

Pre-Event Press Release

Guwahati hosts 1st Asian Ranger Forum during Dec 5 to 8 with participants from 20 countries

Guwahati, December 4: The first Asian Ranger Forum (ARF) is scheduled to get underway at Srimanta Sankardeva Kalakshetra here with a lags-raising cum inauguration ceremony this morning in the august presence of honourable Forest Minister of Assam Shri Chandra Mohan Patowary as the Chief Guest and the honourable Forest Minister of Maharashtra Shri Sudhir Mungantiwar.

As many as 146 participants including 35 women from 20 countries as well as representatives of local communities have converged here to participate in the global event that is being held during December 5 to 8. Eighty-nine (89) of the participants are active Rangers who are assigned to keep vigil over planet's various biodiversity-rich protected areas.

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

“It is really exciting to be part of the first ever Asian Ranger Forum and seeing the regions rangers coming together to strengthen networks, to hear their challenges and also for rangers to share ranger-led solutions to the multitude of challenges that Asia's rangers face,” said Chris Galliers, President of the International Ranger Federation.

“We look forward to working with the regional body, the Ranger Federation of Asia, to build on the momentum that the ARF is creating so that we see greater recognition and investment into rangers to ensure a professional planetary healthcare workforce.”

The ARF offers a platform for rangers to share knowledge, create partnerships and build capacity through plenary sessions, workshops, training and other activities related to the theme of “Asia's biodiversity guardians for 30x30. Discussions are expected to focus on four areas: inclusive workforce, conditions, conduct, and capacity. Participants are expected to initiate discussions on existing challenges and opportunities, including how to address cross-cutting issues like climate risks, biodiversity loss and diseases.

During the event, the Asian awardees of the IUCN WCPA International Ranger Award, including ranger teams from Bhutan, Malaysia and the Philippines, will be felicitated for their outstanding contributions and in celebration of their dedication and bravery in protecting and conserving natural heritage.

The Exploring Womanhood Foundation Van Durga Conservation Award 2023 are also being presented to women rangers from Gujarat, Meghalaya and Rajasthan, India. One special award will be also presented to the spouse of a ranger from Maharashtra, for their extraordinary contributions towards the conservation of biodiversity.

The Guwahati Declaration, a declaration by rangers for rangers, will be announced during the Forum. The Declaration emphasises the crucial role of rangers in nature conservation, the importance of promoting inclusivity and diversity in the ranger workforce, and outlines recommendations to support and empower Asian rangers in carrying out their duties effectively and responsibly. The Guwahati Declaration will feed into the upcoming 10th IRF World Ranger Congress in 2024 (October 2024, France).

It is pertinent to mention that the **International Ranger Federation (IRF)** is a worldwide, non-profit membership-based organisation, established to develop, advance, and promote the Ranger profession. The IRF is the standard bearer for the Ranger profession globally and the voice of Ranger Associations and Rangers everywhere. The IRF recognises Rangers, whether state, regional, communal, indigenous, or private, as essential on-the-ground planetary health professionals, that are responsible for safeguarding nature, and cultural and historical heritage, and protecting the rights and well-being of present and future generations.

The **Universal Ranger Support Alliance (URSA)** is a time-bound initiative that supports, promotes and advises the IRF to establish a pathway for the ranger occupation to be recognised as a skilled, trusted and respected profession that is at the forefront of protecting nature, people, and the planet. The URSA was formed through an alliance of eight global conservation organisations that supports and invests in IRF to professionalise the rangers workforce globally. Since its inception URSA has garnered support of fourteen additional partners that support its mission at the regional and national level.

The **Ranger Federation of Asia (RFA)** works to address the key challenges faced by rangers during the course of their duties throughout Asia. Formulated during the 7th World Ranger Congress, the RFA is an association of frontline field staff from all across Asia who are dedicated to protecting wildlife and their habitats. The RFA provides a platform for knowledge and experience exchange among rangers and is committed to advocating for the welfare and recognition of rangers in the region. The ARF serves as a significant platform to amplify the voices of rangers and address the challenges they face in protecting Asia's exceptional biodiversity.

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One of the objectives of the ARF is to develop a declaration by rangers for rangers, emphasizing their crucial role in nature conservation, promoting inclusivity and diversity, and identifying strategies to support and empower Asian rangers in carrying out their duties effectively and responsibly. The Guwahati Declaration will outline key recommendations raised by rangers at the ARF and will feed into the upcoming World Ranger Congress in 2024.

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