

Press Release

Role of masses, laws, enforcement agencies focused in wildlife crime workshop in Tura

Tura, April 24: Role of the common masses in conservation of biodiversity through prevention of wildlife crime and the efficacy of laws pertaining to wildlife crimes were flagged in the workshop that was organised by Meghalaya Police here today in association with Aaranyak.

In the welcome address by C V S Reddy, DIG, Western Range of Meghalaya Police who has taken this key initiative to hold the workshop on “Wildlife crime scenario and its various dimensions” stated that human beings would go extinct if biodiversity is not there as ‘we human beings, animals, birds, plants etc., all are part of the same ecosystem as well as the food chain. If the food chain is disrupted at some point, the entire ecosystem is affected.’

Citing that recent unprecedented heatwave experienced in Garo Hills region, the police official said it may be because of wanton destruction of forest cover. He also underlined the need for reducing area under shifting cultivation that requires burning of forest cover by using available new agriculture techniques.

The DIG cited example much decorated ‘Forest Man of India’ Jadav Payeng who has converted a barren sandbar island to a thick forest in Assam, to highlight how a common man is capable of making huge contribution towards biodiversity conservation.

Divisional Forest Officer of West and South West Garo Hills Division Ganesan P was present in the workshop and responded to some queries in the interactive session.

Deputy Superintendent of Police from SWGH, R K Sangma explained what transpired in workshop in Garo language for better understanding the village heads and Nokmas and common people in the audience.

The Northeast India by virtue of its unique altitudinal gradient is a very rich biodiversity, especially in Garo hills as the area is having Nokrek Biosphere Reserve and Balphakram National Park, zone and hence could attract the bad eyes of wildlife criminals to exploit bio-resources of the area vulnerable to the burgeoning wildlife crime that has acquired an alarming proportion across the globe, according to globally reputed conservation scientist, Dr Bibhab Kumar Talukdar, the Secretary General and CEO of Aaranyak (www.aaranyak.org), the premier research-based biodiversity conservation organisation based in Guwahati and with an eastern India footprint.

“The Constitution of India has put the onus of conservation of Biodiversity – the precious faunal and floral resources – on every citizen whose wellbeing of human beings is directly related to the state of biodiversity that provides our livelihood, cater to our essential need of pure potable water and pure air,” Dr Talukdar said emphasizing on the important role of common people in conservation of wildlife and habitats.

A former member of National Board of Wildlife, Dr Talukdar laid emphasis on synergised efforts for conservation of wildlife and prevention of wildlife crime which poses threat to national security because of nexus with arms smugglers, drug cartel and militants, and stated that successful conservation of wildlife species leads to conservation of habitats thereby the biodiversity.

Dr. Talukdar also appreciated the initiatives taken by Meghalaya Police under the leadership of DIG-Western Range based in Tura to bring key stakeholders for this workshop. Dr. Talukdar expressed Aaranyak's interest to continue such collaborative efforts with Meghalaya Police and Forest officials to generate much needed awareness on prevention of wildlife crime in the state.

Officers from different ranks of Meghalaya Police from all five districts of Garo hills region, officers of Forest Department were apprised of the key clauses of Wildlife, Forest and Environment Laws, especially Wildlife (Protection) Amendment Act, 2022 by Environment Lawyer Ajoy Kumar Das who is associated with Aaranyak.

He explained the efficacy of these law provisions through a lucid presentation that induced engrossing interactions with the police and forest officials and even village heads and Nokmas present.

Focus of his presentation was to sensitise the officials from enforcement and investigating agencies about the difference between Wildlife cases and other cases as well as how to deal with the amendments incorporated into the Wildlife (Protection) Act.

He also explained the investigation procedure and way of filing of complaint before the court by the investigation officers so that the rate of conviction in wildlife crime cases can be increased manifold in the interest of conservation of biodiversity.

*Press statement issued by Dr Alolika Sinha, Publicity Secretary, Aaranyak.
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