

## Training on “Understanding Biodiversity and Environmental Issues for Better Reportage”

Guwahati 20<sup>th</sup> June:

Media plays an important role in shaping the mindset of people towards the issues pertinent to biodiversity and the environment and can also influence policy making to a great deal. Thus, it is imperative that the upcoming generations of journalists are encouraged to take up environmental journalism in a serious and informed manner. Aaranyak, in its endeavour to promote environmental journalism in the region, has initiated a series of training workshops for journalism students in the state. These trainings initiated by the Media Production & Communications Division of Aaranyak are designed to help the journalism students understand environment and biodiversity issues in a better manner.

The first of this series of trainings titled “Understanding Biodiversity and Environmental Issues for Better Reportage” was organized in collaboration with Department of Mass Communication, Journalism & Media Studies, Cotton University from 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> June 2019. The training, supported by Internews’ Earth Journalism Network covered both in-house training and field trip to Manas National Park to enhance the knowledge and hands on training on different issues and facts related to biodiversity and environment.

The first day of the training was held in the conference Hall of Cotton University where several lectures and interactive sessions were organised. Total of 27 post-graduate students participated in the training which was being conducted by several resource persons. Mr. Udayan Borthakur, wildlife biologist and Head of Media Production & Communications Division of Aaranyak gave an overview of Aaranyak's research and conservation activities. Dr. Oinam Sunanda Devi, Scientific Officer of Assam State Biodiversity Board (ASBB) speaking on significance of biodiversity and issues related to conservation. Dr. Partha Jyoti Das, Scientist and Head of Water Climate & Hazard Division of Aaranyak spoke on the global climate crisis and the Northeast scenario with particular emphasis on the need of sensible reportage of such issues. Mr. Sushanta Talukdar, senior journalist and Editor of [nezine.com](http://nezine.com) spoke on effective approaches to environmental reportage. Mr. Ramesh Bhusal, environmental journalist and South Asia Content Coordinator for Internews' Earth Journalism Network spoke on various tools and approaches in this field.

As a part of this programme, a field trip was conducted to Manas National Park on 18<sup>th</sup> June, 2019. A total number of 11 students from Department of Mass Communication, Journalism & Media Studies, Cotton University were selected to visit the national park. Dr. Bibhuti P Lahkar, Manas Landscape Coordinator and Programme Secretary of Aaranyak delivered a brief orientation on “Manas National Park and related issues” before entering into the park. Dr. Lahkar also delivered another presentation on “Ongoing Aaranyak research and conservation activities of Aaranyak in Manas National Park”. Another session titled “Wildlife documentary film screening and interaction on Conservation Photography and film making” was conducted by Mr. Udayan Borthakur and a film “Legends of Hoolongapar” was screened

at the end of the session. On 19th June, the day was started with nature walk and bird watching session in nearby areas of Smiling Tusker Elephant Camp. An exposure visit to fringe areas of Manas and understanding community conservation efforts supported by Aaranyak was carried out under the guidance of Mr. Bipul Das of Aaranyak.

During the visit to fringe villages of Manas, Mr. Ramesh Bhusal, environmental journalist and South Asia Coordinator for Internews' Earth Journalism Network along with Mr. Muktikaam Hazarika and Pragjyotish Bhuyan, Assistant Professor of Department of Mass Communication, Journalism & Media Studies, Cotton University, Guwahati guided the students on hands on reporting on different issues related to environment.

It is worth mentioning that the Media Production & Communications Division of Aaranyak, initiated in the year 2018, will now also offer internship and assignment opportunities to young freelance journalists of the state for developing original stories on issues related to biodiversity and the environment in the region.

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