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Fresh Oil Drilling Clearance Raises Concerns Over Upper Dehing Forest Conservation



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The granting of environmental clearance for oil drilling inside the Upper Dehing Reserved Forest has reignited concerns among environmentalists and local residents over the future of one of Upper Assam's ecologically sensitive forest landscapes.

According to a public notice issued by Oil India Limited (OIL), the State Environment Impact Assessment Authority (SEIAA), Assam, has accorded environmental clearance for the diversion of 3.73 hectares of forest land for drilling four oil wells at the old Bogapani-2 plinth in the Upper Dehing Reserved Forest (West Block) under the Digboi Forest Division.

The clearance, granted under the provisions of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Notification, 2006, has drawn criticism from conservationists who fear that continued industrial activities within the Dehing-Patkai landscape could accelerate habitat fragmentation and ecological degradation.

Several citizens and environmental activists have questioned the rationale of permitting fresh extraction projects inside a reserved forest. They argue that while the diverted area may appear small in isolation, repeated clearances over time could gradually erode the integrity of the rainforest ecosystem.

Public concern has also been amplified on social media, where users have expressed apprehension over the cumulative impact of oil exploration on wildlife habitats, biodiversity, and forest connectivity. Critics contend that projects approved in the name of energy security must also be evaluated against the long-term environmental costs borne by future generations.

The Upper Dehing Reserved Forest forms part of the larger Dehing-Patkai rainforest ecosystem, known for its rich biodiversity and as a habitat for species such as elephants, hoolock gibbons, hornbills, and several rare flora and fauna.

The latest approval has once again brought into focus the ongoing debate between resource extraction and conservation in Assam's remaining rainforest landscapes, with environmental groups calling for greater transparency and a comprehensive assessment of the cumulative impacts of industrial activities in the Dehing-Patkai region.



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Assam Times Staff. editor@assamtimes.org

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