

Deopahar notified as reserve forest



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Herds of wild elephants in Assam's Numaligarh will now stroll freely in the [Deopahar](#) Reserve Forest, just like they have done for hundreds of years before it was taken away from them by humans, who constructed a [wall](#) around the forest.

Now the Assam government has issued an order notifying [Deopahar](#) in Golaghat district as a Reserve Forest. Though the Assam government had issued the notice on January 19 it became public only recently.

The government's notification came on January 19, a day after the Supreme Court rejected the review [petition](#) of Numaligarh Refinery Limited ([NRL](#)) against a previous decision which upheld a [National](#) Green Tribunal (NGT) order to demolish a boundary [wall](#) and proposed township in the area, which falls in the middle of an elephant corridor.[Deopahar](#) Reserve Forest

State-run [NRL](#) has been engaged in a long-standing legal battle [over](#) its construction of a border [wall](#) for its township, which was blocking the elephant corridor. While the oil company argued that the [wall](#) was necessary to keep the residents safe from wild elephants. But environmentalist claimed that the concrete fencing is dangerous and that elephants are getting killed while trying to bring the [wall](#) down by pouncing on it with their heads. Environmentalist Mubina Akhtar and Chandan Kumar Duarah (Asomiya Pratidin) protested anti-[conservation](#) activities and urged both Central and Assam governments to protect the forest area. It is to be remembered that the foundation stone of [NRL](#) was laid on July 3 by then Prime Minister Sri P V Narasimha Rao and [Conservation](#) Activist, [student](#) of D R College, Chandan Kumar Duarah submitted a memorandum to the PM demanding not to touch the [Deopahar](#) forest area. Environmental Clearance for Refinery Project Obtained in May 31, 1991. Before that clearance, Mr. Achinta Nayan [Bezbaruah](#) and Chandan Kumar Duarah, pointed out the archeological and environmental importance of [Deopahar](#) to the experts who prepared Environmental Impact Study and finally the project kept off [Deopahar](#).

According to the report, though the Assam government had issued the notice on January 19 it became public only recently. The notification said in the exercise of powers conferred by Section 17 of the Assam Forest Regulation 1891, the [Governor](#) is pleased to declare [Deopahar](#) as a reserve forest.

In 2016, the [National](#) Green tribunal had ordered demolition of the boundary [wall](#) constructed by the [NRL](#) authority that came up in the area in 2011 as it is part of [Deopahar](#) and also falls in the “no development zone” issued by the Union [ministry](#) of environment and forest in 1996. The order of 2016 also said that [NRL](#)’s proposed township also falls in [Deopahar](#).

The NGT had given one month’s time to the [NRL](#) for demolition of the boundary [wall](#) and ordered that the proposed township should not come up in the present location.

In 2018, dismissing [NRL](#)’s review application of 2016 order, the NGT had said, “In view of categorical findings already recorded by the tribunal that the area where the [wall](#) came up and the area where the proposed township is to come up is part of the [Deopahar](#) Reserve Forest, rehearing on merits is not permissible.”

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