

35 YEARS  
*Aaranyak*

Nourishing nature to secure our future

UPDATE ON QUARTERLY ACTIVITIES

# Natureole

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*# many more*

### The Mark Shand Award conferred on Aaranyak



250 guests attended Wonders of the Wild, including HRH Princess Beatrice, Lady Marina Windsor, Ronaldo Nazario, Brazilian footballer, actors Ed Westwick and Amy Jackson and singer, Sophie Ellis-Bexter.

### Age-old Dongs revived in Udalguri district



Aaranyak was presented with the esteemed 'Mark Shand Award' by UK-based prominent conservation charity 'Elephant Family' in a glittering and star-studded event titled 'Wonders of the wild' at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, in London on May 13.

The award has been conferred on Aaranyak for its unrelenting efforts for the conservation of Asian elephants in Northeast India by implementing multiple approaches in order to achieve peaceful coexistence between wild elephants and communities.

Aaranyak's senior scientist, Dr Bibhuti Prasad Lahkar, who heads its Elephant Research and Conservation Division, received the award on behalf of the organisation from Their Majesties King Charles and Queen Camilla, Joint Presidents of Elephant Family.

In a significant step towards restoring traditional water management systems and strengthening rural resilience vis-à-vis climate change, premier biodiversity conservation organisation Aaranyak, with support from LIC Housing Finance Ltd. (CSR initiative), has successfully rejuvenated two vital community-managed irrigation canals (Dong in local parlance) in Udalguri district of Assam.

The 'Bhawani Dong' in Uttor Garuajhar and 'Orang Dong' in No. 2 Sonajuli village—both located in Bhergaon Block of Udalguri district play vital role in fulfilling community's water needs.

These water channels, known locally as 'Dongs', form part of an age-old water distribution system used by the indigenous Bodo community.

The Dong system diverts river water through earthen canals to irrigate agricultural lands and fill local ponds (pukhuris) for household and farming needs. Especially in areas near the Indo-Bhutan border—where water scarcity during dry seasons is a recurring challenge—these traditional systems have played a crucial role in ensuring access to water and food security.



The Dong system is a community-driven practice of water governance. Earthen canals channel water from rivers into villages and farmlands, and their maintenance is traditionally overseen by local committees. Over the time, however, these systems have been rendered non-functional due to neglect, sedimentation, and climate-related changes.

'Bhawani Dong', one of the region's most vital irrigation channels, caters to No. 1 Garuajhar (Chuba-Telabasti, Jhorabasti), Orangajuli, and Uttor Garuajhar (Chuba-Choyabasti). The canal serves approximately 1,500 households and a population exceeding 10,000.

However, in recent years, the canal's water flow had drastically reduced during the dry months from January to March, leaving farmlands parched and downstream villages such as Kaachari Basti, Gaonburha Basti, and Jhara Basti with little or no access to water. The situation led to reduction in agricultural output and growing hardship.

Following its restoration, the 'Bhawani Dong' now delivers a consistent flow of water, enabling timely irrigation, reactivating abandoned agricultural lands, and improving water availability even in previously neglected downstream areas.

In the No. 2 Sonajuli village, with around 120 households and a population of over 650, the 'Orang Dong' is the primary source of irrigation for nearly 500 bighas of farmland.

The repair of the 'Orang Dong' has been a game changer for the village, particularly during the pre-monsoon and kharif seasons, when timely water supply is critical for cropping.

With the Dong now functioning efficiently, villagers have resumed cultivation activities with renewed confidence, significantly reducing the risk of crop failure due to water stress.

As in Garuajhar, the restoration effort included community involvement at every stage—from identifying repair needs to physically contributing labour for clearing blockages and maintaining flow paths.

The success of these restorations lies not just in the return of flowing water, but in the revival of traditional knowledge systems and community-led governance. Local water management committees have been reactivated to oversee fair distribution, resolve disputes, and ensure continued maintenance of the Dongs.

## 30-km solar fence secures 1047 HEC-hit households in Jorhat

As part of its sustained efforts to mitigate human-elephant conflict and facilitate coexistence, Aaranyak has so far installed 30.1 km solar fence in Jorhat district of Assam covering three project villages: Hatisal Chapori, Sagunpara, and Bejorchiga, and five adjoining villages: Jopong gaon, Tinighoria, Sumoni chapori, Maajor Chapori, and Satal Bagh Gaon.

The 30.1 km solar-powered fence, installed by Aaranyak in collaboration with British Asian Trust and Elephant Family and with support from the Darwin Initiative, has benefited 1047 households across these villages affected by HEC. This stretch of solar fence has benefited over 5,000 villagers across these households.

Wild elephant herds used to forage paddy and other crops in these villages, causing immense hardship to the agrarian community.

However, wild elephants' foraging of crops has significantly decreased in these villages after the installation of solar-powered fences, which now protect the paddy or other crops from elephants, thereby securing the lives and livelihoods of the villagers.



The solar fence stretch has benefitted 290 households at Hatisal Chapori, 146 households at Satal Bagh, 146 households at Sumoni Chapori, 175 households at Jopong Gaon (under Sagunpara revenue villages), 80 households at Bejorchiga, 30 households at Maajor Chapori, and 180 households at Tinighoria (under Sagunpara Revenue Village).

## Intensive training workshop on wildlife crime investigation



A three-day Skill Building Workshop on Wildlife Crime Investigation and Legal Aspects of Wildlife Crime in India was held from May 28 to 30 at the Rain Forest Guest House, Polo, Shillong, Meghalaya.

The workshop was jointly organised by the Environment and Forest Department of Meghalaya and Aaranyak, in collaboration with Trayata Wildlife Foundation and Langland Conservation, with support from the David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation.

The event was inaugurated by Harish C. Choudhury, Chief Wildlife Warden and Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife and Biodiversity), along with Pawan K. Agrahari, Chief Conservator of Forests, Department of Forest and Environment, Meghalaya.

Around 30 participants attended the workshop, including Divisional Forest Officers, Assistant Conservators of Forests, Range Forest Officers, and Frontline Staff from the Khasi Hills, Garo Hills, and Tura Hills Forest divisions.

Dr Bibhab Talukdar, Executive Director and Secretary General of Aaranyak, commenced the technical sessions with a presentation on “Wildlife Crime Scenarios in Global, National and Local Perspective,” highlighting current trends and challenges, especially in Northeast India.

Advocate Pradipty Bhardwaj, Legal and Cyber Analyst from Trayata Wildlife Foundation, led multiple sessions focused on wildlife crime investigation and legal frameworks. Topics covered included an overview of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, offences and penalties, CITES regulations, investigation protocols, legal documentation, courtroom procedures, and cross-examination techniques.

Additionally, Binita Baruwati from Aaranyak conducted a session on crime scene investigation, discussing different types of wildlife crime scenes and methods of evidence collection.

Participants and facilitators engaged in productive discussions, reflecting a shared dedication to protecting Meghalaya’s rich biodiversity. This initiative forms part of Aaranyak’s ongoing efforts to strengthen wildlife conservation through training, capacity building, and strategic partnerships with forest department and other Law Enforcement agencies. The workshop was coordinated by Dr Bibhab Kumar Talukdar, with support from Wasima Begum and Binita Baruwati of Aaranyak’s Legal and Advocacy Division.

## Handmade tea processing training for women in Kaziranga-KA

In a significant step toward women’s economic empowerment and the preservation of traditional knowledge systems, Aaranyak organised a day-long hands-on training on handmade tea processing for women on May 2. The training took place at the tea processing shed of Mina Tokbipi, a celebrated local entrepreneur known for her work in the artisanal tea sector, who collaborated with Aaranyak to host and lead the session.





## ‘Xupan’ for sustainable livelihoods for HEC-hit villagers

Aaranyak has been working tirelessly in project mode across various villages in five districts of eastern Assam to mitigate human-elephant conflict HEC and facilitate human-wildlife coexistence.

As part of its holistic approach, Aaranyak provides livelihood support to affected villagers, helping them recover losses caused by elephant incursions and enhance their financial resilience.

For further empowering these communities, Aaranyak and British Asian Trust, Elephant Family with support from Darwin Initiative Biodiversity Challenge Funds has committed to creating strong market linkages for the locally-produced goods of project village beneficiaries.

In tune with this commitment, a series of buyer-seller meets were organised recently under the banner Xupan, meaning "the ladder of advancement". These events were conducted across all five districts to provide a reliable and accessible platform for rural producers to showcase and sell their products directly to the end consumers.

The objective of the workshop was to provide practical training in traditional, non-industrial tea-making methods that rely on skill and experience rather than machinery. Participants were guided through every step of the handmade tea process, starting from identifying and plucking high-quality leaves, to techniques of withering and manual rolling, to controlling oxidation levels and naturally drying the tea to preserve its flavor and nutrients. Throughout the session, the emphasis remained on preserving the purity and integrity of traditional methods that have been practiced by local communities for generations.

This training was organised and facilitated by Avinash Phangcho and Prokash Engti, with valuable support from Uttaran Dutta, Moromi Nath, and Mirlong Kiling of Aaranyak.

Aaranyak is committed towards conservation of biodiversity, ecosystem and supporting the indigenous communities residing in Kaziranga-Karbi Anglong (KA) Landscape and Manas Landscape through promotion of Alternative and Sustainable Livelihoods activities, education and awareness. The initiative is supported by IUCN - Kfw and US Fish and Wildlife Service.



The programme commenced on June 14 at the Janjimukh Market in Jorhat District, where 27 villagers participated as sellers. Following its success, the second event was held on June 17 at Mangalboriya Market in Majuli District, with 23 sellers from nearby project villages.

On June 19, the third stall was set up at Sapakhuya Market in Tinsukia, involving 13 local participants. The initiative continued at Rajmai Market in Sivasagar District on 22nd June, where 11 villagers took part as sellers. The final stall was established at the BVFCL Market in Dibrugarh on 24th June, again featuring 11 participants from project villages.

A diverse range of products were displayed and sold at these events, including Chadar-Mekhela, elephant-motif Gamochas and bags, pottery items, vermicompost organic fertilizers, organic vegetables, pickles, bamboo crafts and bakery products, among others.

The initiative marks a significant step toward Sustainable Community Development by connecting rural artisans, weavers and farmers with broader markets, ensuring they receive fair value for their products and reinforcing their journey towards economic independence.

The response from visitors was overwhelmingly positive, with many showing keen interest in the locally made goods and purchasing items from the stalls.

Beneficiaries expressed deep appreciation for the opportunity, stating that the initiative not only helped boost their income but also instilled a sense of pride and motivation.

Through Xupan, Aaranyak reaffirms commitment to empowering rural communities by connecting them with wider markets and promoting sustainable livelihoods rooted in local skills and resources.

## 4<sup>th</sup> Orang Nature Camp enlightens 32 students



Aaranyak and Orang National Park & Tiger Reserve Authority successfully completed the 4th Orang Nature Camp 2025, held from May 17 to 20 in Orang Tiger Reserve. The programme was organised in collaboration with Wild Wings and with support from David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation, UK.

The four-day residential programme acquainted students with importance of conservation of nature. The initiative also facilitated students' interactions with experts working in the conservation field and motivated them to be future stewards to work for the well-being of Orang Tiger Reserve.

On May 17 the programme was inaugurated by Dr Vinay Gupta, Principal Chief Conservator of Forest (Wildlife), Assam Forest Department in presence of Pradipta Baruah, Director, Orang Tiger Reserve, Dr Bibhab Kumar Talukdar, Secretary General and CEO of Aaranyak, Bijay Sankar Bora, Publicity Secretary, Aaranyak, Swapan Nath, Senior journalist based in Kaziranga, Dhaneswar Doley, Forest Range Officer, Orang Tiger Reserve.

A report and a poster on assessment of past three nature camps prepared by Arif Hussain were released in the inaugural programme. Arif Hussain, Manager in Rhino Research and Conservation Division of Aaranyak took a major role in organising this camp.

Thirty-two students and six teachers participated from seven schools namely Sialmari High School, Sankardev Jatiya Vidyalaya, Bechimari ME School, Keramot Ali, ME School, Dokhin Borsola High School, Ballav Bhai Higher Secondary and Fatasimolu ME School.

Resource persons attending the programmes included : Dr Dilip Chetry, Sr Scientist of Aaranyak, Dr Deba Dutta, Senior Manager of RRCD, Aaranyak, Dr Jayanta Baruah, Prof Mangaldoi College, Ramesh Kumar Gogoi, retired DFO, Swapan Nath, Senior Journalist Kaziranga, acclaimed lensman Nejob Ahmed of Wild Wings, Arif Hussain, Manager, RRCD, Dhaneswar Doley, Range Officer, Orang Tiger Reserve, Pranab Goswami, Organizing Officer, Aaranyak, HIRAK Jyoti Das, Abhijit Saikia, Gayatri Dutta, Abhilash Baruah, all researchers of Aaranyak and Pranjit Deka, FR1, Orang Tiger Reserve.

All the participants were presented with kits, education materials and certificates. Aaranyak staff Baidya Gaura and Ujjal Bayan, Aaranyak's members Samim Sultana, Akash Morang, and a local conservationist Baharul Islam, helped making the programme a success.



## Orientation of guide teachers on sustainability education



Aaranyak jointly with Samagra Shiksha Axom (SSA) and National Science Centre, Guwahati and with support from Wipro earthian successfully conducted a day-long orientation training of teachers on sustainability education on May 20.

The event was held at the National Science Centre, Guwahati, where 69 teachers representing 44 schools from the Kamrup Metropolitan district participated, undeterred by severe waterlogging and other weather-related challenges in the city on that day.

Speaking at the event, Tapasi Sarma, District Programme Officer, SSA, Kamrup Metro, emphasized the importance of instilling sustainability practices in students. She also lauded the accomplishments of students and teachers who represented Assam at the national sustainability event held in Bangalore and acknowledged Aaranyak's vital contributions to promoting environmental education. Ms. Sarma further highlighted the initiatives of the Eco Club for Mission LiFE and encouraged greater participation in achieving the nation's sustainability objectives.

Sujay Mazumder, Director of the National Science Centre Guwahati emphasized the importance of science education and shared information about the centre's facilities. He appealed to schools to engage more actively with the centre's evolving galleries, highlighting their value as experiential learning spaces for students.

In the welcome address, Jayanta Kumar Pathak, Senior Manager at Aaranyak, provided an overview of the organization and discussed the positive impact of this educational initiative on participating students. He also acknowledged the encouragement received from the Education Minister of Assam for the sustainability initiative.

The Wipro earthian prize money was distributed to teachers and students to the National Award and Regional Award-winning schools: North Guwahati Girls High School, New Guwahati Adarsha High School, Maharishi Vidya Mandir-III and Natun Fatasil Town High School. The insights and experiences shared by both national and regional award-winning teams in sustainability education were truly commendable.

Tikendrajit Gogoi, Project Officer (ESE Educator) at Aaranyak, interacted with teachers through an insightful presentation on sustainability education, focusing particularly on biodiversity, water and waste.



Last year's guide teachers, Binita Barman Dutt of New Guwahati Adarsha High School; Dulumani Rabha of North Guwahati Girls High School; and Ms. Jumpa Dutta of Maharishi Vidya Mandir-III also shared their enriching experiences with the initiative. They highlighted how students' learning skills improved significantly after participating in the national-level competition. The students from the award-winning teams also shared their invaluable learnings and experiences.

The orientation served as a platform for learning, sharing and strengthening collaboration among educators. It also reinforced the idea that sustainability education must be an integral part of school curriculum shaping young minds to become environmentally conscious and socially responsible citizens.

## Plantation resumes at Bhairabkunda RF to mitigate HEC



Aaranyak with support from SBI Foundation, and in collaboration with Dhansiri-Sikaridanga Joint Forest Management Committee (JFMC) is working towards replenishment of 100 hectares of degraded forest in Bhairabkunda Reserve Forest in Dhansiri Forest Division, Udalguri through plantation of native species and habitat enhancement — with a focus on improving ecological connectivity for wildlife, especially elephants thereby helping mitigate human-elephant conflict (HEC).

