

PROCEEDINGS OF THE PUBLIC HEARING FOR THE PROPOSED RAMMAM HYDRO ELECTRIC PROJECT STAGE-III (120MW) OF M/S. NTPC HYDRO LIMITED IN DIST.-DARJEELING, WEST BENGAL HELD ON 27.04.2007 AT THE COMMUNITY HALL/RECREATION HALL AT LODHAMA HAT, WEST BENGAL STATE ELECTRICITY BOARD TOWNSHIP, DIST.-DARJEELING, WEST BENGAL

M/s. NTPC Hydro Limited submitted an application to West Bengal Pollution Control Board for conducting Public Hearing for the proposed Rammam Hydro Electric Project Stage-III in Dist.-Darjeeling, West Bengal. As per the EIA notification S.O. 1533 dated 14th September, 2006 of the MoEF, Govt. of India, environmental clearance of the said project is required to be obtained from the MoEF, Govt. of India after having public hearing.

Accordingly, WBPCB after observing all formalities, held a public hearing on 27th April, 2007 at 11.30 Hrs at the Community Hall/Recreation Hall at Lodhama Hat, West Bengal State Electricity Board Township, Dist.-Darjeeling. Panel members were present in the hearing. Public notification about the proposed project was published on 26th March, 2007 in The Statesman, an English daily, Anandabazar Patrika, a Bengali daily and Dainik Jagaran, a local Hindi daily. A large gathering was also present in the hearing. List of the panel members and the others present in the public hearing is enclosed.

The hearing started with welcome note from Mr. Gen Omdi Phipon, Additional District Magistrate, Darjeeling who presided over the hearing. Dr. T.K. Gupta, Senior Environmental Engineer and Incharge – Consent Cell, WBPCB explained about the provisions of the above stated MoEF notification. ADM requested the Project Proponent to explain the details about the proposed project for the benefit of the panel members and other public present for the hearing.

Mr. R. Khetarpal, General Manager explained about the proposed project. Mr. Rajesh K Baderia, DGM (Env. Engg.) explained details of the project through power point presentation, the likely environmental impacts arising out of the same as well as the proposed pollution abatement / environmental management/ socio-economic issues considered by them.

During the discussion the panel members and the others present in the public hearing made queries / suggestions with respect to the proposed project which are noted below:

Mr. M.K. Singh, President Bhumi Brangsha Bekari Sangha, Rimbik raised the issues regarding water scarcity during construction of the tunnel, availability of potable drinking water, greeneries, health care establishment, land slides, etc. He has categorically mentioned that the project proponent should take adequate measures to minimize the landslides during construction. He has also made a written submission which is enclosed.

Mr. Prem Subba, Mr. Birkha Rai, Mr. Jitendra Rai, Mr. Prakash Gurung, Mr. Amar Subba, Mr. Deng Phinzo Sherpa of local areas welcome the project but mentioned that the project proponent should take the necessary measures to minimize any kind of damage or loss to the local environment. The project proponent to consider for involvement of the local people for setting up of such project the should take necessary measures for adequate water supply, supply of fuel other than wood, sanitation and

improvement of local road networks. They have requested the project proponent to consider for improvement of education and health facilities at the local area.

Mr. Abhijit Roy, Paschim Banga Vigyan Mancha (PBVM), Siliguri, Mr. Sankar Kar, Asst. Secretary, State Committee, PBVM, Mr. Wangel Sherpa, President of Manibhanjan Zonal committee of PBVM submitted a written proposal for consideration which is enclosed. They have mentioned that the project proponent should consider the issues like seepage due to blasting, drying of agricultural land, alternative supply of fuel, construction and repairing of roads, compensation packages during resettlement, deployment of local people in the job, improvement of sanitation facilities, water supply etc.

On behalf of the project proponent Mr. R. Khetarpal, General Manger, NTPC Hydro Limited, have appreciated the concern expressed by different participants and welcome the suggestions. He indicated that NHL will address all the above stated issues while finalizing the environmental management plan and wherever possible they will consider the issues immediately. He gave the emphasis on considering the various major issues raised by the local people like local meeting would be organized at all the major project affected villages to appraise local people regarding the R&R benefits and other measures proposed to be undertaken for improving the environment and social status of local people as per the R&R policy of NHL. He also ensured that all the likely damage of roads, trees etc. during the construction activities of project would be restored by NHL. However, he also appraised that the technology proposed to be used for the construction work would be advanced and all the measures would be taken to keep the damage to local environment at minimum level. He also explained the NHL Policy regarding the employment opportunities to the local people and highlighted that although the direct employment opportunities may not be there but there would be number of economic opportunities to the local people viz. Hiring of vehicle, petty contract, employment with the contract agencies, allotment of the shops and kiosks at NHL township, vending contract, STD/ISD booth etc. Beside these NHL would also undertake capacity building programme to widen the opportunities for self-employment for local people. He also mentioned that NHL normally undertake number of welfare activities in the project affected villages viz. organizing the health camps, providing the medical dispensaries, organizing the cultural and rural sports events etc. besides undertaking the community development work as approved by Village Development Advisory Committee (VDAC) formed under the guidance and leadership of local administration. The community development work would include strengthening of educational and health facilities, widening and strengthening of village road network, providing potable drinking water, improving the sanitation and drainage networks etc.

Regarding the subsidy in the electricity to the local people GM explained that matter will be dealt by the State Electricity Board as the distribution of electricity is not taken care by NHL. Regarding the replacement of trees likely to get affected by various construction activities, he ensured that to the extent possible the cutting of the trees would be avoided, however, adequate compensatory afforestation work would be undertaken. He also explained that the design of the proposed project is such that the minimum water discharge would be allowed in the Rammam river keeping the sustainable environmental situation. He also explained that the proposed project activities are not likely to affect the water table. To check the land slides as and when required, NHL would adopt modern technologies to minimize the same. The R&R issues will be settled in consultation with local and district administration with the involvement of VDAC.

Additional District Magistrate, Darjeeling emphasized that all possible measures should be ensured by the project proponent towards the mitigation of all environmental hazards and various points raised by the public present in the hearing. In general the public present in the hearing welcome the project incorporating with all the pollution control measures proposed by the Project Proponent.

Sd/-
Dr. T. K. Gupta
Sr. Environmental Engineer &
Incharge – Consent Cell, WBPCB

Sd/-
Gen Omdi Phipon
Additional District Magistrate
Darjeeling