

**MAPITHEL DAM AFFECTED VILLAGERS' ORGANIZATION
HOUSING AND LAND RIGHTS NETWORK
CENTRE FOR RESEARCH AND ADVOCACY**

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PRESS RELEASE:

PMO Intervention in Mapithel Dam Appreciated

The Mapithel Dam Affected Villagers' Organization (MDAVO), Housing and Land Rights Network (HLRN), and the Centre for Research and Advocacy, Manipur (CRAM) express deep appreciation to the intervention from the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) with an urgent appeal to the Government of Manipur not to commission Mapithel Dam in September 2016, as planned. This move is important given the extensive suffering and neglect by the state of dam-affected communities—both upstream and downstream—and the persistent violations of their human rights to adequate housing, food, land, work/livelihood, water, health, participation, information, and security of the person and home.

The human rights violations associated with Mapithel Dam have been highlighted several times, including by the United Nations (UN). In 2009 and 2010, the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples raised concerns about the impacts of Mapithel Dam. On 26 March 2015, the UN Special Rapporteur on adequate housing and the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples jointly wrote to the Government of India, expressing concern over the forced blocking of Thoubal River and the submergence of agricultural land and forests in the Mapithel region without the prior informed consent of affected persons and protection of indigenous peoples' rights.

MDAVO, HLRN, and CRAM consider the intervention of the PMO and Ministry of Power, and also of the UN Special Rapporteurs, as a recognition and strong indication of the multifaceted human rights violations associated with Mapithel Dam and the prevalence of injustice and impunity associated with the mega project. The blocking of Thoubal River that commenced from January 2015 without a detailed environmental, social, and economic impact assessment and a comprehensive rehabilitation and resettlement plan, has led to enormous hardship and suffering of affected communities. The Dam has led to inundation of residential areas, schools, churches, agricultural land, and forests of more than 2000 hectares in Chadong, Louphong, Ramrei, Riha and Thoyee villages, among others. The loss of land, forest, farmland, crops, and other sources of survival has led to acute food shortages, hunger and malnourishment, and impoverishment of the communities. The loss of livelihoods and thereby income has led to severe impacts on the health, well-being, and culture of the affected communities. Loss of access to schools has severely impacted children's right to education. Women, children, and older persons are the worst affected.

The plan to commission Mapithel Dam has been made despite the fact that key infrastructure for the dam, including irrigation canals, water supply components, and hydropower-generation infrastructure are far from completion. It is highly unlikely that the dam will serve its purpose for the next ten years even if the dam is commissioned in the coming months. The Japan International Cooperation Agency is yet to confirm its financing for the water supply infrastructure for Mapithel Dam. As such, there is no reason to cause undue suffering to villagers by commissioning Mapithel Dam. The plan to commission Mapithel Dam was announced even though the National Green Tribunal (NGT), Kolkata Bench of the Supreme Court is still considering the violation of the Forest Rights Act by the Dam.

The construction of Mapithel Dam has violated national and international laws, guidelines, and standards. These include the Constitution of India, the Right to Education Act, the National Food Security Act, and the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act. It also violates the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the UN Declaration on the Right of Indigenous Peoples (which in Article 10 clearly outlines there should be no forced eviction of indigenous peoples without their free, prior, and informed consent), and the UN Basic Principles and Guidelines on Development-based Evictions and Displacement (which lay down operational procedures, for safeguarding people's human rights, before, during and after displacement).

MDAVO, HLRN and CRAM would like to urge the Government of Manipur to:

- 1) Respond to the intervention from the PMO, Ministry of Power, and the UN Special Rapporteurs on adequate housing and indigenous peoples' rights, and to consider affected peoples' demands to stop commissioning of Mapithel Dam.
- 2) To immediately release the impounded water from the Mapithel Dam reservoir, ensure the free flow of Thoubal River, and stop submerging agricultural land, forests, and peoples' livelihood and food sources.
- 3) Institute an impartial inquiry into the corruption and manipulation involved in the rehabilitation and resettlement of Mapithel Dam affected persons.
- 4) Resume the Expert Review Committee (ERC) formed in 2008 and address all pending rehabilitation and resettlement issues based on findings of ERC.
- 5) Review and investigate the failure and underperformance of all commissioned dams in Manipur, such as Khoupum Dam, Khuga dam, and Singda dam, among others.
- 6) Comply with the operational procedures contained in the UN Basic Principles and Guidelines on Development-based Evictions and Displacement in the planning of any development project in Manipur.
- 7) Implement the recommendations of the UN Special Rapporteur on adequate housing and the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples in their communications about Mapithel Dam to the Government of India on 26 March 2015 and 6 April 2009 respectively.

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