This year marked the third-year plantation drive that got underway on May 14. The plantation was undertaken with participation from forest officials of Dhansiri Forest Division, FXB India Suraksha, the Bhairabkunda Development Committee and the Dhansiri-Sikaridanga Joint Forest Management Committee. On the first day of the third-year plantation drive 510 saplings of 11 native species were planted.

Habitat replenishment can have lasting impact in favour of mitigation of the HEC as it provides a long-term solution to promote coexistence between wild elephants and people. Aaranyak initiated this ambitious project for improvement of elephant habitat covering an area of 100 hectares in this Reserve Forest two years back.



## Wildlife photography exhibition marks Aaranyak's 35th anniversary

As many as 46 fabulous photographs of varied species of wildlife were on display for public viewing at Gauhati Artists' Guild at Chandmari, Guwahati from May 22 to 25 under the aegis of Aaranyak as part of the organisation's on-going year-long 35th Anniversary celebrations.

Acclaimed photographer and a former senior bureaucrat of Assam Government, Sanjib Gohain Baruah set the ball rolling for the wildlife photography exhibition that exhibited photographs pooled from photographers across the country. The exhibition was, however, dominated by photographs taken in Assam and other parts of the biodiversity-rich Northeast eastern region of the country.

Along with the wildlife photography exhibition, there ran a photographic depiction of Aaranyak's 35-year-long since 1989 that portrays highlights of activities of various divisions of the organisation.

Aaranyak's senior scientist Dr Partha Jyoti Das addressing the occasion flagged the need for organisation of photography workshops of green photographers across the state to bring vibrancy in wildlife photography that is gaining popularity at a fast pace.

Aaranyak's Organising Secretary and senior scientist Udayan Borthakur who is also an acclaimed wildlife photographer and prime mover behind the exhibition, said the wildlife photography exhibition is a humble initiative of Aaranyak to celebrate the sustained conservation efforts as part of its 35th Anniversary celebrations. Finance Secretary of Aaranyak Jimut Prasad Sharma addressing the gathering elaborated on how technological evolution over the years has imparted vibrancy and brilliance to realm photography in general and wildlife photography in particular.

Publicity Secretary of Aaranyak Bijay Sankar Bora termed photograph a very powerful medium to inculcate in common people especially the new generation, a penchant for magnificent wildlife species that ultimately aids long-term people-oriented conservation efforts.

The inauguration of the wildlife photography exhibition was anchored by Aaranyak's Senior Manager - Administration Bobby Nath and well attended by staff members and well-wishers of the organisation.





## Pobitora community members taken on exposure trip to Kaziranga-KA

A two-day exposure visit was organised for members of the Eco Development Committee (EDC) and Crop Protection Group of Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary to Kaziranga National Park and neighbouring Karbi Anglong by Aaranyak.

The primary objective was to facilitate knowledge exchange, foster collaboration and strengthen ties between the communities involved in conservation and sustainable development efforts. At the beginning, Dr Jayanta Kr Roy, Senior Manager in Herpetofauna Research and Conservation Division of Aaranyak, provided the team insights into the community-driven tourism initiatives in Kaziranga-Karbi Anglong (KA) landscape.

He discussed how local residents had independently developed businesses such as homestays and handmade tea, contributing to economic sustainability while supporting conservation.

Bhaskor Barukial from Aaranyak led the team on a village walk and storytelling session, allowing participants to interact with community members and learn about the historical context of the villages.



The team also visited the outlet of PIRBI, a community-owned business model supported by Aaranyak. During this visit, members observed the operational structure of Pirbi, exchanged ideas on establishing similar community-led businesses in Pobitora, and discussion also covered challenges PIRBI has encountered.

During the second day, the team from Pobitora visited Kaziranga National Park, and met with Range Officer Bibhuti Ranjan Gogoi and Deputy Ranger Tarun Gogoi. The discussions revolved around human-wildlife interactions, conservation strategies, and community participation in wildlife management. The team was taken on a jeep safari in the national park.

Deputy Ranger Tarun Gogoi led the group to a weaving centre established by Nirupama Mushahary, who had received training from the Forest Department in 2016.

She has since built a thriving enterprise, employing 15 individuals. The centre provides training to women. The visiting team observed the weaving process, interacted with workers. The programme ended with a community lunch in Chandrasing Rongpi Village.

The final session took place at Choran Ahem, where Mangal Teron shared the journey of his community's transformation—from involvement in poaching to establishing sustainable livelihoods through a food centre. His contributions to community development were recognized with the Assam Gaurav award, underscoring the impact of local efforts in conservation and economic self-sufficiency.

The entire programme was funded by IUCN CAG and coordinated by Researcher Ujjal Bayan with support Kakali Baishya under the guidance of Dr Deba Kumar Dutta, Senior Manager, Rhino Research and Conservation Division of Aaranyak.

## SSB felicitates Aaranyak's ED



Dr. Bibhab Talukdar, Executive Director of Aaranyak and a globally renowned conservation scientist was felicitated by the Sashastra Seema Bal - SSB during the 12th Raising Day celebration of the force on June 28 at its 24 Battalion sectoral HQ, Rangia in Kamrup district of Assam, for his contributions towards mobilising stakeholders and partnering with SSB in mitigation of wildlife crime and illegal wildlife trade and promoting wildlife conservation in Northeast India.

# Workshop in Jorhat flags media's role in mitigating HEC



In a well-attended interaction with media professionals on 'human elephant conflict (HEC) mitigation for coexistence' organized at Teok in Jorhat district of Assam on June 1, resource persons from Aaranyak highlighted its on-going community-centric HEC mitigation works in certain HEC affected area in Jorhat district of Assam.

The media interaction, organised by Aaranyak and British Asian Trust, Elephant Family with support from Darwin Initiative, was participated by several journalists under the banner of Teok Press Club and Kakojan (East Jorhat) Press Club besides a few community leaders from HEC-affected villages in the area.

Taking part in the interaction Aaranyak's Publicity Secretary and Executive Committee Member Bijay Sankar Bora made an elaborate presentation flagging the important role play by the media in creating awareness among the HEC-affected community on how to respond to and cooperate with mitigation measures undertaken for facilitating coexistence between villagers and elephants which are considered agents for enriching biodiversity and generation of new forests, the a typical HEC situation.

He urged the media to regularly drum up 'Dos and Don'ts' to be observed by people in an HEC-affected areas so that loss to property and lives could be avoided as much as possible.

Aaranyak's Senior Project Officer Rubul Tanti through his presentation enlightened the participating media professionals and community members regarding the current HEC scenario in the region and the research-driven and multi-stakeholders-oriented mitigation works undertaken by the Aaranyak so far for facilitating coexistence.

He explained every effective HEC mitigation measures in detail and underlined how cooperation from the community and mass media is important for success of such endeavours.

Aaranyak's Assistant Manager and Coordinator, Eastern Assam Zone, Zakir Islam Bora set the tone for the interaction through a lucid presentation on various aspects Aaranyak which has completed 35 years, as an organization and its footprint in the region.



## Gajah Kotha continues

Niranjan Bhuyan, Community Coordinator of Aaranyak during interaction with media highlighted how credible mass media can play the role of catalysts to elicit cooperation from the community and other stakeholders towards coexistence-focused HEC mitigation measures.

Earlier, in her welcome address, Aaranyak's Environmental Educator, Rimpee Moran, explained objective of organizing the media interaction.

Several senior and reputed media professionals attending the interaction lauded Aaranyak's efforts for HEC mitigation and biodiversity conservation in general for such a long period of 35 years and pledged support to organisation's current HEC-mitigation project works in Jorhat district.

Aaranyak's field staff Ananta Dutta, Lakhinath Taid and Chiranjib Kalita helped organized the media interaction successfully. Several Rapid Response Units (RRU) members of Aaranyak including Ghanakanta Narah, Bhupen Bora, Dipu Bora, Uddhab Borah, Kamakhya Choudhury, Golap Ch Choudhury, Sabita Mallah and Debajit Taid attended the interaction.

In April, a series of outreach programmes were conducted under our signature campaign "Gajah Kotha" in human-elephant conflict (HEC) affected villages in eastern Assam. Through ten outreach events we reached out to a total of 115 men and women, each and 22 students. We talked about basic elephant ecology, their behaviour and cultural relevance of elephants, as well as effective measures to mitigate HEC. These outreach events are part of Aaranyak and the British Asian Trust's initiative to promote human-elephant coexistence and protect biodiversity, with support from Darwin Initiative.



## Primate Watch 2 - know your primate neighbours

Aaranyak organised a primate observation session on June 29 at the Basistha Temple premises in Guwahati, Assam. The session began with total 18 participants most of whom were students from various educational institutes namely Gauhati University, Tezpur University and Sanskriti The Gurukul, as well as a biologist from Kaziranga National Park & Tiger Reserve and intern from the Assam State Biodiversity Board.

Dr Prabal Sarkar, Professor, Department of Zoology, USTM, Meghalaya, served as the resource person and led a session on primates of Assam, covering species identification, behavioural observation techniques, and age-sex categorisation.



Dr Dilip Chetry, Vice President of Aaranyak and Director & Head of Primate Research & Conservation Division (PRCD), delivered an insightful briefing on primates, emphasising their ecological significance and conservation relevance, particularly in Northeast India. He also highlighted the current status of the Rhesus macaque (*Macaca mulatta*).

The welcome address was delivered by Nandita Medhi, Consultant, PRCD, followed by the introduction of attendees. Participants were provided with customised datasheets, and the observation methodology was explained by Akshay Upadhyaya, researcher at in PRCD. Field observations were conducted under Dr Sarkar's guidance with active support from PRCD researchers Akshay Upadhyaya, Simanta Medhi, and Pitam Jyoti Gore.

Participants engaged in behavioural studies of Rhesus macaques and participated in on-spot photography to capture field experiences. After the field session, a light refreshment was arranged, creating space for informal discussions.

An interactive session followed, during which participants shared feedback and queries, addressed by Dr Chetry and Dr Sarkar. The event concluded with the distribution of Certificates of Participation and a warm vote of thanks by Nandita Medhi, marking a successful and enriching experience for all involved.

## Sensitisation workshop on wildlife crime and role of PRIs



An awareness programme on "Prevention of Wildlife Crime and the Role of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI)" was organised at Agia, Goalpara on May 18 by the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB), Government of India in collaboration with Aaranyak and the Krishnai Forest Range of Assam Forest Department.

Binita Baruwati, a resource person from Aaranyak, addressed the gathering and spoke about various forms of wildlife crime prevalent in Assam and the Northeast, highlighting the crucial role that PRI members can play in tackling these issues.

Jawaharlal Baro from WCCB interacted with participants, discussing the Wildlife Protection Act and the Bureau's role in combating wildlife crime. He also shared his personal experiences and emphasised how PRI members can contribute to wildlife crime prevention at the grassroots level by supporting relevant enforcement agencies.

The programme was participated by 38 individuals, including members of Village Defence Committees (VDC), Village Development Programme (VDP), Eco-Development Committees (EDC), Gaon Pradhans, and Forest Officials.

The primary objective of the workshop was to build awareness among PRI members about the various forms of wildlife crime, ongoing trafficking trends, and the vital role of PRI at local, national, and global levels in addressing these challenges. Discussions also covered the importance of biodiversity, the ecological roles of different species, underlying causes of wildlife crime, associated challenges, societal impacts, and possible prevention strategies.

A team of Aaranyak comprising Anjan Barua, Ripunjay Nath, and Dhananjoy Mashahary were also present in the programme and assisted in conducting it.

## Orientation on natural resource management for volunteers from Manas landscape



Aaranyak organised an orientation, focused on enabling the volunteers in Manas Landscape to conduct future education and awareness programmes in the landscape at Manas Conservation and Outreach Centre of Aaranyak on May 8, as part of its education and awareness initiative focused on Natural Resource Management in the Manas Landscape.

The programme was attended by 12 volunteers from the landscape comprising of four women and eight men. The programme aimed to orient the volunteers on natural resource management and conservation communication, familiarise them with the communication materials as part of the awareness and education programme and assign them responsibilities for the awareness and education programmes.

The programme was coordinated by Jayanta Kumar Sarma, with support from Swapan Kumar Das, Bijay Basumatary, Barnali Baro, Shaikhong Basumatary, Partha Sarathi Ghose and the entire team of Manas Conservation and Outreach Centre.

Aaranyak is committed towards conservation of rich biodiversity and natural heritages of NE India by supporting our indigenous people and local communities for Alternative and Sustainable Livelihoods and other nature-based solutions. The programme was organised with financial support from IUCN-Kfw.

## Health camp organised for forest staff of Pobitora WLS



Around 75 frontline forest personnel deployed in Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary in Assam, their family members and a few local villagers participated in a health camp organised on June 18 by Aaranyak in collaboration with the Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) authority, SHIPA (a local NGO) and Arya Hospital here with support from Zoo Berlin.

A health camp which was conducted at the Range Office of Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS), facilitated basic health care and necessary medical support for the participants. Dr Abijeet Neog, head of Arya Hospital, facilitated availability of a team of medical professionals for the health camp led by Dr Sailendra Kr Das and comprising Dr. Luckson, nurses Satabdi Swargiary and Pallabi Dutta.

The health camp was successfully organised in presence and pro-active participation of Pranjal Baruah, Range Officer of Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary, Dr Bibhab Kumar Talukdar, Executive Director of Aaranyak, Dr. Deba Kumar Dutta, Deputy Director of Aaranyak, Manas Kumar Bhattachariya, Assistant Director of Aaranyak, Researcher Ujjal Bayan, Assistant Project Officer Pranjal Deka, and one of the unit handlers of Aaranyak's K9 dog squad Rupak Bora.

“Aaranyak believes organising such health camps are vital for forest staff, whose demanding duties in remote and physically challenging environments often limit their access to regular basic medical care. Supporting their well-being not only boosts their efficiency and morale but also strengthens long-term wildlife conservation efforts,” said Dr Deba Kumar Dutta.

“This health camp could reach nearly 90% of the frontline staff of Pobitora WLS. A few personnel stationed in remote areas were unable to attend the camp this time. However, we will ensure health care for them in such programmes to be held in future. All forest staff will also receive essential medicines and first aid kits,” Aaranyak official said.



## Solar inverters for homestays of Kaziranga–KA landscape



As part of an initiative aimed at empowering rural homestays within the Kaziranga–Karbi Anglong Landscape (KKL) of Assam, Aaranyak facilitated the distribution of solar inverters to five rural homestays of the landscape.

The distribution was carried out as part of Aaranyak's ongoing efforts to promote participatory Natural Resource Management (NRM) and strengthen sustainable livelihoods in ecologically sensitive areas. The homestays are namely -- Margaret Homestay, Preity Homestay, Anjana Homestay, Kareng Homestay, and Charne Homestay; located in Kohora, Karbi Anglong.

Acclaimed actor and filmmaker Nandita Das participated in the initial distribution of one of the inverters during her recent visit to Kaziranga. Her engagement brought encouraging visibility to grassroots sustainability initiatives and reinforced the importance of community-led conservation cum tourism models.

There are currently 10 community-managed homestays operated by members of the Kindulangso Self-Help Group (SHG) and supported by Aaranyak to promote eco-cultural tourism through the Journey for Learning (J4L) initiative. This initiative is rooted in the Kaziranga-Karbi Anglong Landscape.

The initiative is supported by IUCN - Kfw and US Fish and Wildlife Service.

## Solar fences facilitate education in HEC-hit schools

The normal course of life of common people is severely affected when human elephant conflict (HEC) rages in a particular geographical area. In such a situation, the education of children from affected areas becomes one of the worst casualties.

Aaranyak while implementing its community-centric HEC mitigation strategy in various affected areas spread across the state, have come across several government-run schools where imparting education has become next to impossible because of the raging HEC situation.

Giving priority to the education for the children from those HEC hotspots, Aaranyak with consent of respective local administration, school management committee and cooperation from local communities have installed solar powered fences around eight such schools in the state so far to facilitate regular education for children notwithstanding the HEC hurdle.



