

## PRESS RELEASE

### **Airlines staff in Guwahati airport alerted on burgeoning illegal wildlife trade**

Guwahati, March 19: As the global cartel of illegal trade wildlife is showing increasing tendency to take the air routes for smuggling wildlife products, airport staff of various airlines in the country have faced a challenge to detect wildlife products that are being sent through airlines.

With objective to sensitise and provide some basic inputs for detection of illegal wildlife products that are being routed through airlines in passenger luggage and cargos, biodiversity conservation organisation Aaranyak ([www.aaranyak.org](http://www.aaranyak.org)) joined hands with the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) to organise a sensitisation session on illegal wildlife trade (IWT) in collaboration with the authority in Adani Group-operated Lokpriya Gopinath Bordoloi International (LGBI) Airport in Guwahati on Monday (March 18) for staff of various involved in security related operations like scanning of luggage and cargos at Guwahati airport.

The sensitisation workshop aimed to help airlines' staff develop skills to identify, detect, review and report wildlife products that are being smuggled through the air route. The workshop was held with support from the USFWS.

Around 30 persons from various airlines including Indigo, Vistara, Akasa and Air India, and also from service providers to airlines including Blue Dart Aviation Ltd., BATS, AAI Cargo Logistics and Allied Services Company Limited (AAI CLAS), Guwahati International Airport Ltd. (GIAL) and CISF security officers participated in the workshop.

The resource persons in the workshop included Dr. Jimmy Borah, Senior Manager, Ms. Ivy Farheen Hussain, Project Officer and WL crime analyst from Aaranyak and Rabin Bora from WCCB.

Ms. Hussain initiated the session by introducing Aaranyak and provided information that would help the participants understand the threat posed by the burgeoning illegal wildlife trade in the region and globally and the urgent need to contain the illegal trade in a multi-stakeholders ecosystem where airlines' staff form an important force.

Dr. Jimmy Borah spoke in detail about the IWT routes and the need for developing appropriate response chains, particularly in the national and international transport sector. He provided information on how the security and airline staff should detect and respond to wildlife trafficking cases citing examples of seizures from different airports globally.

He mentioned how the aviation sector can be a valuable asset in providing information to the authorities, leading to faster and greater number of arrests and seizures, and work towards curbing illegal wildlife trade.

The session was followed by live demonstration of various wildlife products so that participants can identify and differentiate the items first hand. WCCB official Rabin Bora interacted with participants and provided his perspectives on the issue under focus.

The resource persons also discussed the different wildlife trading routes in the area as well as the typical wild animal species traded in northeastern India. A summary of various seizure instances, including those at airports, was presented.

Wildlife crime poses a hazard not just to the ecosystem and biodiversity but also to public health in general. It is nonetheless concerning that traffickers are taking chances to smuggle wildlife items through the air transport system, according to a number of reports based on illegal wildlife captures over the years.

Aaranyak-WCCB hopes that the sensitisation programme would encourage greater collaboration among numerous agencies and stakeholders to assist deter wildlife crime, as security and airline workers are likely to become more aware of the issue after the programme.

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