

Baghjan Oilfields

June 23, 2020

Assam's pollution watchdog has told Oil India Ltd (OIL) to shut down production and drilling at all installations in Upper Assam's Baghjan oilfield after discovering that the company had allegedly started operations without obtaining prior consent to operate from it. It is a serious violation of the provisions of the Water Act, 1974, Air Act, 1981 as well as Environment Protection Act, 1986. The closure notice also cited a number of alleged environmental transgressions by the PSU.

Recent Events

- The Baghjan oilfield has 21 functioning wells-four of them are gas wells (including the one that reported the blowout) and 17 are oil wells.
- The ecological disaster at Baghjan in Tinsukia district was precipitated by the blowout at well number 5.
- The well located close to the Dibru-Saikhowa national park caught fire, leading to the deaths of two OIL firefighters. Around 11,000 people from the surrounding villages are now in relief camps set up by the administration.
- Further, OIL was required to take adequate measures to prevent spillage of hazardous wastes into water bodies through designated drains and treatment facilities and to further mitigate oil spillage and fire hazards.
- However, the oil has now leaked into the mainstream of river Lohit polluting the water and adjoining Maguri-Motapung wetland with toxic pollutants.

Source: *Indian Express, Hindustan Times*