The Niti Aayog, in the report has mentioned, “Aaranyak NGO, with support from State Bank of India Foundation, introduced an innovative solution: solar-powered electric fence around five schools under Bhergaon Development Block. This eco-friendly fence emits a mild electric pulse, harmlessly deterring elephants ensuring safety. Powered by solar energy, it is sustainable, cost-effective measure balancing human and wildlife needs.

Thalung L P School at Kalikhola in Udalguri district of Assam was damaged by wild elephants several times till Aaranyak installed a 180-meter-long solar powered fence around it on September 19, 2024 to facilitate uninterrupted education for its 30 students including 14 girls.

Such stretches of solar powered fence installed by Aaranyak have been become lifelines for Bhumi L P School at Khairabari Block in Udalguri district with 30 students including 13 girls ; No.2 Bholatar Dara Chuba L P School under Khairabari Block in Udalguri district with 63 students including 25 girls ; No.331 Nonke Sonajuli L P School at Sonajuli Village at Kalikhola in Udalguri district ; No. 2 L P School at Teenali Division of Budlapara Tea Estate in Udalguri district with 54 students ; No. 2 Tankibasti L P School I Udalguri district with 40 students and Kashibari Kochpara L P School with 24 students including 13 girls in Goalpara district.

Over the years Aaranyak have secured and facilitated education despite the raging HEC situation in these eight schools having altogether about 400 students by installing solar powered fences with support from US Fish and Wildlife Services and SBI Foundation.

Five of such solar-fenced schools which are located in Bhergaon Development Block of Udalguri district, have been lauded by the NITI Aayog in its report on regional workshop on “Improving the Education KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) in Aspirational Districts and Blocks”.

The physical existence of this school for imparting regular education for its over 90 students wouldn't have been possible but for the 400-meter-long solar powered fence that has been installed around it by Aaranyak as wild elephants roam around the institution even in daytime and caused damage to the school on several occasions in the past.

Forty-eight Lower Primary students, 38 students at the Anganbadi centre in the school premises and 15 pre-primary level students would have nowhere to go to attend classes had not the school been secured from wild elephants by the solar fence that was installed.

## 13 kms of solar fence installed at 12 HEC-hit villages



In response to the ongoing challenges of human-elephant conflict (HEC), Aaranyak, with support from the SBI Foundation, has successfully installed altogether 13-kilometer solar-powered fencing in two high-conflict regions covering the villages of Modahi Subba, Uttarkuchi, Amguri, Diyapara, Odalguri, Bhujel Subba, Silbari, Uttar Bijgaon, and Aliguri in Baksa district of Assam, and No.1 Bholatar, No.3 Bholatar, and Neuli in Udalguri district of Assam.

The solar fencing in those Udalguri district villages spans approximately 6 kilometers, providing protection to around 160 households and 861 residents. In Baksa district, the installation spread across 7 kilometres, safeguarding around 370 households and a community of 1580 people.

Aaranyak had installed such solar fences in several others villages of these two districts in the year 2023.

It may be noted that these solar-powered fences are non-lethal, specifically designed not to harm elephants, and to act as a safe deterrent, thereby protecting human lives, property, and crops from elephant depredation. The installations help reduce the frequency of elephant intrusions, ensure food security for villagers, and foster an atmosphere of peaceful human-elephant coexistence.

The sustainability and long-term effectiveness of this intervention depend mainly on active community participation. Hence, to ensure this, Fencing Management Committees comprising local residents have been formed at both locations. These members were trained by Aaranyak's expert and Assistant Manager Anjan Baruah, equipping them with the necessary skills for installation, upkeep, and regular monitoring of the solar fencing system.

The installation works were carried out by Aaranyak's team comprising Dibakar Nayak, Jiban Kumar Chetri, Bikash Tossa, Jaugasar Basumatary, Mondeep Basumatary, and Abhijit Saikia, under the technical supervision of Anjan Baruah.

## Consultation on protecting Majuli's rivers

Aaranyak organised a community consultation on 'Conserving rivers and wetlands in Majuli for riparian livelihood security' at the Mahabahu Resort, Bengena-Ati, Majuli. More than 40 representatives from 13 villages of the Central Majuli region attended the meeting and expressed their views on the importance of preserving and rejuvenating the degraded rivers and wetlands in Majuli for augmenting the dwindling fish-based livelihoods of the riparian communities.

The meeting was presided by Jugal Hazarika, noted social worker of Majuli. Sri Hazarika, in his opening remarks, mentioned about various field-based research studies that Aaranyak has been carrying out in Majuli over last 15 years.

Dr Partha J Das, senior scientist and head of 'Water, Climate and Hazard (WATCH) Division' of Aaranyak, while welcoming the participants apprised them of Aaranyak's recent initiatives in Majuli for raising public awareness for protecting its water bodies and rejuvenating the degraded wetlands and rivers.

Several village leaders (Gram Pradhan), fish harvesters and fish traders also spoke on the occasion expressing their views on the issues under discussion. They mentioned about the threats and challenges to their livelihoods and how their fish-based vocations are increasingly becoming vulnerable due to rapid loss of fish stock and variety.

The discussions and interactions organised on April 2 highlighted the need of resurrecting the dying wetlands located around the Tuni River such as Shaola Gatanga, Bhuramora, Gereki, Chandamora, Batamari, Sholmari, Jorbeel, Saru Hahsora, Bor Hahsora, Dighali Beel, Moloha Khowa, Kachari Boka, Checha Beel, Sengeli Dubi, Oudubi, Tekeli Dubi and Bhoga Saikia.

The participants also prepared a map of the water bodies that they use for fishing with their villages located around, following participatory mapping techniques under the guidance of Sri Jugal Hazarika.

## Villages in Manas consulted on natural resource management



Aaranyak organised a consultation with representatives from Bhuyanpara, Bamunkhal, Majrabari, Kora ibari, Thwribari, Randhanipara, and Gorumara, all fringes to Manas National Park to finalise the strategy related to village-level awareness and education programme, village-level natural resource management (NRM) plan development and assess the scope and interest of the community leadership to set up predator-proof coral in the project villages, experimentally.



## Village Champions taken on a trip to Kaziranga-Karbi Anglong

Aaranyak organised a consultation with representatives from Bhuyanpara, Bamunkhal, Majrabari, Kora ibari, Thwribari, Randhanipara, and Gorumara, all fringes to Manas National Park to finalise the strategy related to village-level awareness and education programme, village-level natural resource management (NRM) plan development and assess the scope and interest of the community leadership to set up predator-proof coral in the project villages, experimentally.

The programme, organised at the Manas Conservation and Outreach Centre (MCOC) of Aaranyak, was attended by 16 members from 6 out of 10 project villages and the 10 volunteers from the designated project villages.

The programme was coordinated by Jayanta Kumar Sarma with support from Swapan Kumar Das, Bijay Basumatary, Barnali Baro, Shaikhong Basumatary, Dr Partha Sarathi Ghose and the entire team of the MCOC.

Aaranyak is committed towards conservation of rich biodiversity and natural heritages of NE India by supporting our indigenous people and local communities for alternative and sustainable livelihoods and other nature-based solutions. The programme was organised with financial support from IUCN-KfW.

An exposure visit was conducted during April 4 to 7 for the "Village Champions" (VCs)- who are local community members from human-elephant conflict (HEC) affected villages of eastern Assam areas and West Garo Hills in Meghalaya, in Kaziranga-Karbi Anglong landscape of Assam. This exposure visit was facilitated by community-based eco-cultural tourism initiative under the "Journey for Learning".

The VCs are trained community members who facilitate Aaranyak and British Asian Trust's initiative to bolster human-elephant coexistence through a bottom-up approach of community empowerment, and monitoring HEC, supported by Darwin Initiative.

The VCs participation in implementing the project is remarkable, and to recognise their support and cooperation, we organised this exposure trip to further build their capacity to contribute to conservation.

A team of 11 VCs, along with Aaranyak project team took part in this educational tour that began with an eco-cultural village walk in the villages of Phumen Engti, and Hemai Lekthe of Karbi Anglong, followed by another forest trekking in Ingnam Kengkam.

During this visit the team interacted with the indigenous Karbi community on eco-tourism model, agroforestry, sericulture, and handloom & handicraft practices. The team also had an interesting interaction on experiential Karbi-way of cooking in bamboo nodes.

The following day, a morning safari to Kaziranga National Park was conducted for the team to witness the rich biodiversity, and management practices to secure the ecosystem. Thereafter, another important session of interaction with local entrepreneurs through "Pirbi"- a community-led business to understand how the local knowledge and products helps in sustainable livelihood sources for the local communities. Moreover, the team paid a visit to community nursery as well as the Orchid and Biodiversity Park.

This exposure trip has made a significant impact on the VCs as this was the first time they got a vivid idea on the concept of eco-tourism and how community-led initiatives are crucial for protecting biodiversity and ensuring well-being of people.

Aaranyak's officials, Dr. Jayanta Roy, Bhaskar Barukial, Sunny Paul, Beauty Terangpi, Rangina Phangso, Stephen Takbi (volunteer), Kristi Borah and Nayam Ali (intern) facilitated the entire exposure trip.

## Forest staff trained on conserving the only 'Ape of India'

Aaranyak in collaboration with Jorhat Forest Division of Assam Forest Department organised a seven-day residential training workshop at the Gibbon Conservation Centre of Hollongapar Gibbon Sanctuary in Assam as part of its relentless effort to equip frontline forest staff with knowledge of various conservation aspects of threatened Hoolock gibbons known as the only 'Ape of India'. The initiative was supported by The Habitats Trust, IUCN SSC Primate Specialist Group and IUCN Primate Section of Small Apes.

Twenty-four frontline forest personnel from Assam and Arunachal Pradesh attended the advance training. Out of the twenty-four participants, eighteen of them were from Assam and six were from Arunachal Pradesh. These trainees included nine men and fifteen women.



All trainees from Assam were forest guards representing nine forest divisions -- Dibrugarh Forest Division, Dibrugarh Social Forestry Division, Digboi Forest Division, Doomdooma Forest Division, Golaghat Forest Division, Golaghat Social Forestry Division, Nagaon South Social Forestry Division, Sivasagar Forest Division and Tinsukia Wildlife division. All six participants from Arunachal Pradesh were from Namdapha National Park.

The inaugural session for the 4th batch of trainees was chaired by Dr Dilip Chetry, a senior primatologist and head of the Primate Research and Conservation Division of Aaranyak.

In his welcome address, Dr Chetry outlined the objectives of the training, encouraging trainees to share their field experiences, and emphasised the importance of active participation during sessions and field visits.

N. Nandha Kumar, IFS, DFO of Jorhat Forest Division, also addressed the gathering, urging trainees to absorb and later disseminate the knowledge gained through the training.

The training programme covered a wide range conservation topics, including -- Introduction to primates with a focus on the Hoolock Gibbon; Fragmentation, Canopy, and Canopy bridges; Plant taxonomy with special reference to Ficus species; Herbarium preparation; Biodiversity and protected areas; Wildlife laws, crime, and forensic DNA investigation; Snakebite awareness and snake rescue; Use of GPS, compass, and techniques of population estimation; Wildlife rescue & Wildlife rehabilitation and field observation methods.

These sessions were delivered by an experienced panel of resource persons, including Dr I.C.Barua from Assam Agricultural University, Former forest officers Gunin Saikia DCF, Former forest Range Officer Jiten Goswami, Gauhati High Court advocate Ajoy Kumar Das, anaesthesiologist Sumit Giri from Demow Hospital, Prabal Saikia from University of Science and Technology Meghalaya and experts -- Dr Pranja Kumar Das, Arup Kumar Das, Akshay Kumar Upadhyaya, Nandita Medhi and Dr Dilip Chetry from Aaranyak.

Classroom lectures were complemented by field visits along different trails within the sanctuary. Pre-test and post-test evaluations, along with a concept mapping exercise, were conducted to assess learning outcomes. Trainees were provided with comprehensive training materials including a manual, a book on the Hoolock Gibbon, notebook, pen, posters, and other relevant resources. Certificates of participation and group photographs were distributed at the end of the programme.

## **‘Ride for Conservation’ Phase III covers 430 kms**

To commemorate Aaranyak’s year-long 35th anniversary, we successfully completed Phase III of "Ride for Conservation," cycling 430 km and held 11 awareness programmes on biodiversity conservation and human wellbeing along the route. Starting from the famed Kaziranga NP&TR, the rally traverses through the Hoollongapar Gibbon Sanctuary, home to India’s only ape—the Hoolock Gibbon.



It then passes through Panidihing Wildlife Sanctuary, a vital wetland habitat for migratory birds and Dibru-Saikhowa National Park, known for its vibrant riverine ecosystems and endangered species. The rally culminates at Dihing Patkai National Park, a rainforest teeming with rare flora and fauna. Awareness programmes and meetings were organised during every halt in these significant sites, to engage local communities, students and nature enthusiasts to reinforce the core message of conservation and the spirit of environmental stewardship.

Furthermore, the rally halted in Kamargaon Press Club, Kaziranga University, Range Office of Jorhat, Annapurna Seed Library in Teok, Dikhowmukh College, Sorguwa Higher Secondary School, Panidihing, Dibrugarh Wildlife Division, Guijan Higher Secondary, Guijan Range Office, Naharkotia College and Jeypore Range Office, where structured environmental awareness programmes were conducted.

The rally was inaugurated on April 9 in the campus of the office of Director, Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve, and flagged off by Bubul Baruah, ACF and Range officers Bidyut Bikash Bora and Monjit Sonowal in presence of Gitanjali Kalita, Manisha Ashraf and Dr Jayanta Roy. Words of encouragement from Dr Sonali Ghosh, Director KNP&TR and Arun Vignesh, DFO, were conveyed via telephone.

In Jorhat Range Office, the rally was greeted in the presence of Santanu Patwary, Range officer, Jorhat and Rupak Bhuyan, Dy. Range Officer. On 10th April, the journey from Gibbon WL was flagged off by Dilip Chetry, Vice President, Aaranyak and Nanda Kumar, DFO, Jorhat, with the participation of newly recruited range officials, foresters and students.

In Teok, the rally was greeted by Mahan Bora, founder Annapurna Seed Library.

The third day rally was flagged off by Amal Borhade, ACF, Dibrugarh Wildlife Division and reached Guijan, where the rally was greeted by Sanjay Das, Social worker, Tinsukia.

On April 12, in presence of forest officials the rally was flagged off by Riyaz Ali, IC Guijan Police Station, and Santanu Phukan, FR1, Range Officer of Guijan, Dipankar Barman, WTI, and staff of Guijan and Saikhuwa Range and Division respectively to pedal to Dihing Patkai. The rally culminated with a closing programme at Jeypore, Dihing Patkai in the presence of Lucky Dutta, Range officer, Jeypore Range, and Bastab Nath, FR1, Jeypore Range and Jakir Islam Bora, Aaranyak.

Dr Dilip Cherty, Aaranyak, Dr Jayanta Roy, Aaranyak, Hiren Dutta, Coordinator, Aaranyak Eastern Assam Zone, Sanjay Das, Social Worker, Guijan, Tinsukia, Jakir Islam Bora, Co-Coordinator Aaranyak Eastern Assam Zone, Pranab Goswami, Aaranyak, Nawab Ruhul Rahman and Nawab Wasim Rahman, Ejaj Ahmed extended their support and help during the programme.

The rally was meticulously planned, executed, and led by Arif Hussain, a senior official of Aaranyak, whose strategic foresight and leadership ensured its successful coordination. The core cycling team included dedicated enthusiasts—Swapan Nath, Ritom, Shyam Orang, Aakash Morang and Arif Hussain. Pedaling through both rain and sunshine, the rally successfully accomplished its mission of spreading the message of environmental conservation. The rally was a source of inspiration for both participants and spectators.



The rally was well supported by Kaziranga NP&TR authority, Gibbon WLS authority, Panidihing WLS authority, Dibrusaikhowa NP authority and Dihing Patkai NP authority and are deeply acknowledged.

