

Two washed away after sudden release of dam water

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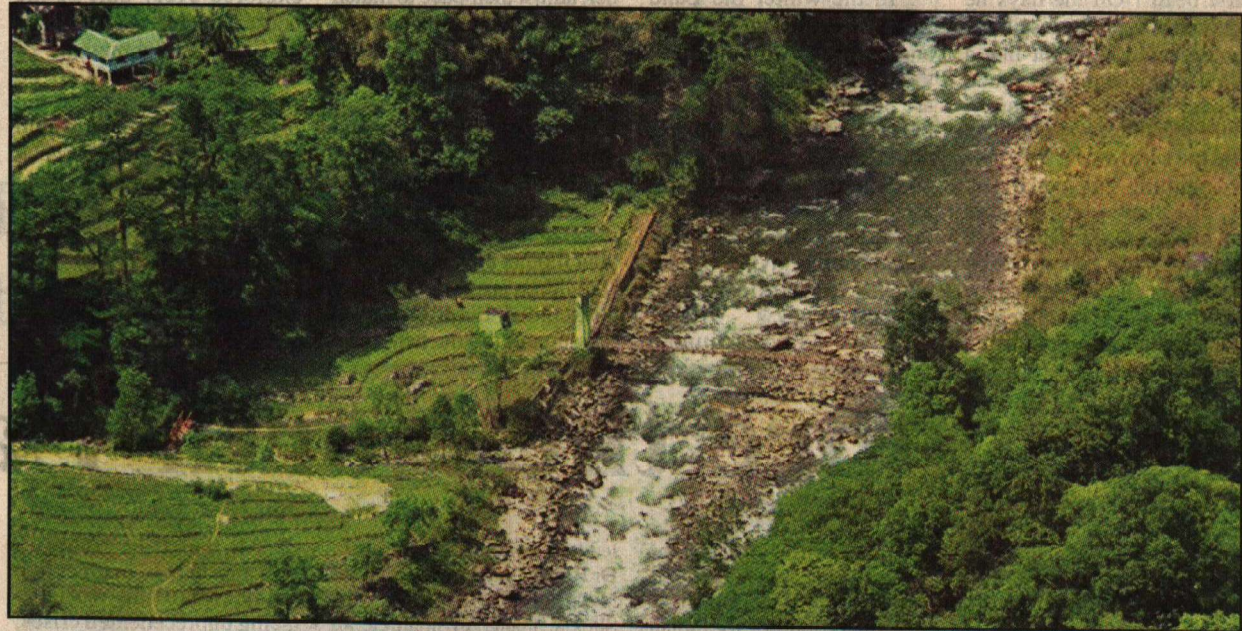
GANGTOK, May 25: A villager and his nephew were swept away and drowned due to alleged sudden release of water by the Gati hydro project dam at Khaharey Khola under Rhenock in East Sikkim.

“The two residents of Khaharey were swimming in the river on Sunday when water from Chujachen-based Gati power project dam upstream was suddenly released and they got washed away. Their dead bodies were found stuck in a rock in the river after the water level subsided,” informed a local resident.

The nephew was a minor and the uncle aged 25 years.

According to locals, such incident due to sudden release of dam water is not new in the area. Lives have been lost due to the negligence of the private power developers as they fail to follow the safety norms before releasing the water, they alleged.

The Affected Citizens of Teesta (ACT) has also expressed its anguish over the incident. ACT general



The Khaharey khola, Rhenock in east district.

secretary Gyatso Lepcha recalled how the hydel power projects have severely affected the State’s ecology and the risks posed for the people.

“We haven’t lost a single person due to Covid-19 but today we lost two young lives due to the carelessness of the project developer. This isn’t

the first case. It’s the violation of human rights which shows how the dams have undermined the lives of the people living in the downstream,” Lepcha said.

Lepcha further questioned as to how long will this continue and who will take the responsibility of these two lost lives and demanded

thorough investigation of the case and compensation to the family of the deceased. They should be delivered justice at the earliest, he said.

“We appeal to the government and civil society to speak up for the lost lives and the ecology which is getting devastated due to these dams,” he stressed.

“The previous State government hardly controlled the functioning of dams in the State but the present government can control new constructions of dams and avoid new proposals. They should strictly regulate the dams that are functional at present,” expressed the ACT functionary.