

Ceremonial handover of 18-km solar powered fences to enable human-elephant coexistence at Nagrijuli, Baksa by Aaranyak

Aaranyak, 05 February, 2021: Premier biodiversity conservation organisation Aaranyak has installed 18 km of solar powered fence to facilitate human-elephant coexistence at Nagirjuli, Baksa. This initiative will ensure food security and substantial decrease in human-elephant conflict incidents, thus directly benefiting approximately 15,000 people of 35 hamlets in 12 villages. The installation of solar-powered fences was conducted with extensive support from local communities and Forest Department, and funded by Elephant Family Foundation India.

The 18 km solar powered fence with two strands has been installed into two phases covering several villages around the Nagrijuli-Udalguri national highway. A 14 km fence was erected from No. 1 Dongargaon to Arongajuli village and the second part of the fence of 4 km length was installed from Piplanee to Serchini village. Five units of solar operated high power fence machines were installed to run the fences.

Nagrijuli area is one of the hotspots of human elephant conflict in Assam; negatively impacting the villagers from every sphere. Before installation of solar powered fence, the people used to have sleepless nights in fear of losing their crops, properties and lives. A direct impact has been seen after installation of the power fence on the community which has improved their daily lives and have a positive social impact.

Local communities participated actively during the installation and the technical know-how & equipment were provided by Aaranyak. Moreover, capacity building training was provided to the local youths for fence maintenance and future sustainability of the same. Five different fencing committees were formed for maintenance of the fence.

On 5th February, 2021, a formal handover programme was organised by Aaranyak at Nagrijuli Police Outpost campus, which was graced by who's who of the area. An MoU for five years with clauses for maintenance and smooth functioning of the fences was signed by each of the committee during the event. Shri Ranjit Basumatary (BR Ferenga), EM, Forest, BTR, Shri Dharma Kanta Das, EM, Agriculture, BTR and Shri Emanuel Moshahary, MLA, Tamulpur inaugurated the solar-powered fence at the site. The inauguration was followed by a public meeting at the outpost campus, which was attended by Shri Dipul Barman, DFO, Baksa, Mr. Abbas Dewan, ACF, Manas National Park, Shri Kailash Malakar, IC, Nagrijuli, solar-fence committees and local people. From Aaranyak the event was attended Dr. Bibhab Kumar Talukdar, CEO & SG, Dr. Bibhuti Prasad Lahkar, Head, Elephant Research and Conservation Division, Udayan Borthakur, a senior scientist, Anjan Baruah, an expert on solar fences, Alolika Sinha, a wildlife biologist, Mr. Jayanta Pathak, conservation educator and other researchers and staffs working in Manas landscape. Dr. Namita Brahma, Faculty, TISS and life member, Aaranyak offered the vote of thanks.

Both the EMs, MLA and the local people expressed their gratitude to Aaranyak for undertaking this work, which ensured a peaceful coexistence between human and elephant. Mr. Upen Thapa, a retired teacher from Arangajuli mentioned, "The installation of the fences has created a safe haven for us. We can sleep peacefully now".