## 'Rhino Goes to School' educates kids in Golaghat

Arif Hussain, Manager of Rhino Research and Conservation Division (RRCD) of Aaranyak was the resource person for the event. Head master of the school Mohed Doley, retired teacher Jatin Kakoti, ex-village head Lukeswar Hazarika, teacher Mukheswar Saikia, senior journalist Moheswar Robidas and Aaranyak members Ivan Loying, Babukanta Daw and Akash Morang were also present in the programme.

Aaranyak conducted a rhino conservation awareness event for young students under one of its flagship campaign 'Rhino Goes to School' at Bordihingiya LP School, Kamargaon in Golaghat district of Assam. The event was participated by 50 students accompanied by their teachers.



As part of the event, a visual presentation containing substantial information on Greater one-horned rhino and its habitats was made in the event that also featured an open quiz contest, an interactive session and games that educated about the environment.

## Alternative crops promotion for human-elephant coexistence

Aaranyak with support from the SBI Foundation conducted a training on alternative crops in Onthaibari village in Baksa district of Assam on April 6. This initiative focused on promoting alternative crops that are less palatable to elephants, aiming to address the pressing issue of crop foraging by wild elephants.

The training attracted local farmers from Onthaibari and Modhupur villages, along with members of the MSKETS NGO, resulting in a total attendance of 24 participants. Led by agriculture expert and plant pathologist Dipankar Haloi of Aaranyak, the session provided invaluable insights into effective planting techniques and organic farming practices.



Participants learned about cultivating alternative crops such as Assam lemon, ginger, turmeric, and rapeseed-mustard—crops that not only minimize crop foraging, but also enhance income prospects for farmers. Emphasising sustainable practices, the training encouraged the use of natural inputs like Panchagavya, Neemastra, and Beejamrit to improve soil fertility while reducing reliance on chemical fertilizers and pesticides.

This programme reflects Aaranyak's ongoing commitment to fostering human-wildlife coexistence and promoting sustainable farming practices in conflict-prone areas. The programme was executed seamlessly with the active participation of Aaranyak's dedicated team members- Mondeep Basumatari, Arindam Saikia, Dipankar Haloi, Jiban Chetry, Jaugashar Basumatary, and Pradip Barman.

## Govt officials visit our nursery promoting coexistence, biodiversity conservation



As part of our joint efforts to support local communities in restoring ecosystems and improving livelihoods in Udalguri, the Sub-Divisional Agriculture Officer (SDAO) and Agriculture Development Officer (ADO), accompanied by the Agriculture Extension Assistant (AEA) of Dimakuchi, visited the Jaikhleng Community Nursery and expressed deep appreciation for the impactful work being carried out on the ground.

## First aid training to help tackle HEC exigencies

The community nursery is a vital component of the project titled “Community-Based Integrated Approach to Facilitate Human-Elephant Coexistence and Biodiversity Conservation”, being implemented in Udalguri District by Aaranyak under the aegis of the UNDP-GEF Small Grants Programme, supported by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India, and implemented nationally by TERI-The Energy and Resources Institute.

During their visit, the officials conducted a comprehensive walkthrough of the nursery, carefully observing each section including the mother plant blocks, seasonal seedlings, and demonstration plots. They commended the commitment of the local women managing the nursery and were especially impressed with the vision to transform the space into a training-cum-production center for rural livelihoods and agro-ecological learning. They also distributed Assam Lemon seedlings to the beneficiaries. These seedlings will be utilized for bio-fencing, blending income generation with ecological benefits such as natural barriers and elephant deterrence.

The initiative is being steered under the strategic guidance of Senior Manager in Aaranyak’s Environment Education and Capacity Building Division Jayanta Kumar Pathak, whose continued support and leadership have been instrumental in nurturing community-based conservation efforts.

Aaranyak, with support from the SBI Foundation, conducted two first-aid trainings in Orangajuli and Amlaiguri villages of Udalguri district of Assam. We collaborated with Goodricke Group Private Limited of Orangajuli Tea Garden for the training at Orangajuli. Both the sessions were aimed to equip local communities with essential emergency response skills, particularly in areas prone to human-elephant conflict (HEC).



Seventy-five persons took part in these trainings which was facilitated by experienced team of AAPDA Mitra master trainers, a disaster response initiative operating under the Disaster Management Authority (DDMA), Baksa. The sessions focused on delivering life-saving first-aid techniques, including how to construct makeshift splints and apply bandages for injuries such as broken elbows, legs, and chins. Additionally, the participants received crucial guidance on handling snakebite incidents—an important skill in remote areas where immediate medical care is often unavailable.

By equipping villagers with these first-aid skills, Aaranyak is strengthening community preparedness and resilience in regions frequently affected by HEC. In many such areas, medical assistance can be delayed, making it essential for residents to have the knowledge and confidence to provide immediate care during emergencies. Aaranyak team members including Mondeep Basumatari, Abhijit Saikia, Bikash Tossa, and Pradip Barman facilitated the training sessions.

## Free eye camp in Udalguri for marginalised communities



Responding to a request from the local community, Aaranyak organised a free eye camp at Dimakuchi, Udalguri, in collaboration with Sri Sankaradeva Nethralaya. The camp received an overwhelming response, with over 160 individuals benefiting from comprehensive eye check-ups.

Patients diagnosed with cataract-related issues were referred for free surgery, to be conducted at Sri Sankaradeva Nethralaya in Guwahati. This initiative ensures that those in need receive essential medical intervention without any financial burden. Individuals from Samrang, Badlapara, Tanki Basti, Bamunjuli, Sonajuli, Bholatar villages, ranging in age from 28 to 80, attended the camp.

Aaranyak is currently implementing a project under the UNDP-GEF Small Grants Programme (Operational Phase 7) in Udalguri, Assam. The eye camp was organised at No. 331 Nonkeh Sonajuli LP School, Sonajuli following requests from project beneficiaries, in collaboration with Sri Sankaradeva Nethralaya. During the camp, community members also discussed the ongoing SGP project activities and expressed interest in replicating some of the initiatives in their own villages.

Jayanta Kumar Pathak of Aaranyak shared that 38 individuals were diagnosed with cataracts and they received free treatment at Sri Sankaradeva Nethralaya by the end of April. He also assured that if the community wants, similar camps will be facilitated in the future.

Aaranyak officials Jayanta Kumar Pathak, Dipankar Haloi, Haben Mochahary, Rabiya Daimary, Abhijit Saikia, Mondeep Basumatary, Abhilasha Baruah, and Pradeep Barman played key roles in the smooth execution of the event. Additionally, Aaranyak's Elephant Conservation Network team was instrumental in facilitating the camp's operations.

## Community outreach on HEC mitigation

Continuing its mission to promote harmonious coexistence between communities and elephants, Aaranyak conducted two community outreach events with support from the SBI Foundation in Udalguri and Baksa district of Assam.

A community outreach event was organised at Mainaophuri village in Udalguri. The event featured our signature campaigns 'Gajah Kotha' and 'Hati aru ami,' which aim to enhance understanding of elephants, including their movements and habits, and behaviour, while providing strategies to minimise human-elephant conflict (HEC).



In addition to this, we screened a documentary which helped enriching their understanding on the crucial relationship between communities and wildlife. Sixty-three persons including elderly, youths and children from two villages participated in the outreach event.

We organised another session at Milanchuba village in Baksa. This programme focused on discussing the effects of human-elephant conflict in the village and showcased our IEC sets about elephants and effective HEC mitigation strategies. The villagers shared personal experiences regarding elephant encounters and discussed potential solutions for mitigating conflicts. A total of 21 people contributed to the interaction aimed at fostering peaceful coexistence.

These outreach events were facilitated by Aaranyak's dedicated team members Rabiya Daimari, Abhijit Saikia, Mondeep Basumatari, Abhilasha Boruah, Jaugashar Basumatary and Pradip Barman.

We remain steadfast in our commitment to promoting human-elephant coexistence through educating people, implementation of effective HEC mitigation tool and habitat enrichment to help ensure coexistence.

## Teachers oriented on sustainability education

A day-long orientation programme was organised in the realm of environment education through the orientation programme for guiding teachers on the Wipro Earthian Sustainability Education initiative on April 23. The event was designed to inspire, equip and empower teachers with the knowledge and tools necessary to integrate sustainability education in teaching practices at their respective schools.



## Aaranyak's interventions project documented by TISS Guwahati

Being the Knowledge Partner for the North-Eastern Region of the Small Grants Programme (SGP), a team led by Dean Dr Abhinandan Saikia from Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Guwahati, visited Aaranyak's UNDP-GEF Small Grants Programme (SGP) project sites in Udalguri, Assam on April 10, to gather firsthand knowledge and document on-ground experiences of community-driven interventions.

The event was witnessed active participation from 100 teacher trainees. The programme involved various interactive discussions, group activities, and resource sharing to enhance the trainees' understanding of the topic.

The session was led by Tikendrajit Gogoi, Project Officer at Environment Education and Capacity Building Division of Aaranyak focusing on the importance and implementation of sustainability practices among the younger generation instilling a deeper understanding of environmental issues in their local context.

Gogoi alongside Dr Pradip Chandra Borah, Principal of the College of Teacher Education highlighted the much-needed emphasis on grassroots-level engagement in sustainability efforts through the school education system.

The orientation programme showcased Aaranyak's commitment towards bridging the gap between the environment and new generation by fostering critical thinking and informed decision-making towards sustainable development and efforts in empowering educators through effective sustainability education.



The team carried out transect walks across the village, reviewed Aaranyak's past and present initiatives, held Focus Group Discussions involving one-to-one interviews and documented stories to identify impacts, outcomes, and innovations to create impactful knowledge resources involving documentaries, success stories, visual storytelling, and case studies.

Dr Saikia led the Focus Group Discussion and interacted closely with the beneficiaries and stakeholders to derive profound insights regarding the project interventions and impact on the community. The visit was coordinated by Jayanta Kumar Pathak, Senior Manager & Team Lead, Environment Education and Capacity Building Division, Aaranyak, with active support from team members, Dipankar Haloi, Project Officer, and Haben Mochahary, Field Assistant. The collaboration will aid preparation of case studies that highlight the impact and outcomes of the SGP initiatives.

## Sustainable Development Goals: Role of Youth



Aaranyak participated as a collaborator in a one-day national level student seminar on the theme "Sustainable Development Goals: Role of Youth" organised by Darrang College on April 25. The Regional Office of PCBA and the Zilla Parishad, Sonitpur also collaborated for the seminar. The objective of the seminar was to provide UG and PG students a platform to explore and engage in meaningful discussions on global sustainability challenges.

The inaugural session of the event was graced by Prithiraj Rava, Honourable MLA of Tezpur LAC, along with the Principal of Darrang College and several other dignitaries as well as the student participants.

During the session, Pranab Goswami from Aaranyak spoke about the role of youth in addressing the global sustainability challenges. He also highlighted various scope and opportunities available through Aaranyak's platform, encouraging students to take initiative, starting with themselves.

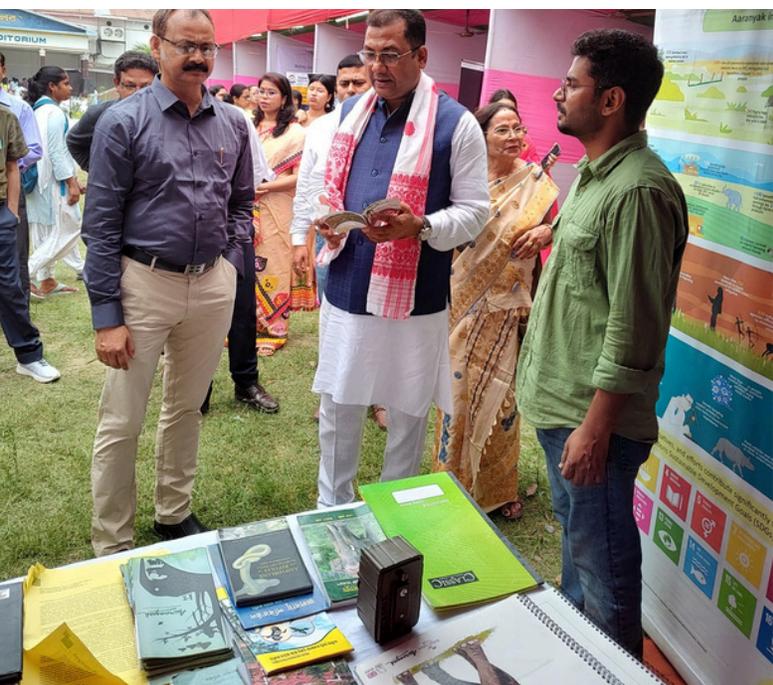
As part of the collaboration, our team participated in an exhibition where we showcased the organisation's diverse efforts toward conservation of biodiversity and human well-being. They also engaged with students to inspire their involvement in various nature conservation activities across different platforms and backgrounds.

Aaranyak appreciated the Darrang College authority for organising this meaningful dialogue and knowledge sharing event for the youths and inviting Aaranyak for collaboration. Aaranyak's Public Relations Executive Gunajit Mazumdar and member Vishaal Raj Khanikar represented the organisation.

## Aaranyak at Blooming Kopou cum Career and Job Fair

Aaranyak took part in a unique event -- 'Blooming Kopou cum Career and Job Fair,' hosted by the Department of English at Nowgong Girls' College, in association with the college's IQAC and ICGC on April 11.

The event organised at the college premises aimed to encourage students to pursue skill-based and passion-driven career paths across different sectors. At the event, Aaranyak's team showcased the organisation's various initiatives and career opportunities, engaging actively with students, faculty, and participants from other institutions in Nagaon.



The interaction highlighted the wide range of roles and possibilities within Aaranyak, emphasising how individuals can contribute to biodiversity conservation and sustainable living.

Encouraging young minds to engage in environmental conservation activities, whether through scientific research, artistic expression, media involvement, community services, or advocacy, can help foster a lifelong commitment to ecological stewardship.

Involving students from diverse backgrounds and across various forms of media also ensures a richer, more inclusive approach to conservation, tapping into different perspectives and talents to address environmental challenges more effectively.

Aaranyak official Pranab Goswami along with three members of Aaranyak -- Lakhminandan Dutta, Debojit Rajbongshi and Hrishikesh Deka represented the organisation in the event.

## Participation in InnoVibe'25 at TISS, Guwahati

Aaranyak participated in the InnoVibe'25, an inspiring event organised by TISS, Guwahati. As a part of this vibrant event, Aaranyak has highlighted its wide-ranging efforts in conservation of biodiversity and natural resources management, while also promoting human well-being. The team actively engaged with students, exploring various ways they can get involved and make use of the opportunities offered by Aaranyak in the field of environmental sustainability.

## Honorary Doctoral Degree for Dr Purnima at AAU convocation

Globally acclaimed senior conservation biologist of Aaranyak Dr Purnima Devi Barman stole the limelight at the glittering convocation organised at Assam Agricultural University (AAU) in Jorhat, Assam for being conferred Honorary Doctoral Degree by the Governor of Assam Lakshman Prasad Acharya.



Dr Barman was conferred the honour along with another decorated conservationist Jadav Payeng while 548 graduates from the AAU received their degrees in the convocation today.

## Aaranyak expert speaks at CASFOS

Aaranyak's senior conservation biologist, Dr Alolika Sinha during a session on "Biodiversity conservation and its importance" on April 25 for the three-day training programme on "Awareness on Mission LIFE-Lifestyle for Environment" for college students and Eco-clubs, conducted by CASFOS, Burnihat, Meghalaya.



The event became a hub for interaction, as students enthusiastically engaged with our team, gaining insights into wildlife conservation and learning how they can contribute to our mission by aligning their skills and interests. One of the highlights of our participation was the Vulture Selfie Corner, a creative initiative designed to raise awareness about the urgent need for vulture conservation. Students and faculty members actively took part by clicking selfies and sharing messages, helping amplify the conversation around protecting these critically endangered scavengers which is playing a crucial ecological role.

