

## PRESS COMMUNIQUE

### Forest officers sensitised on wildlife forensic, law provisions in crime investigation

Guwahati, September 29: Importance of wildlife crime investigation through biological evidences and using DNA technology to establish a crime in the court of law as well as systematic preparation of documents in wildlife crime investigation were flagged by resource persons from Aaranyak ([www.aaranyak.org](http://www.aaranyak.org)) in a ‘workshop on legal orientation and wildlife forensic’ held in Haflong in Assam on Wednesday.

The workshop was organised in the Agricultural Guesthouse Auditorium, Haflong under the aegis of Dima Hasao Forest Department in collaboration with Aaranyak. It was attended by forest officials including Rangers, Deputy Rangers and Foresters from 12 Ranges from East and West Divisions of Dima Forest Department of North Cachar Autonomous District Council of the state.

Dr. M Firoz Ahmed, senior scientist of Aaranyak coordinated the event to make it a success.

Deliberating on a session on “Legal provisions to check wildlife crime”, Ajoy Kumar Das, Senior Law Consultant of Aaranyak and a practicing advocate of Gauhati High Court, dealt in the recent amendments to the Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972. He said that the species in the new four schedules appended to the legislation have been categorised.

He also spoke about the exotic species that can now be dealt with under Chapter V-B of the Act after the 2022 amendment as well as various punishments given in Section 51 of the Act and the changes that have come to the Act since the amendment of 2022. He also talked on various aspects of the Wildlife (Protection) (Assam Amendment) Act, 2009.

A senior scientist of Aaranyak Udayan Borthakur speaking on “Wildlife forensic using DNA technology” explained the importance of wildlife crime investigation through biological evidence and using DNA technology to establish a crime in the court of law.

He explained various DNA-based tools that can assist in the investigation of wildlife crime. Explaining the evidence gathering process, he also emphasised on proper sample collection techniques and maintaining chain of custody in handing over the samples for forensic investigation.

Borthakur handed over a forensic DNA sampling kit developed by Wildlife Genetics Laboratory of Aaranyak to Dima Hasao Forest Department.

Advocate Ajoy Kumar Das while dealing with the topic ‘Preparation of Documents in Wildlife Crime Investigation’ explained to the participants the various legal steps involved in a wildlife crime investigation.

He further explained how scientific evidence helps in conviction in the court of law. He cited various already-drafted sample formats of seizure lists, forwarding reports, case diaries, arrest memos, inspection memos, etc.

He highlighted that no charge-sheet should be filed in the wildlife crime cases, rather a complaint petition serves the purpose. He also explained to the participating forest officials how a complaint petition is to be prepared.

Inaugurating the workshop, Tuhin Langthasa, DFO of West Division Dima Hasao, stated that there was a great need to keenly understand the various provisions of law so that investigation is done properly through adequate preparation of the case diary.

He also shared about the challenges faced in the past by the Dima Hasao Forest Department in tackling wildlife crime offences and how they have successfully handled those challenges.

He also said that it is necessary to understand the process of DNA sample collection to facilitate an effective conviction in the court. "DNA sample collection process needs to be scientific so that the expert witness can make the DNA report properly and the report is made admissible in court," he said.

The programme ended with the offer of vote of thanks by Dipankar Lahkar, a senior official in Aaranyak. Nitul Kalita, a project officer in Aaranyak contributed a lot in making the programme successful.

Press statement issued by Bijay Sankar Bora, Publicity Secretary, Aaranyak.  
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