



Assam Gas Leak

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Why in News

Recently, a gas leak has occurred at **Baghjan well** in Tinsukia district of Assam following a blowout.

- The Baghjan well is a purely gas-producing well in **Tinsukia district**, and is at an aerial distance of 900 metres from the **Dibru-Saikhowa National Park**.
- It has been drilled by **Oil India Limited (OIL)** since 2006.
- Natural gas is a mix of propane, methane, propylene and other gases.

Key Points

- **Gas Leak:**
 - The gas well at Baghjan **was under maintenance**, for which it was temporarily shut. The Blowout Preventer (BOP) was also removed.
 - However, the gas started to ooze out of the well during the maintenance. The reason behind the blowout (a sudden/uncontrolled release of gas/oil) is not clear.
- **Possible Reasons:**
 - It may have occurred **due to lack of attention, poor workmanship, bad maintenance, old age, sabotage to morpho-tectonic factors**.
 - Sometimes, the **disturbance of pressure balance in a well may also lead to sudden blowouts**.
- **Steps Taken:** The authorities have built a temporary water reservoir through pipelines from the **Dangori river** nearby the well to control the blowout.
 - To control a blowout, a huge quantity of water is required so that the gas does not catch fire.
 - The **control of a blowout depends on two things:** the **size of the reservoir** and the **pressure at which the gas is flowing out**. Many blowouts also automatically collapse on their own.

- **Challenges:** The gas leak at the Baghjan is still not under control and it is continuously leaking.
 - The limited space and non-availability of open space above the well head poses a huge challenge in placement of BOP.
 - The BOP placement involves a huge risk since Baghjan is a gas well and runs the risk of catching fire at any point.
- **Impact:**
 - The **gas is flowing with the wind** in the radius of up to 5 km and **condensate (the residue from gas) is falling** on bamboo, tea gardens, banana trees, betel nut trees among others.
 - While the well is outside the **Eco Sensitive Zone** of the park, there are reports that the condensate is falling into **Dibru-Saikhowa National Park** and **Maguri-Motapung wetland** too.
 - The gas leak has also caused deaths of **Gangetic dolphins**, and a variety of fish. The number of birds have also decreased because they have flown away.
- **Assessment of the Impact:** To safeguard the environment, OIL has engaged a **National Accreditation Board for Education and Training (NABET)** accredited consultant to carry out an **Environment Impact Assessment study** to assess the effects of blowout on terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems and to work on a **Socio-Economic Impact Assessment**.
 - NABET is a constituent Board of **Quality Council of India**.
 - It offers accreditation to **educational organisations, vocational training organizations and skill certification bodies**.

Dibru-Saikhowa National Park

- Dibru-Saikhowa is a **National Park** as well as a **Biosphere Reserve** situated in the south bank of the river Brahmaputra in Assam.
- It is one of the **19 biodiversity hotspots in the world**.
- The forest type of Dibru-Saikhowa comprises **semi-evergreen forests, deciduous forests, littoral and swamp forests and patches of wet evergreen forests**.
 - It is the largest swamp forest in north-eastern India.
- It is an identified **Important Bird Area (IBA)** notified by the **Bombay Natural History Society**. It is most famous for the rare **white-winged wood ducks** as well as **feral horses**.

Maguri-Motapung Wetland

- Maguri Motapung Beel is less than 10 km from Dibru-Saikhowa National Park and part of the Dibru-Saikhowa Biosphere Reserve.

- The wetland derives its name from “Magur”, the local word for the catfish ‘Clarius batrachus’.
- It is an **Important Bird Area** notified by the Bombay Natural History Society.

Source:IE