Through such collaborations, we aim to inspire the next generation to take action for biodiversity conservation and build a more sustainable future. Aaranyak's Officials Pranab Goswami and Wasima Begum participated in the event.

## Aaranyak researcher presents at Cambridge University SCCS

As part of the prestigious Student Conference on Conservation Science (SCCS)- 2025 at the Cambridge University, Aaranyak's senior project officer Sourav Gupta presented his research work titled -- "Lost and Found? Assessing arboreal nocturnal mammals on Noa-Dihing River's southern bank, Namdapha National Park, India." The paper is authored by Sourav Gupta and co-authored by Dr. M Firoz Ahmed, Dr. Ramie H. Begum and Dr. Jayanta Kr. Roy.

## Educating students on human-elephant coexistence in Udalguri



With the support of SBI Foundation, Aaranyak organised two school outreach programmes at Garuajhar High School on April 25 and Teliapara Middle School on April 26 in the Udalguri district of Assam.

These sessions were part of Aaranyak's ongoing efforts to spread awareness about the human-elephant conflict (HEC) and to promote peaceful ways for people and elephants to live together.

A total of 130 students from both schools actively took part in the programmes. Aaranyak's team presented important information about HEC in an easy-to-understand and engaging way. They introduced the students to basic knowledge about elephant behaviour, the reasons why conflicts happen between humans and elephants, and simple steps that people can take to reduce the chances of conflict.

Using interactive discussions, storytelling through 'Gajah Katha', and visual aids, the team made the sessions lively and interesting for the students. The storytelling approach helped students connect with the issue emotionally, making it easier for them to understand the importance of coexisting peacefully with elephants. Students also learned how they can stay safe during elephant movements while also showing respect and care for wildlife.

Both programmes were successfully facilitated by Aaranyaks Abhijit Saikia, Mondeep Basumatari, Abhilasha Boruah and Pradip Barman.

## HEC-affected community in Baksa educated on coexistence

Aaranyak with the support from the SBI foundation, on April 24, conducted two community outreach programmes at Uttar Subankhata and Bandwguri in Baksa district, Assam.

These programmes were part of Aaranyak's continued efforts to promote human-elephant coexistence and reduce human-elephant conflict (HEC) in areas prone to such issues.



During the sessions, Aaranyak introduced and demonstrated the HaatiApp, a mobile application specially designed to assist local communities in monitoring and reporting elephant movements and incidents of conflict. The app enables users to easily record sightings of elephants, report conflict situations, and receive alerts about elephant presence in their surroundings. By using this tool, communities can stay better informed and take early precautions to avoid encounters, making the coexistence with elephants safer and more manageable.

In addition to the HaatiApp demonstration, Aaranyak's team presented HEC mitigation sets, explaining how different tools and techniques can be used to prevent or reduce conflicts with elephants. These demonstrations helped participants understand practical ways to protect their crops, property, and lives while also ensuring the safety of the elephants.

A total of 51 participants from both areas actively engaged in the sessions, showing great interest in learning about the importance of coexistence and how technology and traditional knowledge can work together to reduce conflicts.

Aaranyak team members Abhijit Saikia, Mondeep Basumatari, Jiban Chetry, and Pradip Barman, who brought their expertise and field experience facilitated this informative and interactive session.

## Endemic Bird Day brings enthusiasts into the wild



Under its WeForNature programme, Aaranyak collaborated with Kamrup East Division of Assam Forest Department to conduct a nature awareness event with 24 bird lovers, researchers, and conservationists, which included outdoor exploration and meaningful discussion on nature in the lush Garbhanga Reserve Forest on Endemic Bird Day 2025.

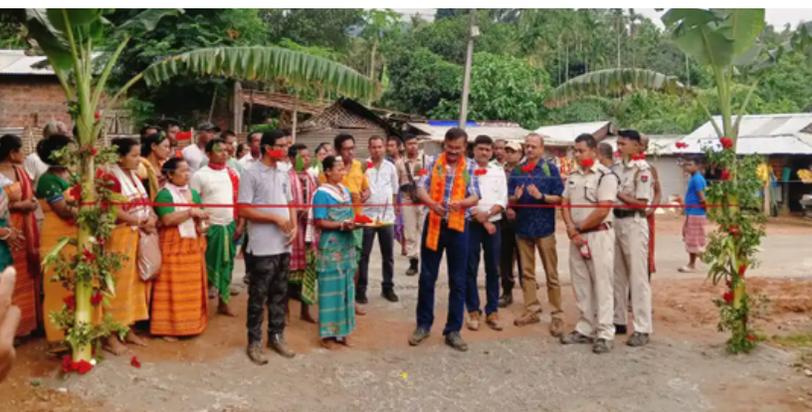
The half day event organised on May 10 aimed to promote awareness and discussion around the significance of avian endemism, growing threats to bird populations, conservation priorities, citizen science-based bird documentation, and the importance of public engagement in bird conservation.

The event unfolded in two engaging parts. The morning began with a birdwatching trail, starting at the Lokhara entry point, where participants observed and documented local birdlife in their natural habitat. This was followed by an interactive gathering titled “Conservation Adda”, a casual yet insightful discussion space where participants reflected on bird conservation challenges, citizen science, and the need for public awareness around endemic species. Twenty-two bird species were sighted during the birdwatching, showcasing the richness of Garbhanga’s avifauna.

Leading the event were Dr Jayaditya Purkayastha, conservation biologist and educator; Dr Nilotpal Mahanta, wildlife biologist and birder; with support from Aaranyak team comprising Partha Pratim Das, wildlife biologist; Chinmoy Swargiary, cinematographer and photographer; and wildlife biologists Simanta Medhi and Pitom Jyoti Gore. The event was coordinated by Pranab Goswami from Aaranyak.

With shared passion and purpose, the gathering served as a reminder of the pressing need to protect the avian treasures of Northeast India and inspired deeper commitment to conservation through community engagement and collaboration.

## Solar fence inaugurated under Krishnai Forest Range



“We villagers will work hard together under your guidance to maintain and protect this solar-powered fence that holds promise to change our lives and livelihoods for better amid the constant fear from wild elephants roaming around our area.”

This was how an elderly woman, Jamini Boro, of far-flung human-elephant conflict (HEC) affected Chaplengkata village under Krishnai Forest Range in Goalpara district of Assam, heaved a sigh of relief loudly during a public meeting organised for inauguration and formal handover of a stretch of solar powered fence to solar fence management committee of the village.

A former member of village panchayat, Boro expressed gratitude to Assam Forest Department and Aaranyak for the efforts for mitigation of the raging HEC that has made life very hard for the villagers in the area located close to Assam-Meghalaya boundary.

A two-kilometer solar powered fence was inaugurated on May 26 by the Range Forest Officer of Krishnai Forest Range in Goalpara district Moniruddin Sheikh at Chaplengkata village having 43 households mostly belonging to Bodo tribe.

The solar fence has been installed by Aaranyak’s specialised team headed by senior official Anjan Baruah for mitigation of HEC and facilitating coexistence. The solar fence has been installed with support and collaboration from Goalpara Forest Division of Assam Forest Department. Aaranyak’s solar fence expert Anjan Baruah was assisted by Aaranyak field staff Ripunjay Nath and Rohit Nath in carrying out the spadework, villagers’ training and installation of the solar fence.

## Celebration of International Day for Biological Diversity

On the International Day for Biological Diversity (IDBD) on May 22, celebrated this year with the global theme “Harmony with Nature and Sustainable Development” Aaranyak organised multiple events to commemorate the day and its significance.



Aaranyak's Secretary General and CEO Dr Bibhab Kumar Talukdar delivered a talk from Indonesia for students and faculties of the Department of Ecology and Environmental Science, Assam University, Silchar through virtual mode.

A community-centric celebration was organised at Bholatar, Samrang and Sonajuli villages in Dimakuchi, Udalguri district of Assam. The event was held under the project “Community-based integrated approach to facilitate Human-Elephant Coexistence and Biodiversity Conservation in Udalguri, Assam”, implemented by Aaranyak under the aegis of UNDP-GEF Small Grants Programme (SGP), MoEF&CC, Govt. of India, and TERI.

The event featured a “Sapling distribution and indigenous tree seeds collection drive”, designed to promote green cover and preserve in-situ biodiversity. Saplings of Amla, Arjun, Bahera, Passion Fruit and Assam Lemon were distributed among students, school teachers, and local residents. Several saplings were also planted in gardens of schools to encourage hands-on environmental learning.

The saplings were provided by Jaikhleng Community Nursery, a grassroots initiative supported under the same project to empower rural women. Awareness talks were delivered by Dipankar Haloi for boosting students' understanding of biodiversity highlighting the importance of native species, ecological balance, and the need for community-driven conservation. The awareness talks were attended by school teachers too. In addition, a community-led ‘Indigenous tree seeds collection drive’ was carried out with active participation from local villagers. The collected seeds will be used in future plantation efforts, especially in restoring degraded areas. The event was led by Aaranyak's Project Officer, Dipankar Haloi, under the guidance of Jayanta Kumar Pathak, Senior Manager, EECBD, Aaranyak.

Aaranyak in collaboration with the Kachugaon Forest Division of Raimona National Park celebrated the International Day for Biological Diversity in the national park. The event witnessed the enthusiastic participation of 36 students from fringe villages around Raimona National Park, along with community nursery partners, representatives from the Forest Department, and the Block Elementary Education Office (BEEO), Kachugaon Division.

As part of the celebration, a poster-making competition was organised, where students showcased their creativity and awareness of native biodiversity. The program also included an introductory session on Raimona National Park and a discussion on the importance of biodiversity conservation. The event was graced by the presence of renowned primatologist Dr Jihusu Biswas, who interacted with the students and community members, highlighting the critical role of biological diversity and the need for its preservation.



Also, a seed poster including native plant species in and around Raimona was released during the event. From Aaranyak, Gayatri Dutta, Birdutta Baro and Nijwm Basumatary participated in the event.

Aaranyak's West Assam Zone in collaboration with the Departments of Botany and Zoology of PADUM, Tulungia, and in association with the Department of Botany of Abhayapuri College and IQAC & NCC unit of PADUM, Tulungia organised a vibrant celebration of The International Day for Biological Diversity on May 22 at Kakoijana MV School, Kakoijana village in Bongaigaon district of Assam. The programme commenced with an inaugural talk and welcome address by Dr Phatik Chandra Kalita, Principal of PADUM, Tulungia.

The event placed special emphasis on snake diversity, conservation, and snake bite awareness—a theme of both local and ecological relevance. Harmohan Rabha, a well-known local snake rescuer and wildlife conservationist, captivated the audience with an informative session on local snake species, their behaviour, and ecological roles. The event was a resounding success, fostering awareness, education, and community engagement in the pursuit of biodiversity conservation and sustainable living.

With an aim to foster kinship with nature among the younger generation and ecological wisdom, Aaranyak, in collaboration with the eco-club of Mission Life, conducted awareness activities in a few registered schools in Wipro earthian sustainability education, on the day of International Day for Biological Diversity in different parts of Assam. The butterfly symbolises a sense of interconnectedness between the human and the natural world, and a balanced relationship to promote a sustainable and thriving existence for all. In order to deepen this understanding, the EECBD of Aaranyak emphasised the role of butterflies in harmony with nature and raised awareness about the protection of globally endangered Swallow-tailed Butterflies at North Guwahati Girls' High School, Kamrup Metro.



A poster-making competition, plantation programme, and biodiversity quiz were conducted at Kishan Vidyapith High School, North Lakhimpur, Kakodunga Gyanodaya HS School, Golaghat and Shekhar Ullah Memorial ME School, Dhubri.

Aaranyak also conducted biodiversity documentation on the school campus, and documentary screening on Gaja Katha and Aaranyak's initiative on biodiversity conservation at Rajdhar Bora HS School, Azara. The entire programme was coordinated by Tikendrajit Gogoi, Project Officer of EECBD of Aaranyak.

## Dr Purnima invited to Ethnobiological Conference in University of Nevada

Dr. Purnima Devi Barman, TIME Women of the Year 2025, presented Assam's rich cultural heritage and biodiversity at the 46th Ethnobiological Conference in the University of Nevada in Lake Tahoe, Reno in USA through her conservation work.



Dressed in a pair of traditional Assamese mekhela-chador, she presented her innovative conservation model, highlighting the region's successful efforts in saving storks, empowering women and developing a climate-resilient community-centric conservation model in Assam. Her presentation showcased the intersection of culture, conservation, and community engagement, inspiring global dialogue on sustainable practices. She elaborated on how by saving a species and empowering communities, we can build climate resilient communities.

Dr. Purnima's appearance in the conference promoted Assam's cultural identity and underscored the importance of indigenous knowledge in conservation efforts.

## HaatiApp demonstrated for facilitating coexistence

With support from the SBI Foundation, Aaranyak conducted a community outreach programme on human-elephant coexistence at Bangrikuchi in Baska district of Assam, reaching out to the nearby villages of Kusratari, Diringapur, and Kantalguri on May 7.

The programme aimed to build awareness about human-elephant conflict mitigation and facilitating peaceful coexistence and introduce useful tools and knowledge to help local communities deal with the challenges of human-elephant conflict (HEC).



## Interaction with HEC-affected community to facilitate coexistence

We reached out to five villages in Jorhat and Dibrugarh districts of Assam covered under our elephant conservation project during May 8 to 10 and interacted with the local communities for knowledge sharing as well as to apprise them on our efforts, and project findings so as to help mitigation of human elephant conflict and facilitate coexistence.

During the event, Aaranyak demonstrated the HaatiApp, a mobile application designed to help people report elephant movements and access timely information to stay safe.

This hands-on session helped participants understand how the app can support early warning and conflict mitigation efforts. In addition, the team introduced Gajah Katha, an educational skit developed to share detailed information about elephants—their behaviour, ecology, and habitat. The session helped participants understand the importance of elephants in the ecosystem and how communities can live alongside them peacefully.

Forty-three participants from the three villages attended the session, showing keen interest and engagement throughout the event. The programme was part of Aaranyak's ongoing efforts to strengthen community-level knowledge and response to human-elephant conflict, and was successfully facilitated by Aaranyak's dedicated team -- Abhijit Saikia, Arindam Saikia, Jaugashar Basumatary and Pradip Barman.



Altogether 128 people including 48 men and 80 women in participation, we shared an audio-visual presentation to highlight the project findings. The villagers appreciated our efforts. Team Aaranyak also took the opportunity to express its gratitude for all the cooperation and support received from the communities in presence of Gaon Pradhan and village community members.

The village-level meetings were coordinated by Aaranyak's Zakir Islam Bora, Niranjana Bhuyan, Rimpee Moran, Ejaj Ahmad, Dhantu Gogoi, Diganta Saikia, Chiranjib Kalita, Ananta Dutta, and Jiaur Rahman.

Aaranyak in partnership with British Asian Trust and with support from Darwin Initiative is working towards promotion of human-elephant coexistence.

## Participation in national seminar on minor forest products

Aaranyak participated as a collaborator in a two-day ICSSR sponsored national seminar on 'Exploring the Potential of Minor Forest Produces for Vikshit Bharat @2047: Challenges, Opportunities and Strategies for North East India', May 16-17.

The seminar was organised by PG Department of Economics, Pragjyotish College in association with IQAC of the college in collaboration with North Eastern Development Finance Corporation Ltd. (NEDFi) And Aaranyak.

Aaranyak's senior conservation biologist Dr Alolika Sinha was invited as a speaker during the opening session where Dr Alolika spoke about the Minor Forest Produces (MFPs) and how it is intricately intertwined with the culture of Assam's indigenous communities drawing from her observations while working in the landscape.

As part of the collaboration, our team participated in an exhibition where we showcased the organisation's diverse efforts toward conservation of biodiversity and human well-being. Our team also engaged with students to inspire their involvement in various nature conservation activities across different platforms and backgrounds.

Aaranyak appreciated Pragjyotish College authority for organising this dialogue and knowledge sharing event and inviting Aaranyak for collaboration.

