demand preparation of a Rehabilitation and Resettlement Policy of Manipur by the Government with participation of affected villagers. The project authorities should not resume construction of dam till the revised R&R plan is implemented. We should not allow the Dam becoming a condition

of militarization and more violence. Review of the project should be based on the recommendations of the World Commission on Dams, 2000 which instructs that all Dams, which are already under construction and others which are commissioned, should ensure compliance with the principles of equity, justice and respect of rights of indigenous and tribal peoples. It is time to have debates on the development model which is imposed on us.

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*(Mapithel Dam, Damn (II) Continued . . .)*

Mr. Biren's comments that civil society organization shall be subjected to prosecution for misleading the people is highly unfortunate and an insensitivity to the democratic call of the dam affected villagers to address their long standing unresolved concerns over the submergence of agricultural land, loss of livelihood and the project perusal without any clear development, rehabilitation and resettlement, impact assessment and accountability policies for Manipur. Any development projects introduced by silencing affected villagers and civil societies with brute use of force will undermines its purpose and will further alienate peoples to resist such forms of development. CCDD considers as unfortunate and an irresponsible move that Mr. Biren, the IFCD minister tries to shield the Engineers, Contractors and construction company officials for the cracks at Mapithel Dam without initiating any investigation as to why the cracks appeared. Any structure created as an essential part of the dam developing cracks untimely is in itself a very clear indication of sub-standard quality of work, naturally a reason rife to assess the quality of work of the main dam as well. The cracks appeared should be an eye opener for the IFCD to review the quality of all construction components of the dam as the people of Manipur have already lost trust and confidence with IFCD with the quality of the dam because of the massive cracks. The voices of concerns raised by the affected peoples cannot be simply negated as unfounded fears.

The quality of the construction of main dam is seriously questionable as the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) Report dated 31 March 2004 of the Government of India clearly mentioned that the Progressive Construction Limited (PCL), constructing the main Mapithel dam is being criticized for failing to install two important quality monitoring apparatus 1) Relative Density Apparatus to determine density of cohesion less soil used as filter media in the

dam and ii) Permeability Test Apparatus ever since the Mapithel Dam construction started in 1989. The CAG report further mentions that the failure to install these two important equipments was detected in 1999 October and was not installed. In addition, media establishments, on 14th May 2008 in Manipur reported the concerns raised by the Progressive Construction Limited Workers Union Thoubal Multipurpose Project as to how they work during night and that tree roots, boulders, rocks and several other materials unintended for the dams are being filled in without any monitoring. People residing in downstream areas of the dam had already expressed their apprehension citing similar reasons.

The IFCD minister as a responsible minister should uphold all democratic processes and practices and take all necessary steps to allay the apprehensions of the people by calling for a thorough review of the Mapithel Dam and investigating causes of the cracks and to prosecute all those responsible for the cracks and other substandard works. All pending issues concerning rehabilitation and resettlement, environmental impact assessment both upstream and downstream, livelihood issues of all affected peoples, dam safety should be settled first in accordance with the wishes and needs of the affected peoples before commencing Mapithel dam construction. And to avoid such and other situations like NHPC's Loktak Project, where the affected villagers are condemned without any rehabilitation and resettlement, policies on sustainable development, rehabilitation and resettlement, for people's participation in Manipur should be prepared with the people.

**Note:** *The two articles are developed as a revised version of a Press note released by Mapithel Dam Affected Villagers Organizations (MDAVO) and Citizens Concern for Dams and Development (CCDD).*

**MSAD EXECUTIVES (2007-2008)**

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