

ATTSA, ATTWA Shut Down ONGC Assam Asset HQ in Nazira Over Tea Garden Displacement, Unfulfilled Promises



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Normal functioning at the Oil and Natural Gas Corporation's (ONGC) Assam Asset headquarters in Nazira came to a complete standstill on December 24 following a massive sit-in protest staged by the Assam Tea Tribes Students' Association (ATTSA) and the Assam Tea Tribes Women's Association (ATTWA).

The protest was organised in opposition to the eviction of tea garden land for oil and gas exploration and production activities, and against ONGC's alleged failure to fulfil assurances made to the tea community following such land acquisitions.

Protesters stated that the tea industry, which played a crucial role in introducing Assam to the global economy, is now facing systematic destruction. They alleged that ONGC, a Maharatna public sector undertaking, has been carrying out oil and gas extraction activities in tea garden areas, leading to displacement of the tea community and posing a serious threat to their primary source of livelihood.

While acknowledging ONGC's contribution to the national economy, ATTSA and ATTWA leaders alleged that in Assam, the corporation's operations have resulted in the eviction of tea garden land, pushing the tea community towards economic and social marginalisation.

According to the organisations, ONGC had made several commitments in exchange for acquiring tea garden land, including employment opportunities for educated unemployed youth from the tea community and free admission to professional courses such as D-Pharma, ANM, and GNM. However, these promises have allegedly remained unfulfilled for years.

The large-scale sit-in protest in front of the ONGC Assam Asset headquarters led to the complete disruption of official work.

Following the protest, a memorandum containing a seven-point charter of demands was submitted to the Executive Director of ONGC Assam Asset. The key demands include making D-Pharma, ANM, and GNM courses completely free as announced by ONGC and the Union Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas; construction of a two-kilometre road to the GKB ZED oil well; ending alleged deception related to land acquired in 1992 from Ligiri Pukhuri Tea Estate for establishing a Delhi Public School and a golf club; ensuring 60 per cent recruitment of educated unemployed youth from the tea community in the New GGS-2 establishment; upgrading the Shivbari Tea Garden hospital; establishing a library at Hatipatti Tea Garden; and providing one ambulance to each tea garden located in oilfield areas.

The memorandum was submitted under the signatures of ATTSA Nazira branch president Sanjay Gowala and acting secretary Ramesh Karmakar. The organisations warned that if their demands are not implemented within 48 hours, they would be compelled to intensify their agitation, including a complete shutdown of ONGC operations.

The protest highlights growing resentment among the tea community over displacement, unfulfilled assurances, and the impact of oil and gas exploration activities on their livelihoods.

SK Hasan

Freelance journalist, Nazira, Sivasagar district.

BY SK HASAN

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