From Aaranyak, Organizing Officer Pranab Goswami, PR Executive Gunajit Mazumdar, Members -- Debajit Rajbongshi and Vishaal Raj Khanikar aided with their support.



## HEC-affected community trained on solar fence management

Aaranyak, with support from the SBI Foundation, conducted a capacity building training on management and operation of solar-powered electric fence as a human-elephant conflict (HEC) mitigation tool for the local communities at Bholatar village in Udalguri district of Assam on May 14.

Thirty-five villagers, including members of the local solar fence management committee participated in the training session that was led by Aaranyak's expert on such solar fences, Anjan Baruah who provided a comprehensive overview of the solar fences with both theoretical and practical sessions.



He emphasised the importance of proper earthing for operational safety and performance of solar fences and demonstrated how to interpret voltage meter readings to monitor system efficiency. He explained the methods for connecting the energizer to the battery, along with key safety measures.

A special focus was laid on the lightning diverter, a critical component designed to protect the system from lightning damage, by safely channalising electrical charges into the ground. The participants were also introduced to various fencing materials and components. They were provided hands-on guidance on the dos and don'ts of management and maintenance of the solar fence efficiently.

This practical exposure ensured that community members could take ownership of the system post-installation by monitoring and maintaining the fences, and thus enhancing its sustainability and effectiveness through formation of the solar fence management committee comprising the villagers. Aaranyak's team members Mondeep Basumatari, Bistirna Buhaguhain and Dibakar Nayak facilitated the training.

## Gajah Kotha continues to sensitise community for peaceful coexistence

As part of the continued community outreach efforts on human-elephant coexistence, Aaranyak with support from SBI Foundation, organised another event of our signature campaign, 'Gajah Kotha' on May 13 at Uttar Garuajhar village in Udalguri district of Assam.



This interactive session centered on elephant behaviour and ecology, and effective ways of coexistence in shared landscapes. The session aimed at encouraging a deeper understanding of the challenges and practical solutions surrounding human-elephant conflict to facilitate coexistence.

During the outreach session, the Academy Award-winning documentary “The Elephant Whisperers” was screened, which movingly portrays the bond between humans and elephants.

Over 60 villagers attended the outreach event whose engagement reflected a growing interest in understanding safe and respectful ways to coexist with elephants in conflict areas.

Team Aaranyak comprising Mondeep Basumatari, Abhilasha Boruah, Bistirna Buraguhain, Dibakar Nayak, Bikash Tossa, and Pradip Barman facilitated the event.



## Training of Young Climate Leaders for Himalayan Development

In order to address the burgeoning environmental issues related to climate change, Aaranyak in collaboration with YouthNet and Climate Studies and Knowledge Solution Centre – Government of Nagaland, with support from Mobius Foundation aims to capacitate a pool of young leaders in the field of climate change.

With this objective, a training was conducted on May 6 by YouthNet of Nagaland at the Conference Hall of Aaranyak in Guwahati, Assam. The training focused on enhancing the understanding of the Pani, Pahar – The Water Curriculum among the Young Fellows engaged in the initiative. This curriculum has been jointly developed by the Department of Geography, University of Cambridge, and The Hearth Education Advisors, a division of Canta Consultants LLP (“The Hearth”).

The training commenced with a warm welcome from Jayanta Kumar Pathak, Senior Manager in the Environment Education and Capacity Building Division. The visiting YouthNet team, Tokai Awomi, Manine Alice and Methadou Chewang shared their valuable insights into the initiative. They discussed the implementation of the curriculum, research and development efforts, capacity-building strategies, and approaches for effective execution. The team also underscored the importance of collaborative efforts and strategic partnerships in achieving shared goals.

The session concluded with an interactive segment, fostering a productive exchange of ideas and enriching the overall learning experience.

It is worth mentioning that Aaranyak will provide sustained support to 16 schools in Guwahati under this initiative, particularly focusing on water conservation, for a period of 9 to 10 months starting from June 2025.

## Refresher workshop on Applied Environmental Education



A two-day refresher workshop on Applied Environmental Education was organised during May 13–14 by Aaranyak at its administrative office in Guwahati. The workshop brought together 20 participants focused on deepening their understanding of participatory approaches in conservation education.

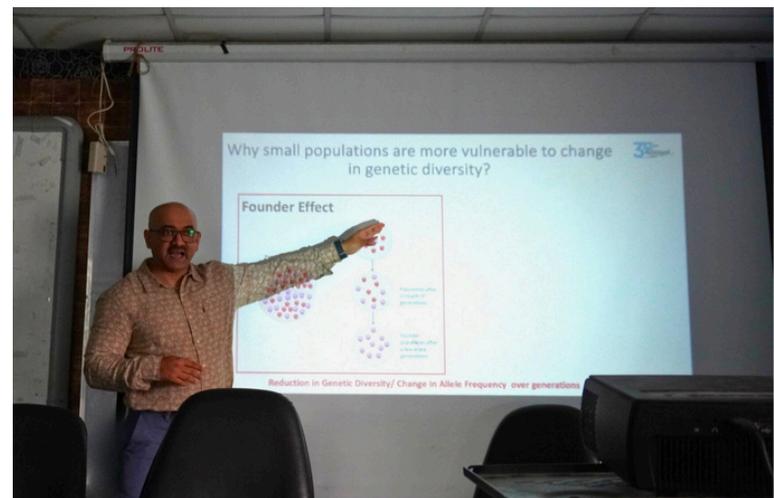
The workshop was led by Jayanta Kumar Pathak, Senior Manager in Aaranyak's Environment Education and Capacity Building Division.

The workshop covered a range of topics including identifying and prioritising conservation challenges, designing effective conservation strategies, communication planning and ethical engagement etc. Participants also explored school-based environmental education approaches, Social Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) as well as innovative, interactive fun activities, along with practical tools such as matrices for programme design.

Aaranyak's Dr Debjani Borah shared valuable insights from her work on pygmy hog conservation and SBCC strategies to address African Swine Fever in rural Assam. The environmental education games, led by Tikendrajit Gogoi of Aaranyak, added a dynamic element to the sessions.

## Lecture-cum-interactive session on conservation genetics

The Outreach Cell and the Department of Zoology, Bhattadev University, Bajali, in collaboration with Aaranyak organised a lecture-cum-interactive session on the topic "Conservation Genetics: Concepts, Prospects, and Management Applications in Wildlife" at the University's Conference Hall on May 19.



The event began with a welcome address by the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Dhanapati Deka. The invited resource person for the session was Udayan Borthakur, a senior scientist and the Head of Wildlife Genetics Division of Aaranyak.

## Students of Udalguri, Tamulpur sensitised on HEC

In his address, Borthakur elaborated on the vital role of genetics in wildlife conservation, explaining how genetic tools help researchers and conservationists understand and manage biodiversity at the genetic level. Drawing from Aaranyak's pioneering efforts through its Wildlife Genetics Laboratory, the first private sector genetic lab of its kind in India, he discussed key applications of genetics in conservation. He included some of the key applications as understanding genetic diversity, population identification and management, detecting inbreeding and genetic bottlenecks, wildlife forensics through DNA analysis, tracing evolutionary histories of species etc. He also talked on the successful works of his through the laboratory on population genetics of one horned rhino in West Bengal and Assam.

The informative talk was followed by a vibrant interactive session, where around 100 undergraduate and postgraduate students, along with faculty members from the Department of Zoology and other departments, actively participated.

Aaranyak expresses its heartfelt gratitude to Professor Dhanapati Deka, Vice-Chancellor of Bhattadev University, as well as to the Outreach Cell and the Department of Zoology for their support and initiative in organising this event. Aaranyak's Organizing Officer Pranab Goswami coordinated and attended the event.

In pursuit of our ongoing effort to raise awareness about human-elephant conflict (HEC) and promote peaceful coexistence, Aaranyak conducted two school outreach events in the districts of Udalguri and Tamulpur in Assam with support from the SBI Foundation. These events were designed to sensitise students about elephant behaviour and sustainable ways to reduce conflict between people and elephants.



The first event was held at Indira Gandhi ME School in Udalguri, where Aaranyak's team introduced the students to 'Gajah Kotha', our signature campaign that explains elephant behaviour in a simple and relatable manner. The students learned basic facts about elephants, their social structure, and how understanding their behaviour can help avoid confrontation.

The second programme was conducted at Bholajhar Bangalipara ME School in Tamulpur district which focused on HEC Mitigation that included detailed discussions about the drivers of HEC, as well as how to reduce these through tried and tested solutions that communities can adopt, including preventive measures and respectful ways to respond when elephants are nearby.

Altogether 115 students from both schools actively participated in these events facilitated by Aaranyak team members Mondeep Basumatari, Abhilasha Boruah, Bikash Tossa and Pradip Barman.

## HEC-affected community oriented on solar fence management

A hands-on training to build the capacities of local communities to install, manage and operate solar-powered electric fences as a human-elephant conflict (HEC) mitigation tool was conducted by Aaranyak with support from SBI Foundation in Uttarkuchi, Baksa.



The training was held in collaboration with the Baksa Forest Division and the Manas Serfang Songkrwi Hajw Society. It brought together twenty-eight participants, including two forest officials from the Uttarkuchi Forest Camp.

The session was led by Aaranyak's expert on solar fences, Anjan Baruah who shared both technical know-how and hands-on demonstration to the participants. From explaining the basics of solar fencing to guiding them through practical demonstrations, he ensured the villagers gained a clear understanding on how the system works.

He explained the setup and safety aspects of the electric fence system, emphasising proper earthing, voltage checks, safe battery connections, and protection against lightning through a diverter.

The hands-on experience gave them the confidence to manage the fence independently. To ensure its sustainability, a solar fence management committee was formed, responsible for its upkeep and monitoring.

This initiative reflects Aaranyak's ongoing commitment to empowering communities in conflict-prone areas by sharing practical solutions and building local capacity. The training was facilitated by Aaranyak's team members Abhijit Saikia, Arindam Saikia, Jiban Kr Chetry, Rupam Gayari, and Pradeep Barman.

## Aaranyak's conservationist speaks at CASFOS

Aaranyak's senior conservation biologist Dr Alolika Sinha delivered a lecture on "Forest fire and their mitigation strategies" for the ongoing training programme for in-service forest officials in CASFOS, Burnihat. During the lecture she delved into forest fire and its causes, and how increasing preparedness, tailoring site specific measures help mitigate the crisis of forest fire in India.

## Farmers from 10 Kaziranga-KA villages trained on improved banana cultivation

Aaranyak, in collaboration with the Agriculture Development Circle, Rongmongve, KAAC organised a day-long training programme on May 27 on improved banana cultivation for the farmers from 10 villages in the Kaziranga Karbi Anglong (KA) Landscape.



The main objective of this training was to enhance the practical knowledge of local farmers in banana farming. The training was organised at the farming ground of Bronson Tokbi, a progressive farmer from Englepothar village.

Gouranga Chetia, Agriculture Development Officer (ADO), Rongmongve, Karbi Anglong, briefly discussed with the farmers covering essential aspects such as site selection, planting methods, variety selection, disease and pest management and irrigation techniques. There were 14 farmers actively participated in the training programme.

To strengthen the practical component of the programme, Bhomkuru Rongphar, a recognised progressive farmer from Diphu, Karbi Anglong also interacted with the farmers and shared his experiences on improved banana cultivation practices and benefits as an alternative source of livelihood.

This training was important in the landscape to bridge traditional farming with modern agricultural practices and build the capacity of farmers to improve productivity, profitability, and sustainability in horticulture.

The training was organised under the guidance of Gouranga Chetia, Agriculture Development Officer (ADO) of Rongmongve Agriculture Development Circle. The training was organized and facilitated by Larbeen Teronpi and Uttaran Dutta with support from Prokash Engti Joshna Terangpi, Beauty Terangpi, Mirlong Kiling and Ratul Das of Aaranyak.

## An adda on the Synergy of Nature and Creativity

An informal discussion titled "An adda on the Synergy of Nature and Creativity" was organised on May 25 at the Gauhati Artists' Guild, in connection with the wildlife photography exhibition hosted by Aaranyak from May 22 to 25. The discussion attracted 42 participants from diverse walks of life.



Moderated by Dr Partha Jyoti Das, Senior environmental scientist and Executive Member of Aaranyak, the session explored various aspects of wildlife photography, the inspiration behind it, and how it reflects the unique convergence of nature and creativity.

Wildlife photography is a unique blend of art and science, where nature and creativity converge. It allows photographers to portray the beauty, behaviour, and essence of wildlife, while also promoting conservation and appreciation for the natural world.

Aaranyak extends heartfelt thanks to all participants for dedicating their time to this enriching discourse. The event was successfully conducted with the support of Aaranyak officials from various backgrounds.

## Paribesh Mitra award for Aaranyak's conservationist

Aaranyak's senior conservationist Jayanta Kumar Sarma was conferred the Paribesh Mitra Award by Assam Government. The award was presented to him by Assam Minister for Science and Technology Sri Keshab Mahanta in presence of a host of dignitaries in a solemn function organised in Guwahati on June 5.



The Science, Technology, and Climate Change Department of the Assam government, with the coordination of the Assam Science, Technology, and Environment Council (ASTEC), has been conferring this prestigious award in recognition and honour to the prominent individuals working on conservation of wildlife, nature as well as the environment every year.

## Aaranyak scientist presents paper on recovery of Manas at ICCB



Aaranyak's senior scientist Dr M Firoz Ahmed attended the International Congress for Conservation Biology (ICCB) 2025 held in Brisbane of Australia during 15-19 June. He presented on community participation and recovery of Manas National Park, BTR, Assam and highlighted the recovery of Manas through community engagement, awareness, sustainable livelihoods and role of traditional knowledge while implementing the Manas Tiger Conservation Programme during 2015-2021.

Multiple stakeholders came together for recovery and rewilding of the Manas World Heritage site which was once listed as 'In Danger' by the UNESCO. The conference was also an opportunity for Dr Ahmed to interact and network with practitioners and experts from across the world.

## Orientation of guide teacher on sustainability education

Aaranyak in collaboration with Samagra Shiksha Axom (SSA), Golaghat, with support from Wipro earthian, successfully conducted a day-long orientation training of teachers on sustainability education.

The event was held at the Dergaon Girls' Higher Secondary School, where 35 teachers representing 35 schools from the Golaghat district actively participated. The training involved various interactive discussions, group activities, and resource sharing to enhance the teachers understanding of the topic.



Chidananda Pathak, Principal, Dergaon Girls' HS school stressed the importance to address the interconnectedness of the ecological system among a new generation and a school can play a pivotal role in shaping a mindset on long-term sustainability.

While, Tikendrajit Gogoi, Project Officer (ESE Educator) at Aaranyak's Environmental Education and Capacity Building Division, interacted with teachers through an insightful presentation on sustainability education, focusing particularly on biodiversity, water and waste.

The orientation programme also showcased Aaranyak's commitment towards bridging the gap between the environment and new generation by fostering critical thinking and informed decision-making towards sustainable development and efforts in empowering educators through effective sustainability education.

It is worth mentioning that the Environment Education and Capacity Building Division (EECBD) of Aaranyak is planning to engage at least 100 schools across Assam in environmental and sustainability education activities during 2025–2026, as stated by Jayanta Kumar Pathak, Assistant Director of EECBD, for the well-being of both people and nature.

## Community-led lemon plantation

Aaranyak, in partnership with Raimona National Park, Kachugaon Division, and Araisopara Forest village under Central Range began a community-led lemon plantation to reduce human-animal interactions. Dr Paris Basumatary, I/C Central Range, Pranjit Narzary, Gaon Pradhan of Araisopara village, Dr Dipankar Lahkar, Assistant Director, Gayatri Dutta, Niwjam Basumatary, and Birdutta Basumatary of Aaranyak co-organised the event. A large number of villagers volunteered for the plantation drive.



The day was celebrated at Bhairabkunda in collaboration with 23rd Bn SSB, Dhansiri Forest Division, FXB India Suraksha, Dhansiri Sikaridanga JFMC, and Bhairabkunda Development Committee. Over 100 participants including students, teachers, SSB personnel, forest officials, and local stakeholders were present. Key Highlights on the event were -- Awareness session at Zero Waste Learning Centre, upcycling demo of plastic/glass waste, and a plantation drive at the restoration site, inaugurated by the DFO of Dhansiri Forest Division.

