

## Gauhati HC Orders Murder Charges Against Rat-Hole Mine Operators in Umrangso Tragedy



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Wahidur Rahman 16 September 2025 57857 views

The Gauhati High Court has directed the Assam government to prosecute those responsible for the Umrangso rat-hole mine tragedy under charges of **murder**, holding that the deaths of nine miners in April this year cannot be treated as mere negligence.

The accident occurred at 3 Kilo in Umrangso, Dima Hasao district, when nine workers lost their lives in an abandoned coal mine that was being operated illegally. Despite a ban imposed on rat-hole mining, such activities continue to flourish in the region.

Hearing a suo motu Public Interest Litigation, Chief Justice **Ashutosh Kumar** observed that the continued practice of illegal rat-hole mining pointed to a grave dereliction of duty by the authorities concerned. He said those engaged in running such mines, and those enabling their operation, must face the most stringent provisions of law.

The State government has constituted a commission of inquiry under retired Justice **Anima Hazarika** to ascertain responsibility. While the Dima Hasao administration has filed its response, the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council has yet to submit its affidavit, drawing censure from the court.

Earlier, the Chief Judicial Magistrate of Dima Hasao had ordered registration of an FIR against **Kanika Hojai**, spouse of the Chief Executive Member of the Dima Hasao Autonomous Council, and constituted a Special Investigation Team to probe the matter.

The High Court's order to frame charges under **Section 302 of the IPC** is seen as a landmark directive which may set a precedent for treating deaths in illegal and hazardous mining as deliberate crimes.

The matter will come up for further hearing in **late November**, when the Court will review the progress of the investigation and the government's compliance with its directions.

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**BY WAHIDUR RAHMAN**

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