

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 106
TO BE ANSWERED ON 03.02.2025

Approval to Exploratory Drilling in Hollongapar Gibbon Wildlife Sanctuary

106. SHRI SASIKANTH SENTHIL:
SHRI PRADYUT BORDOLOI:

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether exploratory drilling for oil and gas has been approved within the eco-sensitive zone of Hollongapar Gibbon Wildlife Sanctuary;
- (b) if so, the specific environmental safeguards that have been put in place to protect the sanctuary's biodiversity during the exploratory drilling phase;
- (c) whether there are any specific conditions recommended by the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) to mitigate environmental risks during the project and if so, the details of such recommendations;
- (d) whether any public consultations were conducted by the Government or the firm involved before according clearance to the project, if so, the details thereof; and
- (e) whether the Government has conducted any studies on the impact of the project on the connectivity of the sanctuary with the nearby Dissoi Reserve Forest and if so, the measures proposed to be taken to mitigate the same?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

(SHRI KIRTI VARDHAN SINGH)

- (a) to (c) The Standing Committee of National Board for Wild Life in its 81st meeting held on 21st December 2024 decided to recommend the proposal for Oil & Gas exploration drilling over an area of 4.4998 Ha in the Eco-Sensitive Zone (ESZ) of Hollongapar Gibbon Wildlife Sanctuary, District Jorhat, Assam. The proposal has been recommended with following conditions:
- (i) The User Agency shall submit the entire plan of exploration drilling operations including the Material safety data sheet before commencement of the drilling operation to the controller DGH/SPCB & Forest Department.
 - (ii) The SPCB & Forest Department shall ensure direct control and continuous vigilance over the operations and the DGH to overlook all the controls & operations.

- (iii) The User Agency shall install CCTV DSS (Digital Videos Surveillance System) to enable real time monitoring of all the operations by all the controllers (DGH/ SPCB/ Forest Dept.)
 - (iv) Any violations of PCB norms shall result in immediate suspension of the operation and termination of the project and necessary legal actions will be taken against the project proponent.
 - (v) No oil/ gas extraction shall be allowed from inside the ESZ area in case any reserves are discovered at the site.
 - (vi) The User Agency shall ensure minimal tree felling. No adverse impact shall be caused to the wild animals and their habitat.
 - (vii) The User Agency shall take adequate measures against all kinds of pollution likely to be caused by implementation of the project including disasters like oil & gas leakage or explosion of the well.
 - (viii) An amount equivalent to the cost of implementing the measures to mitigate impact of the activities proposed in the project in the ESZ shall be deposited by the User Agency to be utilized by the Chief Wild Life Warden in consonance with the guidelines issued by the Ministry vide F. No. 6-30/2019-WL dated 13.12.2023.
 - (ix) An annual compliance certificate on the stipulated conditions shall be submitted by the User Agency to the State Chief Wild Life Warden and an annual compliance certificate shall be submitted by the State Chief Wild Life Warden to Government.
- (d) All projects in respect of off-shore and onshore oil and gas exploration have been categorized as 'B2' projects under the Environment Impact Assessment Notification, 2006, thereby exempting them from the requirement of EIA report and Public Consultation.
- (e) Based on the decision taken by the Standing Committee of the National Board for Wild Life in its 80th meeting held on 9th October, 2024, a site inspection committee was constituted by the Ministry. This committee undertook site inspection and noted that the ESZ around the Hollongapar Gibbon Wildlife Sanctuary notified by the Ministry in September, 2019 also includes the Dissoi Valley Reserved Forest. As per the ESZ notification, certain activities have been categorized as prohibited, regulated and promoted. The purpose of categorization of activities as prohibited and regulated in the ESZ which includes Dissoi Reserved Forest is to mitigate impacts on the sanctuary.