## World Environment Day events

Aaranyak celebrated the World Environment Day (WED) with various awareness and outreach events throughout Assam



The WED was celebrated by Aaranyak at Lakshminath Bezbaruah High School, Bamunjuli, Udalguri, Assam in collaboration with Lakshminath Bezbaruah High School and supported by LIC HFL (CSR). A plantation & cleanliness drive and an art competition was organised to create awareness among students. The school authority, students and team members of Aaranyak were participated in the programme.

In collaboration with Axis Bank, Aaranyak celebrated the day at Bokakhat and Kaziranga in a grand manner. The celebration was marked by 25 km cycling from Bokakhat to Kohora, plantation programme at Panbari in Kaziranga landscape, awareness programme at Geleki ME School and Chandrasing Rangpi High school, Kohora, Karbi Angling. Total 35 Cyclists and 550 students participated in the celebration.

In another occasion, we celebrated the day at PM Shri Nagrijuli High School, Tamulpur, in collaboration with the Tamulpur Forest Range and the school itself. The event was graced by Forest Range Officer Kameshwar Boro and his team, who participated in a sapling plantation drive and delivered a brief speech to mark the occasion. The program also featured informative presentations on combating plastic pollution and an extempore speech competition. Approximately 200 students took part in the event.

As part of a celebration at Hattigorh High School, the Nonai Forest Range under the Dhansiri Forest Division and Hattigor High School celebrated the day in collaboration with Hattigor High School and Aaranyak. A plantation drive was conducted on the school campus to mark the occasion. The initiative was supported by SBI Foundation. Forest officials from the range, school authority and Aaranyak officials attended the event.



We observed the day at Panchali High School at Thorko, Goalpara district, close to the inter-state boundary with Meghalaya on a collaborative mode by Assam Forest Department and Aaranyak with participation school children and staff. A plantation drive was organised in the school campus with active participation of school children, forest staff and Aaranyak field staff.

At Ujani Sadiya Higher Secondary School, Aaranyak in collaboration with Sadiya Range of Assam Forest Department and Assam Science Society, Sadiya celebrated the WED 2025 with enthusiasm. The celebration was participated by the school students and teachers.

Aaranyak in collaboration with the Institution of Engineers (India), Assam State Centre, Panbazar, Guwahati, organised an event focused on this year's theme – Beat Plastic Pollution. The event brought together environmental experts, engineers, academicians, and conservationists to deliberate on the growing threat of plastic pollution and the urgent need for sustainable alternatives and awareness-driven actions.

An awareness event themed "Reduce, Reuse, and Reimagine Plastic" was jointly organised by Aaranyak and the Guwahati Regional Office of the Pollution Control Board Assam (PCBA) in collaboration with Geetanagar High School on the occasion of WED. Held at the Geetanagar High School premises on June 5, the programme witnessed enthusiastic participation of around 150 individuals, including students, teachers, guests and representatives from PCBA and Aaranyak.

Aaranyak in collaboration with North Cachar Autonomous Council, Dima Hasao Forest Department, Assam Power Generation Corporation Limited and Larsen & Toubro celebrated the World Environment Day at Longku High School, Longku, Dima Hasao.

About 250 students of Longku High School and Longter English School took part in it. An art competition was organised amongst the students to raise awareness on the ill effects of plastic on our society.

In Majuli, the WED was celebrated at Chamaguri Satra Rawanapara Model HS school in collaboration with Majuli Forest Division, WWF-India, Aryabhatta Science Centre, Donyi Green Foundation and Poribesh Bondhu. Started with plantation drive the event was followed by lectures from the guests. From Aaranyak's a visual presentation on "Beat Plastic Pollution" was presented in front of the students, teachers, and guests.

In Sivasagar, the day was celebrated at Charaguwa in collaboration with Sivasagar Forest (T) Division and Charaguwa High School. A number of activities were conducted such as plantation & sapling distribution, awareness rally, conservation drama, distribution of awareness leaflet on beat plastic pollution. About 240 students participated in the programme. Nine officials from Assam Forest Department, ten school teachers, Twenty community members and Aaranyak officials Tibrajyoti Gogoi, Deepjyoti Buragohain, Diganta Saikia, and Jiaur Rahman coordinated the event.

In Dibrugarh, the day was celebrated at PMshri Joypur Higher Secondary School in collaboration with Jeypore Forest Range office under Dibrugarh Forest Division. A number of activities were conducted such as plantation & sapling distribution, essay competition, visual presentation on 'sustainable living'. About 500 students participated in the programme. Forest officials Kabin Kumar Borah (RFO), school principal Runu Borgohain attended the event, Aaranyak officials Ejaj Ahmad, Dhantu Gogoi, volunteer Rakib Ali, other forest officials and teachers coordinated the event.



In Jorhat district. it was conducted on two different days with All India Radio, Jorhat. On 4th of June the day was celebrated with AIR Jorhat where an event called 'Yuvavani' (Youth Programme) was broadcasted. Again, another radio broadcast on 'Awareness on World Environment Day' was broadcasted on June 5 with an onsite recording done at Jhanjimukh Janajati High School on June 3 with the presence 200 students. Aaranyak officials Zakir Bora, Niranjana Bhuyan, Rimpee Moran, Chiranjib Kalita, Ananta Dutta, Lakhinath Taid, Diganta Saikia, Jiaur Rahman and VC Makhon Kalita coordinated the programme with officials from AIR Jorhat namely Khursid Ahmad and Priyanuj Kumar Bairagi.

Aaranyak in collaboration with Wipro earthian conducted a workshop at Raspberry Global School, Kerakuchi, Kamrup (M) on WED with the aim of fostering a deeper connection with nature among students. Sixty-five students, along with teachers, actively participated in the workshop, which aimed to inspire the younger generation to adopt sustainable practices in their daily lives.

During the workshop, students learned about eco-printing techniques using natural dyes and developed a deeper understanding of environmental stewardship, especially in relation to sustainable alternatives to plastic usage.

In a spirited and action-driven observance of WED, Uttar Sekhar ME School in Udalguri turned into a vibrant hub of awareness, commitment, and community participation. Organised under the theme Beat Plastic Pollution, the event was celebrated as part of the ongoing project, "Community-based integrated approach to facilitate Human-Elephant Coexistence and Biodiversity Conservation in Udalguri, Assam," implemented by Aaranyak under the aegis of UNDP-GEF SGP, MoEF&CC, and TERI.

The Dream India Network organised an interactive programme on the occasion in collaboration with Aurobindo Vidyamandir High School, Guwahati, and the Guwahati Municipal Corporation. Aaranyak's Wasima Begum was invited as a resource person, along with Bonti Chetia, Asst. Commissioner from the Guwahati Municipal Corporation. Chinmoi Deka and Mary Ann Pao were invited from the Earthful Foundation. Wasima Begum spoke about the environment and sustainability, highlighting how animals are also affected by pollution, especially due to the use of plastic. The representatives from the Guwahati Municipal Corporation and Earthful Foundation emphasised the importance of waste management, community cleanliness, and addressing plastic pollution.

During an educational event organised in Jyoti Vidyapeeth, Dangari, students of the school were made aware of many environmental concerns during WED. The event featuring environmental talks, art and a quiz contest were organised by 'Go Green Organization' in collaboration with Aaranyak and 'Art for Nature'.

Resource persons -- Dr Tilak Chandra Dutta, retired professor of Digboi College, Diganta Kumar Bhajoni, District Coordinator of National Children Science Congress, Pinku Singh, Range officer of Dibru Saikhowa National Park and Rubul Tanti, senior wildlife biologist from Aaranyak enlightened the students.

A discussion about plastic pollution was carried out by Dr Tilak Chandra Dutta and Diganta Kumar Bhajoni, while Pinku Singh mentioned the importance of wildlife in and around Dibru Saikhowa National Park, as well as some information regarding plastic pollution.

During his presentation, Rubul Tanti explained the different types of plastic pollution and how it impacts our society, as well as wildlife in the local context. Deepak Hemrong, Mohan Sonowal, Hemanta Hazarika and Youth & Eco Club of Laina were felicitated for their contribution towards raising awareness for environment conservation. Aaranyak joined hands with youth led NGO 'Daring Pathfinders', under their flagship initiative Project BASTAV- Bring a Step to a Village, celebrated World Environment Day with a series of impactful and community-centered activities in the serene village of Pesamhuru.



The highlight of the day was the distribution of 600 fruit bearing plants to 40 households, as a part of their ongoing Mission Fruit initiative. This endeavour, made possible through the generous support of donors and collaborators, aims to enhance the village's green cover and promote self-sufficiency among the villagers. The distribution was followed by a plantation drive across the village, where over 80 villagers participated in planting the saplings.

An awareness programme was organised at Kakoijana Senior Basic School by Aaranyak (West Assam Zone) in association with the Department of Botany and Eco Club of Abhayapuri College. The event highlighted the WED's this year's global theme of ending plastic pollution with active involvement of local students, teachers, villagers, and environmentalists.



Students from the Daodhara ME School in Baksa district of Assam were sensitised on the importance of minimising plastic pollution in order to ensure a sustainable future. The event was organised in collaboration with Daodhara ME School, and attended by 68 students and six faculty members on June 5.

The programme commenced with a brief introductory talk by the Headmaster of the school Hemaka Boro. Boro spoke passionately about the significance of forests, wildlife conservation, and the collective responsibility of safeguarding the environment.

As part of the event, a plantation drive was conducted within the school premises, where the students' planted saplings of economic importance. This was followed by a creative poster-making competition, where students showcased their artistic skills and awareness of environmental issues. The students presented their work in front of their fellow students and teachers and engaged in a lively interactive session based on their poster topic. The top three posters were awarded for their outstanding creativity.

Adding a fun element to the event, a game activity -- "Who am I" was organised for the students. The event continued with a screening of the movie "Manah and Manuh", followed by an interactive quiz competition to test the students' environmental knowledge.

## Villagers given torchlights to guard against wild elephants

Human-elephant conflict (HEC) remains a bane of life of villagers in several villages in Assam's Udalguri district, where crop damage and property loss are serious concerns for local communities.

As part of Aaranyak's ongoing efforts to mitigate the raging HEC and facilitate coexistence, a torchlight distribution and awareness programme was held on June 2 at Nunaikhuti village in the district.



During the event, ten torchlights were distributed to residents from three chubas within Nonaipara Tea Estate, Nonaipara Basti, and Chauntalpara Basti. These torches are intended to improve night-time visibility and help deter elephants, providing a simple yet effective tool for community safety in a HEC situation.

An awareness session followed, which included a display of our signature campaign "Gaja Katha Pt. 2", a resource on elephant behaviour and coexistence, along with a demonstration of the "HaatiApp", a mobile app designed to support wild elephants monitoring and response for mitigation of HEC. A total of 18 villagers took part in the programme, showing keen interest in learning practical mitigation strategies.

This initiative, supported by SBI Foundation as part of its conservation efforts, is an impactful step toward fostering safer and more informed communities living alongside wild elephants.

## Karbi village headmen deliberate on sustainable development

Aaranyak in collaboration with Karbi Rong Asar Amei (KRAA), Karbi Cultural Society (KCS), Department of Arts & Culture, KAAC, organised a day-long workshop on 'Nature, Culture and Conservation of Nature and Natural Resource for Sustainable Village Development- Role of Rong Asar' for its community partners from Kaziranga-Karbi Anglong Landscapes at Kohora Soil IB, Kohora, karbi Anglong on 2 June.

Eighty individuals participated in the workshop targeting the Rong Asar (village headmen), community leaders, youth leaders and women to discuss importance of organising an awareness programme in villages for conservation of nature and natural resource management linking the living Karbi cultural practices to secure sustainable livelihood and future for the local communities residing in Kohora and Diring river basin of KKL.



The workshop was organised to share our plan and objective in organising the village-level Conservation Education Awareness programme with our collaborators, Rong Asar and community leaders across the 10 villages of Diring and Kohora river basin of KKL respectively. We also discussed the Role of Rong Asar, Rong Amei and community leaders and to give their support in making this awareness campaign a success.

The Rong Asar and community leaders have agreed to organise the village level Conservation Education Awareness Programme. The Rong Asar along with the community leaders shall discuss with the Kohora Area Protection Committee and finalise the dates and venues in 10 villages of Diring and Kohora area of KKL.

## Plantation drive on 4th foundation day of RNP



A plantation drive was conducted on the occasion of 4th foundation day of Raimona National Park on June 9. The event saw participation from local community members, village leaders, and staff from Forest Department, all contributing to the success of the drive. The event was graced by Bhanu Sinha, retired Divisional Forest Officer (DFO), and Sanatan Deka from Wildlife Trust of India. This plantation initiative is part of an ongoing ecological restoration project of Aaranyak.

## Students sensitised on rhino conservation in Pobitora WLS

Aaranyak in collaboration with Assam Forest Department and Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) authority organised an orientation programme on rhino conservation for students of Shankardev Shishu Niketan, Mayong on June 10. The event supported by Zoo Berlin focused on behaviour on rhinos, the role of flood in wild landscapes, and significance of human-wildlife coexistence.



During the session, Pranjal Baruah, Range Officer of Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary spoke about the ecological role of flood. Baruah highlighted how flood contributes to habitat renewal, nutrient distribution, and biodiversity, ensuring the survival of various species.

Community member Binod Deka addressed the need for peaceful coexistence between community and wildlife, focusing on the role of local communities in conservation efforts.

At the beginning of the event, Aaranyak's Researcher Ujjal Bayan explained the behaviour of rhinos during floods. He described how seasonal changes affect their movement, foraging habits, and daily activities. His session emphasized the importance of monitoring these animals to understand how they adapt to environmental changes.

The event saw participation from 35 students and was coordinated by Ujjal Bayan under the guidance of Dr Bibhab Kumar Talukdar, Executive Director of Aaranyak and Dr Deba Kumar Dutta, Deputy Director of Rhino Research and Conservation Division of Aaranyak.

## Herping session enriches students' knowledge on herpetofauna

Aaranyak organised a 'Herping' session in Phumen Engti village, Karbi Anglong district of Assam, marking the first such unique session of the year. Twelve undergraduate and graduate students from the Zoology departments of Debraj Roy College, Golaghat, International School, Guwahati and Arya Vidyapeeth College, Guwahati, participated in the programme organised on June 29.



The session began with a theoretical demonstration at the Aaranyak field station, where Aaranyak's herpetologist Dr Jayanta Kumar Roy introduced the participants about the basics of amphibians and reptiles, key identifying characters, followed by field study techniques and an introduction to frog calls by Sourav Gupta from Aaranyak.

Following the classroom session, the field exercise began from the village and extended along the Langkiri River, covering approximately five kilometers into the community forests Karbi Hills. During the walk, students had the opportunity to explore the natural beauty of the landscape and observe the rich biodiversity of the area. In addition to encountering reptiles and amphibians, they also observed jhum cultivation, a traditional farming practice of Karbi community, and were introduced to various wild edible plants known for their medicinal value.

The night walk for herps session was guided by local community experts Sanjib Bey and Bidyaram Tokbi. The participants explored the community forest areas near the village, observing species such as the Red-eyed frog (Ronga chakua beng in Assamese), Indian skipping frog (pani beng in Assamese) cricket frog (uisiringa beng in Assamese), Assamese cascade frog (axomiya nijora beng), as well as bent-toed gecko, garden lizards, skinks (monikira). As they moved through the trails, students listened to frog calls, learned to identify species by their sound and appearance, and understood more about the habitats these animals depend on.

A highlight of the session was the sharing of traditional conservation practices by the Karbi community through guided interaction and observation. Participants gained insight into the community's deep connection with the environment and the role of indigenous knowledge in biodiversity conservation. The session successfully blended scientific learning with cultural understanding, offering a meaningful and hands-on experience in the field.

