

MEDIA COMMUNIQUE

'Gajah Kotha' campaign engages over 1,200 people to mitigate human-elephant conflict in Assam

Guwahati, July 13: To address the pressing issue of the increasing human-elephant conflict (HEC) in the state of Assam, Aaranyak (www.aaranyak.org) has launched an innovative outreach campaign called 'Gajah Kotha' (The Elephant Story) to foster coexistence between local communities and the magnificent elephants.

The initiative targets HEC-affected villages in eastern Assam, and educates them about the elephants' behaviour, ecology, and cultural connection to the region and the importance of their conservation.

Aaranyak and the British Asian Trust, in partnership with the Assam Forest Department and with support from the Darwin Initiative, are implementing this initiative as part of their efforts for fostering coexistence.

“In consultation with scientists, artists, educators and conservationists, we have developed insightful and engaging awareness materials for exhibitions open to community members comprising of women, men, youth, elderly and students”, Dr Alolika Sinha, a senior conservationist at Aaranyak’s Elephant Research and Conservation Division said.

“We have reached out to over 1,200 HEC affected people in eastern Assam through 24 'Gajah Kotha' campaigns so far”, stated Aaranyak through a press statement.

The campaigns were held at Majuli's Haladhibari, Jaborchuk Kathoni, Gazera, Gazera High School, Ujani Majuli Kherkatia High School, Pub Majuli Kherkatia HS School, Jaborchuk Basa, and Jopanchuk. In Dibrugarh, the campaign was held at Konwabam, Panchukia Bongaon, Nahorjan Lebankula, Nagaghat Tantipather, Lebankula ME School and Kamargaon ME School. In Tinsukia, the campaign was conducted in Ujani Sadiya HS School and Padumphula. Other locations included Sivasagar's Chamarajan, Charaguwa Grant, Majumelia, Charagua ME School, Charagua High School, Demomukh Gohaingaon, and Jorhat's Sankardev Janajati ME School and Bejorchiga.

Aaranyak collaborated with several local organisations to mobilise community members and future stewards from each HEC area. These organisations and community members also interacted with Aaranyak’s experts to discuss innovative approaches for human-wildlife coexistence.

“Our community educators, field staff, and Village Champions are working relentlessly on this coexistence initiative between the communities and elephants in Assam, home to a well-established elephant population as well as burgeoning conflict,” said Zakir Islam Bora, an Aaranyak official in charge of the initiative in Eastern Assam.

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