

## Press Release

### **First Asian Ranger Forum gets underway in Guwahati**

#### **Dedication of forest field staff scripts rhino conservation success story in Assam: Minister**

Guwahati, December 5: Setting the ball rolling for the 4-day First Asian Ranger Forum (ARF) that got underway here, Assam Environment and Forest Minister Chandra Mohan Patowary lauded the sacrifices and toiling of the forest field staff in protective the precious wildlife and rich biodiversity in the state.

“Our rangers, forest guards and officials have been toiling hard while overcoming various obstacles, even in the face of extreme danger to their lives, to safeguard our rhinos and other wildlife. They must be applauded for such exemplary service in trying conditions.” Patowary said.

Flagging the rich biodiversity of Assam, Patowary said dedicated forest officials with the support of local communities have scripted the rhino conservation success story in Assam as the state has achieved zero poaching in the past couple of years.

The first Asian Rangers Forum is organised by the Environment and Forest Department of Assam, biodiversity conservation organization Aaranyak, International Ranger Federation (IRF), the Ranger Federation of Asia (RFA) and the Universal Ranger Support Alliance (URSA) in collaboration with other NGO partners.

As many as 146 including 35 women participants from 20 countries have converged at the first Asian Ranger Forum (ARF), a 4-day global event which began at the Srimanta Sankardev Kalakshetra here on Tuesday.

Among the participants, which also includes representatives of local communities, 89 are active rangers assigned to keep vigil over various biodiversity-rich protected areas.

Assam forest minister Chandra Mohan Patowary attended the inaugural ceremony as chief guest while Maharashtra forest minister Sudhir Mungantiwar was the special guest of honour.

Patowary further said apart from prevention of poaching, the forest rangers in Assam engage in habitat management initiatives such as preventing deforestation. “Besides, they play a key role in mitigating man-animal conflicts, implementing strategies to minimise damage to crops, protecting human settlements, safely relocating animals, etc,” he said.

Addressing the inauguration of the ARF, the Environment and Forest, Cultural Affairs and Fisheries Minister of Maharashtra Sudhir Mungantiwar who is known for his penchant for wildlife and nature conservation, said that protecting forest and nature is like worshipping God.

He said that the burgeoning human population on earth has made it extremely difficult task to protect the forest cover and wildlife so as to achieve 30 per cent forest cover on the planet by the year 2030.

Stating that Rangers are true guardians of Asia’s natural heritage, Mungantiwar said “No Prime Minister or President on earth will be able to solve the problem of depleting biodiversity unless every one of us contribute towards the efforts.”

The four-day event is being organised by the Assam forest department, biodiversity conservation organisation Aaranyak, International Ranger Federation (IRF), Ranger Federation of Asia (RFA) and the Universal Ranger Support Alliance (URSA) in collaboration with other NGO partners.

Both the forest ministers expressed optimism that the Asian Ranger Forum would provide a unique opportunity for rangers and organisations supporting rangers from all over Asia to collaborate on issues affecting rangers globally in their pursuit of protecting forests and wildlife.

They hope the forum would offer a platform for rangers to share knowledge, create partnerships and build capacity through a cross pollination of ideas, techniques and best practice conservation/management initiatives that have been tried and tested in conservation areas around Asia.

Speaking on the occasion, Chris Galliers, president of the International Ranger Federation said, “The world needs a well-equipped workforce in the field to protect biodiversity. Every ranger makes a difference through their valuable contribution towards protection of wildlife and biodiversity and the planet needs more rangers at this juncture.”

The president of ARF Rohit Singh said the forum would continue to strive for welfare and strengthening of rangers in the continent.

Assam Forest Minister Patowary also mentioned how the Assam government has recently achieved Guinness world records by planting 1 crore trees on a single day in Assam as part of Amrit Brikshya Andolan.

Terming Assam as the gateway to South East Asia, the Minister called for more such platforms like Asian Ranger Forum to synergize the efforts in forest and wildlife protection in the entire ASEAN region and beyond.

At today's programme, the Exploring Womanhood Foundation Van Durga Conservation Award 2023 were also presented to women rangers from Gujarat, Meghalaya and Rajasthan. One special award was also presented to the spouse of a ranger from Maharashtra, for their extraordinary contributions towards the conservation of biodiversity.

Earlier, in his welcome address the Principal Chief Conservator of Forest (PCCF) and the Head of Forest Force, Assam, M K Yadava said the ARF would be a boon for the participating rangers of Assam Forest Department that came into being way back in 1874 to look after the richer biodiversity in the state.

*Press statement issued by Dr Alolika Sinha, Publicity Secretary, Aaranyak.  
Contact No. 9435021312, Email ID: [alolika@aaranyak.org](mailto:alolika@aaranyak.org)*