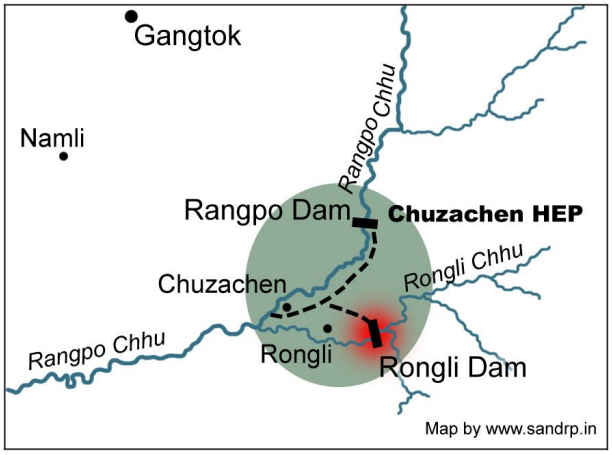
DAM OF CHUZACHEN HEP COLLAPSES



At least 12 labourers were washed away in East Sikkim when an under-construction dam of 99 MW Chuzachen HEP collapsed at about 9:00 pm on April 16, 2009. At least 12 bodies trapped in a tunnel between Lamaten and Rolleck areas and 10 bodies have been recovered, but the toll could mount as it was not clear how many labourers were at work at the site. Since a one km tunnel was flooded after the collapse. Superintendent of Police M S Tuli said that they have registered a case under section 304(A) of the IPC against the private developer and another company to which the dam construction work was awarded for causing unintentional death of the labourers. As per the preliminary information, the labourers were working in the coffer dam in the night shift when the dam suddenly burst "due to a rise of water level of Rongli River triggered by heavy rainfall", it is not known if there was any heave rainfall in the area recently. The dam was being built by Gati Infrastructure Ltd, a courier company, that has no experience in dam building. The project has two intakes one on Rangpo Chhu and another in Rongli Chhu and each with a dam and headrace tunnel and then join together to a common headrace tunnel. Chief Minister of Sikkim laid the Foundation Stone for the Chuzachen HEP on February 6, 2007. The project got environment clearance on Sept 9, 2005. In Sept 2008 the project applied for CDM under UNFCCC status. In fact, during the public hearing for the project on Sept 30, 2004, "Several people expressed fear about disaster that may happen due to the tunnel passing through Rongli bazaar as the area is vulnerable to land slides. They desired that tunnel should be shifted", as noted at the Project Design Document submitted for the CDM status. This incident shows that the feat expressed by people then was timely and by not heeding it the project authorities, the Sikkim Pollution Control Board and the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests, have invited this disaster. They all must be held accountable for this disaster, along the contractor building the project.

Salient Features of Chuzachen HEP			
Installed Capacity			99 MW
Dam	Rangpo Dam	Type	Concrete Gravity
		Height	48 m
		Volume	83,000 m^3
	Rongli Dam	Type	Concrete Gravity
		Height	41 m
		Volume	45,200 m^3
Head Race Tunnel	Rangpo Dam	Length	2578 m
		Internal Diameter	3.3 m
	Rongli Dam	Length	2258 m
		Internal Diameter	4 m
	Common Headrace Tunnel	Length	3225 m
		Internal Diameter	4.6 m

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Surge Shaft		Internal Diameter	12 m
		Height	103.9 m
Surface Penstock		Length	801.2 m
		Diameter	3.3 m
Power House		Type	Outdoor
Turbine type			Francis, Vertical
Generators			2 Nos. each 49.5MW

(http://www.ddinews.gov.in 170409, 180409 http://www.gatiinfra.com/Chujachen.htm 170409, http://www.uniindia.com 170409, PDD of the project submitted for CDM status, among other references)