

PRESS RELEASE

MAJOR INTERVENTION BY NATIONAL GREEN TRIBUNAL
ON DAMS OF ARUNACHAL

Date: 12/5/15

An application has been filed on 30th April'15 in the National Green Tribunal by Pradip Kumar Bhuyan, IITan and Senior Citizen and Joydeep Bhuyan, wildlife photographer and naturalist as co-applicant, and in a major intervention on 7th May'15, the NGT admitted the application and issued notice to Ministry of Power, Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change, Governments of Arunachal, Assam and the Brahmaputra Board and **“they are also directed to set up proposal for scientific study of comprehensive cumulative environmental impact study with reference to construction of so many hydro electric projects in the State of Arunachal in terms of their effect on downstream area on water source, biodiversity and socio-ecology of the people.”** This is a very significant and major development regarding the proposed HEPs of Arunachal.

The petitioner has brought forth that **Brahmaputra is central to all these HEPs in the valleys of Arunachal** and a **flowing Brahmaputra is sacrosanct for the people of the region**. The proposed 135 plus HEPs in the valleys of Arunachal are 4 hour peaking generation type dams which holds up water for 20 hours or so in the day in lean months and create a tsunami in 4 hours or so when all the turbines are operational. The petitioner contended that this process will devastate the valleys of Arunachal, Brahmaputra, and also Majuli, Kaziranga once the dams are commissioned after 15-20 years. The petitioner **has prayed for Cumulative Impact Assessment (CIA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for all the valleys of Arunachal** and has advocated for

24x7 true Run of the River **sustainable dams** where the river flows either through the turbines next to the dams and/or over the dam without any adverse downstream impact on ecology, environmental and the riparian people yet generating sustainable level of power for development. **The petitioner prayed that free flowing sustainable dams in the valleys of Arunachal is the key for balance of nature and development in Arunachal and Assam and in the region as a whole.**

The Tribunal was pleased to direct all the parties to respond by six weeks and directed the respondents to submit status report on the next date disclosing the particulars of the HEPs proposed and/or approved in Arunachal Pradesh including details of the number of HEP's which have been processed through environmental Clearance and other procedural setup. The Tribunal also directed to set up proposal for scientific study with reference to construction of so many HEP's in Arunachal Pradesh in terms of their effect on downstream area on water source, biodiversity and socio ecology of people. The case is now listed for 30th July 2015 for further hearing.

The Petitioner also referred to the Uttarakhand (2013) disaster as well as the recent Nepal (2015) disaster and suggested that this is an opportune time to examine these issues in detail and not wait for another Himalayan disaster to occur before acting. The case is therefore premised on the precautionary principle and the Environment Protection Act and the Biodiversity Act where such assessments are mandated by law. Noted environmental lawyer **Sanjay Upadhyay** from Delhi and Advocate **Vikram Rajkhowa** from Guwahati appeared for the petitioners.