

NRL draws flak over elephant corridor



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Centre for Conservation [Education](#) and Research (CCER) has strongly opposed and condemned the encroachment by the Numaligarh Refinery Limited on the traditional elephant corridor in Deopahar PRF under Golaghat Forest division. The organization alleged that [NRL](#), winner of [green](#) awards, has been destroying nature with its activities that has increased elephant depredation in the area.

Telgaram, where the Refinery is situated, is known for its elephant habitations. This area has served as a transit for elephants in between [Kaziranga](#) and Karbi Anglong. With the establishment of [NRL](#) in the area in the 90s, elephant depredation reached an alarming proportion. Incidents of man-elephant conflict only increased [over](#) the years resulting in casualties on both sides. To make matters worse, the [NRL](#) brought into its possession a stretch of Deopahar PRF and tried to secure it by constructing a boundary wall on this traditional elephant corridor. The illegal boundary wall became a huge physical barrier for the elephants blocking their [normal](#) movement. In a number of cases baby elephants got trapped inside these erections and were separated from the herd. The pachyderms were even seen hitting at the walls trying to get rid of these obstructions.

Further, the wall was constructed inside the “No Development Zone” violating the norms of the [National](#) Green Tribunal.

The Divisional Forest Officer, Golaghat, vide letter no. B/13/[NRL](#) Const/1295-98 dated 02/05/15 has asked the [NRL](#) authority, Guwahati to take immediate action and remove the barrier constructed illegally that is blocking the [normal](#) movement of elephants in the area.

The expansion of [NRL](#) township has been another cause of concern that has become a threat to the elephant habitat in the Deopahar fringe. Moreover the use of high voltage lights, heavy construction equipments and vehicles day and night in the immediate vicinity of the PRF is causing disturbance to the pachyderm population.

Continuing with its anti-conservation activities, [NRL](#) of late has cleared huge stretch of forest land in the “no development zone” of the Deopahar PRF for developing a golf course. In this connection, the Golaghat Forest Division appointed Santanu Barua, ACF, (vide order no 38 dated 20/05/15) to conduct a detailed enquiry into the illegal clearing of forest area and illegal cutting and mining of earth/hillocks in the forest fringe.

It may be mentioned here that although approval was given for operating (felling) certain numbers of trees in a restricted area after the receipt of the [Environment](#) Clearance by the State Level [Environment](#) Impact Assessment Authority (SEIAA), however, the same was withdrawn later before the final approval due to violations (Letter No-B/32/PP/2685-92 dated 23/[10](#)/14). Recently, another letter was issued to the [NRL](#) management in this regard (Letter No-B/13/[NRL](#)-Const/1302-1305 dated 02/05/15).

Even after the issuing of the letters by the Golaghat Forest Division a month has lapsed and the [NRL](#) is yet to comply with the instruction of the Forest Department.

Large-scale change in the land use patterns with destruction of forest cover and cutting and mining of hillocks has changed the topography of the area known for its rich and endemic biodiversity, stated a CCER press release.



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