

Stolen Lands, Broken Lives: How Assam's Khilonjiya Pay the Price for Corporate Development



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In Assam, the land of the Brahmaputra, tea gardens, and vibrant indigenous cultures, a troubling pattern has emerged. The state's push for development—solar plants, thermal power stations, cement factories, and urban restoration—has come at a devastating cost to its original inhabitants, the Khilonjiya. These indigenous communities, including Karbi, Bodo, Dimasa, and Adivasi, are being displaced from their ancestral lands to make way for wealthy industrialists and corporate giants like Adani. While rich outsiders are welcomed with open arms, the Khilonjiya bear the burden of uprooted lives, lost livelihoods, and erased heritage. This blog chronicles few recent land disputes, exposing the stark inequality between corporate gain and indigenous loss.

The Khilonjiya's Burden: A Timeline of Displacement

Mikir Bamuni Grant, Nagaon - October 2020

In Nagaon's Samaguri Circle, Khilonjiya Karbi and Adivasi tenant farmers were evicted from 276 bighas (91 acres) of farmland to accommodate a 15 MW solar plant by Azure Power Forty Pvt Ltd. With just one day's notice in March 2020, their rights under the Assam Tenancy Act (1971) were ignored. On October 8, 2020, bulldozers destroyed crops, backed by police and CRPF. Fourteen villagers were arrested, and women faced violence, with one miscarriage linked to police brutality. The land, once sustaining generations, now serves corporate interests

Impact: Khilonjiya farmers were rendered landless, their heritage erased for a private firm's profit.

Silsako Beel, Guwahati - May 2022 to June 2025

In Guwahati's Silsako Beel, a vital wetland, over 1,000 Khilonjiya Assamese families were evicted in phases (May 2022, February and September 2023) to restore ~350-800 bighas for flood management. By April 2025, 1,203 homes were demolished, and in May-June 2025, institutions like Ginger Hotel were cleared, signaling urban development favoring elite interests. Promised compensation (₹10 lakh for RCC houses, ₹5 lakh for Assam-type, ₹1 lakh for kutcha) reached only ~550 families by June 2025 due to bureaucratic hurdles. A magisterial probe is investigating fairness, but Khilonjiya voices remain sidelined.

Impact: Indigenous families face displacement and uncertainty, while urban elites benefit from "restored" spaces.

Kaziranga Animal Corridors, Nagaon & Golaghat - February 2022

Khilonjiya settlers in Kaziranga's animal corridors (e.g., Amguri, Harmati) received eviction notices in 2022 to protect wildlife, a move prioritizing conservation over people. Many, displaced earlier by erosion, protested, demanding justice. A 2017 eviction saw two Khilonjiya protesters killed by police, with ~₹15 crore later paid as compensation.

Impact: Khilonjiya families were sacrificed for ecological goals, while tourism benefits outsiders.

Rampur Dorabeel, Kamrup - April-May 2025

In Kamrup, 150 bighas of Khilonjiya grazing land near Dorabeel wetland was proposed for a logistics park by M/S New Kolkata International Development Pvt Ltd in April 2025. Supporting ~30,000 residents, including 3,000+ livestock-rearing families and 2,000 fishers, the land is central to festivals like Suwari and Magh Bihu. On May 18, ~300 villagers formed the Dorabeel Grazing Field Protection Committee to resist, citing risks to 200+ bird species and river dolphins.

Impact: Khilonjiya livelihoods and culture face erasure for a corporate park benefiting external investors.

Parbatjhora, Kokrajhar (BTAD) - May-June 2025

In the Bodoland Territorial Area District, ~3,600 bighas of Khilonjiya Bodo land in Parbatjhora was allotted for a 1,800 MW thermal power plant by Adani and APDCL, despite Forest Rights Act recognition. Protests led by the Bodoland Tribal Protection Forum on May 18, 2025, decried health risks and rights violations. BTR CEM Pramod Boro claimed on June 16 that issues are being addressed, but Khilonjiya resistance persists.

Impact: Over 150 Bodo families risk losing ancestral lands to a billionaire's project.

Dima Hasao, Umrangso - June 2025

In Dima Hasao, ~9,000 bighas of Khilonjiya land were proposed for Adani's Mahabal Cement Pvt. Ltd. mega cement plant, bypassing Sixth Schedule protections. The National Commission for Scheduled Tribes issued a notice on June 17, 2025, after an Indigenous Peoples Party petition flagged risks to 14,000+ Karbi, Dimasa, Naga, and Adivasi families. Limestone mining tenders without consultation fueled protests.

Impact: Khilonjiya tribes face displacement for Adani's profit, threatening ecosystems and rights.

Goalpara, Rakhyasini Pahar - June 2025

In Goalpara, an eviction drive was planned at Rakhyasini Pahar, possibly for wetland development, affecting Khilonjiya families. An X post suggested a link to the Hasila Beel operation, but details are unclear, and the query's mention of 68 families in Guwahati may be a misattribution.

Impact: Potential displacement of Khilonjiya families for unspecified development favoring external interests.

The Injustice: Khilonjiya vs. Industrialists

The Khilonjiya, Assam's soul, are being pushed out to welcome industrialists like Adani, whose projects—cement plants in Dima Hasao, thermal plants in BTAD—promise wealth for a few. Over 1,000 families lost homes in Silsako, 14,000 face risks in Dima Hasao, and 30,000 in Rampur stand to lose livelihoods. Environmental damage is staggering: Dorabeel's wetland risks losing 200+ bird species; mining in Umrangso threatens ecosystems. Cultural heritage—Bodo traditions, Assamese festivals—is eroded, while legal protections like the Sixth Schedule and Forest Rights Act are ignored.

Deaths are rare but tragic. In Mikir Bamuni, a miscarriage followed police violence. In Kaziranga (2017), two Khilonjiya were killed by police, a chilling precedent. Meanwhile, industrialists face no such burdens, handed Khilonjiya lands with state support, bypassing Free, Prior, and Informed Consent.

Resistance and Hope

Khilonjiya communities are fighting back. The Dorabeel Committee, Bodoland Protection Forum, and Indigenous Peoples Party lead protests, from Guwahati's streets to Dima Hasao's hills. The canceled Karbi Anglong solar project (2025) proves resistance works. Yet, the state's bias toward corporates persists, demanding urgent reform.

Assam's Khilonjiya deserve to thrive on their lands, not be displaced for corporate greed. Let's stand with them to reclaim justice.

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Assam Times Staff. editor@assamtimes.org

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