## 6-km solar fence secures 3 HEC-affected villages in Udalguri

As part of its sustained efforts to deal with the ongoing challenges of Human-Elephant Conflict (HEC) in Udalguri district of Assam, Aaranyak, with the support of the SBI Foundation, has installed a 6-kilometre stretch of low-cost, solar-powered fence covering the high-conflict villages of No.1 Bholatar, No.3 Bholatar, and Newli.

Formal inauguration of the solar-powered fence and its handover to the community were carried out in a programme held on June 12 at No.3 Bholatar Lakshi Priya L.P. School, Udalguri.

The fence was inaugurated by Mustafa Ali Ahmed, Divisional Forest Officer, Dhansiri Forest Division; Pranjal Talukdar, Forest Range Officer, Nonai in presence of Ms. Esha Mitra, Assistant Manager, CONSERW, SBI Foundation; Deputy Executive Director of Aaranyak Dr Bibhuti P Lahkar and Deputy Director Hiten Baishya among others.

This initiative is aimed at strengthening community-led conservation and promotion of peaceful coexistence in HEC-prone landscapes. The fence safeguards around 160 households and a population of 861, significantly improving community safety, food and ecological security.

The solar-fence installation was undertaken under the technical supervision of Aaranyak's Assistant Manager Anjan Baruah, and field execution was carried out by Aaranyak's team members Dibakar Nayak, Bikash Tossa, Mondeep Basumatary and Abhijit Saikia.

These villages have long suffered from frequent incursions by wild elephants, resulting in recurring crop loss, property damage, and threats to human life. The HEC situation has created both ecological and social tensions in the area.

The solar fence is designed as a single-strand system mounted on bamboo poles inclined to the ground at approximately 45 degrees ensuring that the elephant's foot cannot reach the pole or dismantle the structure. This strategic and non-lethal design acts as an effective deterrent, reducing conflict while protecting both human and elephant lives.



The inauguration of solar fence was also attended by Mrinmoy Hazarika, Beat Officer, Paneri and Anjan Baruah along with few other team members from Aaranyak's Elephant Research and Conservation Division.

Also present were Rajib Tamang, VCDC Chairman of Bholatar; Gopal Pokhrel, Gaon Pradhan; members of the solar fence management committees; and beneficiaries from the villages.

## Awareness programmes on HEC elicit good response

Aaranyak, with the support of the SBI Foundation, conducted a series of community outreach programmes in the villages of Nunaipara in Udalguri district, Sonmoni (Kumarpara), Paharpur (School Chuba) and Paharpur (Peepal Chuk) in Tamulpur district during June 8 to 12.

These initiatives aimed to raise awareness about human-elephant conflict (HEC), encourage peaceful coexistence and introduce practical mitigation strategies in those areas prone to frequent elephant incursions.

At each location, villagers participated in interactive sessions under Aaranyak's signature campaign, "Gajah Katha", which offered insights into elephant behaviour, the deep-rooted cultural and historical connections shared between humans and elephants and effective non-confrontational conflict mitigation approaches.



Preventive measures such as appropriate crop selection, active elephant monitoring, and safe responses during elephant presence were also discussed.

The sessions also featured a demonstration of "HaatiApp", a mobile application designed for real-time tracking of elephant movement and issuing early alerts about presence on wild elephant in a particular location. Participants were trained to report sightings and use the app to enhance coordination with authorities for prompt action.

Altogether 121 community members took part in the programmes, sharing first-hand experiences of crop damage and safety concerns. Many highlighted the need for a long-term solution, reflecting a growing interest in sustainable, community-driven mitigation measures.

By equipping communities with knowledge and tools, these initiatives build trust, resilience, and collaboration for a future where both people and elephants can thrive.

The outreach events were coordinated and facilitated by Aaranyak's team comprising Abhijit Saikia, Mondeep Basumatari, Arindam Saikia, Jiban Chetry, Dibakar Nayak, Bikash Tossa, and Jaugashar Basumatary.

## Solar street lights installed at Rangamati village in Kamrup

Aaranyak in collaboration with Loharghat Forest Range Office under Kamrup (W) Forest Division of Assam Forest Department and with cooperation from the community members installed five solar street lights at different human elephant conflict (HEC) prone locations at Rangamati village.

These solar street lights are expected reduce chances of direct confrontation between villagers and wild elephants during night hours thereby secure lives of villagers.

The Loharghat Range Officer, Nayanjyoti Das, took the initiative to install the solar street lights as a mitigation measure. From Aaranyak Assistant Manager Anjan Baruah and field staff Bijoy Kalita oversaw the installation of solar lights on the ground.



Rangamativillage is situated in Kamrup district of Assam under Loharghat Forest Range while adjacent villages such as Satpur, Bhagabatipara, Gosaihat, etc., are located near the Maliata Reserve and Rani Reserve Forest and adjacent to Meghalaya border.

The human-elephant conflict has been there in the area for over four year. The elephants come to these villages from Meghalaya area and Rani Reserve Forest in search of food. Elephants usually come into the villages and forage on standing crops and sometimes damage property every season.

Two people have died in HEC incidents in this area so far. On the other hand, two elephants died due to a train accident as the railway track is very close to the Maliata Reserve and the Rangamati village area.

A small herd of elephants containing about six elephants, has been roaming around the area. As this is a new issue for the villagers, the people get panicked.

Aaranyak and Loharghat Range have been collaborating to control the HEC mitigation and facilitate coexistence. On the public demand, the Forest Department recently drove away the elephants towards Rani Reserve Forest. But the herd came back again.

Aaranyak has provided a number of rechargeable torch lights to the local elephant committees, VDPs, etc., as a mitigation tool through some awareness programmes organized with the help of the Forest Department.

## Aaranyak's experts train forest staff on open-source GIS

A hands-on workshop on Open-source GIS was conducted at the Forest School Jalukbari, Guwahati, from during June 9-14, where forest officials from the different forest divisions delved deep into the world of GIS.



Organised by the Assam Forest School, Jalukbari, Guwahati, and sessions conducted by the GIS Specialist from Aaranyak, namely Arup Kumar Das, Assistant Director, Madhumita Borthakur, Assistant Manager, Avishek Sarkar, GIS Analyst, and Shivani Khalote, Project Officer.

This intensive training equipped frontline forest staff with vital geospatial skills to enhance forest monitoring and conservation planning. Participants explored the basics of GIS and remote sensing, Open-source tools like QGIS, and real-world forest mapping applications.

## World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought

On June 17, the World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought was celebrated by Dhansiri Forest Division of Assam Forest Division and Aaranyak at the Amrit Brikshya Andolan Nursery in the Bongurum of Khalingduar Reserve Forest, Nuno Range of Dhansiri Forest Division.

On this occasion communities, local NGOs, and Dong Band Committee members exchanged words with the goal to form a united force to safeguard and conserve the forested areas within the Dhansiri Division.

Dr Dipankar Lahkar, Senior Conservation Biologist and Assistant Director of Aaranyak attended the event and interacted with the present gathering. Dr Anwaruddin Choudhury, Mustaf Ali Ahmed, DFO- Dhansiri, Narayan Mahanta, CR Bhobora, Dr Pranjit Sarmah, Sanatan Deka graced the event. The event was moderated by Pranjal Talukdar, Range Officer of Nuno Range. Aaranyak's Hemanta Phukan and Dibakar Nayak were also present in the occasion.



## Aaranyak's expert presented on wildlife crime at SSB workshop

Aaranyak's senior official in Legal and Advocacy Division Binita Baruwati was invited to make a presentation on "Wildlife Crime and Illegal Wildlife Trade" during a workshop on the "Border Interaction Team," organised by the 64 Battalion of the Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) on June 25 at the Border Out Post (BOP) in Darranga. Around 35 SSB officials of various BOPs attended the session.

The workshop aimed to raise awareness among BOP officials about various forms of wildlife crime, current trends in wildlife trafficking, and trade activities within their area of responsibility.



The discussion was focused on issues related to wildlife crime and illegal trade along the border areas of the Manas Landscape and Northeast India. It emphasised the critical role that border security agencies can play in detecting and preventing such crimes.

Key topics covered in the workshop included crime patterns, impacts, challenges, and preventive measures.

The presentation began by defining wildlife and its ecological significance, leading into an exploration of wildlife crime, its diverse forms, root causes, and consequences.

Real-life examples of recent wildlife crime cases from the region were shared to make the session more relatable and impactful. Participants also learned about the ecological importance of the Manas Landscape, along with the challenges encountered in addressing wildlife crime in the area.

From Aaranyak Bijet Baro and Dhananjoy Mashahary assisted in conducting the session.

## Students sensitised on human-elephant coexistence

Aaranyak with support from the SBI Foundation conducted two well-participated school outreach events meant for raising awareness on human-elephant conflict (HEC) mitigation and promotion of coexistence.



One of the events was held on June 9 at Hattigarh High School, where students were engaged with “Gajah Kotha” Part 1 — an educational set introducing elephant behaviour, habitats, and conservation importance encouraging empathy and conservation.

The second event was organised on June 17 at Indira Gandhi ME School focused on another educational set - "Gajah Kotha" Part 2, explaining why elephants enter human spaces and demonstrated practical solutions such as early warning systems, safe distancing, and community-level conflict mitigation measures.

Both sessions used interactive storytelling, visuals, and student participation to enhance learning.

Over 205 students took part in both of the events. The programmes which were facilitated by Aaranyak team members Abhilasha Boruah, Abhijit Saikia, Bikash Tossa, Gautam Daimari, and Pradip Barman, successfully fostered awareness and understanding among young minds.

## Rhino Goes to School conducted at Bokakhat

An event of our flagship 'Rhino Goes to School' campaign was conducted at Panbari Tribal LP School in Bokakhat, Assam on June 19. The event featured visual presentation on diverse aspects of Greater one-horned rhinos. An open quiz session, and interactions to foster interest among participants were also conducted.



Students were captivated by the rhino sculpture displayed during the programme, reinforcing the conservation message and capturing their imagination. Arif Hussain, Senior Manager in Aaranyak’s Rhino Research and Conservation Division and resource person of the programme, shared valuable insights on rhino conservation attended by over 50 participants.

Linakshi Deka Phukon, Head Mistress of the school, Akash Morang, Member of Aaranyak, and a local conservationist Saurav Morang were also present in the event.

## Gender sensitisation workshop at Nonai Forest Range Office

Aaranyak conducts gender sensitisation workshop at Nonai Forest Range Office in Udalguri district of Assam. The workshop aimed to facilitating an inclusive, respectful and equitable work environment for staff engaged in conservation initiatives across the Udalguri and Baksa landscapes, as well as to build perspectives that can pave the way for community-level engagements.

Seventeen staff members from Aaranyak's Elephant Research and Conservation Division (ERCD), Water Climate and Hazards Division (WATCH), and Environment Education and Capacity Building Division (EECBD), along with an intern, participated in the session.



The workshop was facilitated by two members of the Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) of Aaranyak Dr Namita Brahma, Centre Chair and Faculty of Ecology, Environment and Sustainable Development, at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Guwahati Off Campus, and Bobby Nath, Assistant Director, Administration in Aaranyak along with Hiten Kumar Baishya, Deputy Director, ERCD, Aaranyak.

The session covered a range of vital themes, including the understanding of gender roles and importance of gender neutrality in the workplace and the legal framework provided by the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013. The role and responsibilities of the Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) were also discussed in detail, underlining the importance of institutional mechanisms for ensuring workplace safety and dignity.

Additionally, the ways to prevent, prohibit and redress sexual harassment were also discussed.

The workshop went beyond internal capacity building and also explored how gender sensitivity can and should be integrated into field-based conservation and community outreach efforts—especially while engaging with diverse rural stakeholders in high human wildlife conflict areas. Recognising that conservation is inherently a people-centred process, participants reflected on how respectful, inclusive approaches can strengthen both human and ecological outcomes.

By equipping its field teams with gender sensitization for promoting equity in gender awareness and inclusion, Aaranyak reaffirms its commitment to organizational integrity and community empowerment as well as to the belief that sustainable conservation has to be aligned with social equity and justice.

## Communities around Manas NP sensitised on importance NRM

Aaranyak in collaboration with the village committees and local youth groups, organised a series of awareness programmes on Natural Resource Management (NRM) for the community partners in Manas Landscape during June 6 and 15.



The awareness programmes were organised as part of the conservation education initiative in the landscape, which aimed to enhance the knowledge of the communities on the importance of the Natural Resources the region boasts and simultaneously encourage them to take necessary actions to manage and safeguard these resources for future sustainability.

Nine awareness programmes were organised across the ten project villages around Manas National Park. The programmes were organised in Gorumara, Majrabari, Bhuyanpara, Bamunkhal, Karebari, Daodhara, Langdangpara, Thwribari Madanguri and Randhanipara villages. Altogether 748 community partners including 347 women and 401 men attended the programme.

The key experts included Dr Bibhuti Prasad Lahkar, Deputy Executive Director of Aaranyak, Chandrakanta Basumatary, Sr. Teacher, Khamardwisa High School, Jadab Brahma, Independent Sustainable Agriculture Practitioner, Kamal Machary, Teacher, Kathalguri L.P. School, Karma Singh Mushahari, Head Master, Bormajra M.E. School, Didwm Daimari, Shikaridanga JFC, Udalguri and Detsung Basumatary, Manager, Bodoland Handloom Mission.

The series of awareness programmes was made successful by support from the Presidents, Secretaries and the community members of the respective villages. The conservation education programmes were coordinated by Dr Jayanta Kr Sarma with support from volunteers - Sonia Boro, Simangshree Basumatary, Monoj Muchahary, Swmkhwr Basumatary, Geremsha Basumatary, Pranjit Boro, Shri Sonit Basumatary, Adit Narzary, Phungkha Basumatary, Anju Basumatary, Purnima Basumatary and Daimalu Basumatry.

The logistic arrangements and proceedings of the programmes were overseen by Swapan Kr Das, Momita Narzary, Shaikhong Basumatary, Barnali Baro, Bijay Basumatary, Bubli Rani Basumatary and Pankaj Kr Das of Aaranyak Team under the supervision of Dr Partha Sarathi Ghose.

The programs were organised as part of the IUCN-KfW-supported project “Securing population of tigers, habitats and biological corridors in Assam, India”.

## Capacity building programme for ECN members

Aaranyak with support from SBI Foundation conducted a capacity building programme for Elephant Conservation Network (ECN) members on June 24 at Bongurum, Udalguri district of Assam, with the participation of 17 ECN members.

The session was organised to boost community-led efforts in mitigating Human-Elephant Conflict (HEC) and promoting coexistence. During the event, Aaranyak’s Rabiya Daimari led an engaging session on elephant behaviour, rising conflict trends, and effective coexistence strategies using both traditional practices and technical tools.

ECN members also shared ground-level knowledge and first-hand experiences, offering valuable insights that not only enrich local strategies but also contribute meaningfully to broader elephant conservation efforts.

The event also featured the 'Gajah Katha', an Aaranyak's visual storytelling tool that raises awareness about elephant conservation and peaceful coexistence. To support field readiness during the monsoon, raincoats were also distributed to the ECN members.

Aaranyak believes such programmes aimed at nurturing local leadership and integrating community knowledge enable us to strengthen conservation from the ground up, laying the foundation for long-term, landscape-level human-elephant coexistence.

The event was facilitated by Aaranyak's Mondeep Basumatari, Abhijit Saikia and Pradip Barman.



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### Administrative & Registered Office

*Aaranyak, 13 Tayeb Ali Bye lane, Bishnu Rabha Path,  
Beltola-Bhetapara link Road, PO: Beltola,  
Gurwahati, India- 781028*

### Research Office

*Aaranyak, 12 Kanaklata Path, Bye lane 3,  
Ajanta Path, Beltola Survey,  
Gurwahati, India- 781028*

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**[www.aaranyak.org](http://www.aaranyak.org)**

[info@aaranyak.org](mailto:info@aaranyak.org)

Aaranyak society registration number – RS/3096 of 1989-1990

Phone: +91-361-2230250