

Kalai-II Hydroelectric Project

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Why in News?

Recently, Union Environment Ministry's Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC) has recommended environmental clearance (EC) for the Kalai-II hydroelectric project on the Lohit River.

Project Details

- **Developed by** - Tehri Hydro Development Corporation Limited (THDC) India Ltd.
- **Location** - Lohit River (a tributary of the Brahmaputra in Anjaw's Hawaii village, Arunachal Pradesh).
- **Capacity** - 1,200 MW.
- **Type** - Run-of-river with pondage project.

A standard run-of-river project generates electricity by using the natural flow and elevation of the river.

- **Structure** - Concrete gravity dam with underground powerhouse.
- **Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Consultant** - Water & Power Consultancy Services (WAPCOS) Ltd.
- EIA's Avian fauna chapter listed 28 species on 19 families; but omitted white-bellied heron, failed to mention under - threat species.

Significant locations under threat

- **Lohit River Basin** - Supports free-flowing riverine habitats crucial for fish diversity and endangered avifauna.
- **Avifauna** - The collective bird population of a specific region, habitat, or geological period.
- **Kamlang Tiger Reserve** - Misrepresented only as a sanctuary in EIA; Habitat for white-bellied heron also home to tigers, elephants, and rich biodiversity.
- **Namdapha Tiger Reserve** - Known for heron nesting sites; one of India's richest biodiversity zones with endemic flora and fauna.
- **Walong (Anjaw district)** - Only other nesting site of white-bellied heron in India; records of nest abandonment due to anthropogenic disturbance.
- **Parshuram Kund (downstream Lohit)** - Pilgrimage site; ecological and cultural significance.

White-Bellied Heron (*Ardea insignis*)

- The 2nd largest heron in the world after Goliath Heron.
- **Habitat** - Free-flowing rivers with rapids, low disturbance zones.
- **Threats** - Hunting and habitat loss are the major threats.

- **Population** - Less than 250 globally; 60 estimated in wild; 4-5 breeding pairs in Bhutan, fewer in eastern Arunachal.
- **Conservation Status**
 - **IUCN Red List** - Critically Endangered
 - **Wildlife Protection Act** - Schedule-I

Reference

- [The Indian Express | Kalai II Hydroelectric Project](#)

