

PRESS RELEASE

Aaranyak gifts field gear and sensitizes VDO members on wildlife crime

Guwahati, February 22: Aaranyak, a frontline biodiversity conservation organisation in the region, provided field gear including surveillance attire to over 100 Village Defence Organisation (VDO) members from 16 VDOs located around the rhino abode of Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve, a UNESCO world heritage site in Assam.

The grassroots conservation organisation Aaranyak (www.aaranyak.org), which relentlessly fights wildlife crime in Northeast India, also conducted two back-to-back sensitisation workshops on February 21 and 19.

In order to prevent the burgeoning wildlife crime in the region, the field gears were handed over during a workshop on "Combating Wildlife Crime through Awareness" on February 21 at the Luhitmukh Chariali LP School, Gohpur in Sonitpur district of Assam. The workshop was conducted in collaboration with Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve authority, Assam Police and representatives from Village Defence Organisations of the area with support from the David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation (DSWF), UK.

In another such programme held under the aegis of the organisation on 19 February at Laltapu LP School, Panpur Jamuguri of Sonitpur district in collaboration with KNP&TR, Sonitpur district Police, Upatyaka and VDOs with support from the US Fish and Wildlife Service, USA, more field gears were distributed among VDP members.

VDOs around Kaziranga National Park have been assisting in conserving the park's wildlife, especially the one-horned Indian rhinoceros- the state animal of Assam, and instrumental in eliciting cooperation of the fringe area villagers in protecting the park's wildlife. Aaranyak has provided the VDO members with field gears and basic field equipment whenever the opportunity arises, to complement their efforts for wildlife conservation.

"It is also a part of Aaranyak's effort to raise mass awareness level and assist civil authorities in rhino-bearing areas for conservation of rhinos as well as provide field gear to help support 'No Rhino Killing' for the foreseeable future", a senior official from Legal and Advocacy Division (LAD) of Aaranyak said.

Dr Jimmy Borah, Aaranyak's Senior Manager and an expert on wildlife crime monitoring, spoke to the representatives from VDOs about the current wildlife crime situation in the state and the region. In order to curb this burgeoning social evil, which is directly connected to serious crimes like arms and drug smuggling, synergy among VDO members and passing information on wildlife crime to forest and police authorities is utmost necessary. Ivy Farheen Hussain, an official of Aaranyak, hailed the eagerness exhibited by VDO members to contribute towards controlling wildlife crime. Both the meetings were coordinated by Aaranyak's senior official Sanjib Kumar Bezbaruah.

The sensitisation programme held in Sonitpur district was graced by Babul Kumar Doley, Headmaster of Luhitmukh Chariali LP School, Jotindra Mohan Das, Ranger, Gautam Mahanta, Co-VDO, Mridul

Hazarika, President and Tilok Hazarika, Secretary of Thana Committee of local police station, representatives from local civil bodies, Anima Mili, TMKK Savanetri, Kaliram Mili, Sampadak of MMK Sonipur District.

The field gear distribution and sensitisation workshop held at Laltapu LP School, Panpur Jamuguri of Sonitpur district was graced by Tanko Bahadur Chetry, Headmaster of Laltapu LP School, Jatindra Mohan Das and Debojit Saikia, Rangers, Hemanta Das, CI, Kaljoti Bora, Officer in Charge- Jamuguri Police Station, Saidul Islam and Luhit Chetry, Sarkari Gaonburhas.

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