

## Press Release

### VDPs from 11 villages near KNP provided with torchlights for HEC mitigation

Guwahati, Dec 16: Village Defence Parties (VDPs) of 11 human-elephant conflict affected villages near Kaziranga National Park & Tiger Reserve (KNP & TR) have been provided with torch lights for facilitating mitigation of the conflict and to facilitate coexistence.

Leading research-based biodiversity conservation organisation Aaranyak distributed these rechargeable torch lights with support from US Fish and Wildlife Service and cooperation from KNP&TR authority.

HEC-affected villagers from -- Jogi gaon, Diffaloo Bagisa, Kolakhowa village, Koilakhat village, Dhekiapotar village, Borbheta-Amlokhi, Borjuri Bosti, Methoni Bagisa, Lakhoujan, Geleka Balija and Lakshmijuri near the national park will be directly benefitted from these torch lights provided to VDPs of these villages.

“A key function of a VDP is to coordinate with Forest Departments to protect wildlife and other resources in KNP&TR, especially by ensuring round-the-clock vigilance”, said Dr Bibhuti Prasad Lahkar, an IUCN Heritage Hero and a senior scientist in Aaranyak.

Aaranyak's senior official Manas Kumar Bhattacharjya, who coordinated the distribution of the torch lights underscored the necessity of these torchlights saying “When VDP members are on night surveillance, the spotlights will enable them to spot elephants and other wildlife, such as rhinoceroses, if these animals stray into the human settlement areas. This will ensure the safety of both villagers and wildlife, ensuring coexistence.”

The lights were distributed among VDPs in two separate programmes held on December 14 and 15. Honorary wildlife warden of KNP & TR and a veteran in conservation sector Uttam Saikia moderated both the torchlights distribution programmes, indicating his involvement and support for the initiative.

Achyut Krishna Gogoi, Deputy Ranger, and Sashanka Saikia, senior forest official were present at the event that signifies the support of local authorities to the initiative.

The distribution of spot lights paves way for involvement local communities in the mitigation of conflict, promoting a sense of shared responsibility. This initiative demonstrates a proactive and community-focused approach to address the raging HEC, emphasising collaboration between conservation organisations, local communities and authorities.

Rechargeable spotlights are among the mitigation tools distributed by Aaranyak among various stakeholders in HEC-affected areas in Assam and other parts of Northeast India for facilitating coexistence.

“Empowering communities in Bokakhat Range! Thanks to Aaranyak, we've distributed solar charge lights to 8 more Village Defence Parties. Due to our ongoing efforts, a total of 19 villages now shine

bright, enhancing safety and community well-being. Together, we illuminate progress!", posted Kaziranga National Park & Tiger Reserve through multi-blogging platform X on December 15.

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