

## PRESS RELEASE

### Aaranyak's concern on oil leakage and fire at Baghjan in Tinsukia District

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Aaranyak, an organization working towards biodiversity conservation in Northeast India is deeply disturbed and concerned on the fire-bursting at the oil wells at Baghjan area adjacent to important wildlife areas, Maguri-Motapung wetlands and Dibrusaikhowa National Park since yesterday afternoon. The leakage of natural gas from the oil well has been reported almost 12 days ago, however it is now evident that Oil India Limited (OIL) could not address the leakage issue for over 12 days leading to unabated fire since last afternoon.

Dibru-Saikhowa is also a Biosphere Reserve and it is worth mentioning that Biosphere Reserve (BR) is an international designation by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for representative parts of natural and cultural landscapes extending over large areas of terrestrial or coastal/marine ecosystems or a combination of both. The unabated fire which spread horizontally, had already had a severe impact on human habitation, agricultural fields, wildlife and wetlands. We urge that both OIL and the government agencies need to act immediately to control the fire for well-being of the local people and restore environmental damage. We are also skeptical about OIL's capability to stop such fires, as they have failed miserably to prevent oil spill and subsequent fire due the leakage in the last two weeks. We demand that OIL should take full responsibility of the restoration of the environmental damage caused and of the affected people whose life, property and everything is at stake. We also demand that OIL needs to pledge to check such kind of mishap and be well-equipped to deal with such an emergency in future. It is time for the government to be more cautious and have a full understanding of the capabilities of user agencies before granting permission for greater interest of safeguarding public life and properties from such mishap. In this context, we would also like to draw attention on the recent clearance that OIL received for drilling oil using ERD technology at seven locations in the area. With the present mishap, we would like to state that the decision needs to be revisited. Aaranyak hopes that user agency shall give due value to people's life and properties in surrounding area.

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