

## PRESS RELEASE

### Workshop highlights gravity of sustainable development in Karbi Anglong

### Book on Tiger-community relationship launches in Karbi Anglong

**Diphu, Karbi Anglong, Feb 25:** The Karbi Cultural Society (KCS) and Aaranyak, a leading organisation dedicated to conservation of biodiversity, jointly organised a discussion and awareness programme for the first time on a crucial topic deeply rooted to Karbi culture and tradition in Diphu, Karbi Anglong.

The event themed “Natural Resources and Green Livelihoods – A Conversation for Sustainable Development in Karbi Anglong.” was organised during the 51st Karbi Youth Festival.

The event was held at Rangsin Sarpo Achatai, Karbi Peoples Hall, Taralango, Diphu, with a total of 38 participants from different parts of the district. The objective was to understand public perspectives on natural resources and current management practices, incorporating traditional knowledge and cultural practices.

The event began with a welcome talk and the felicitation of distinguished guests and panelists, including Holiram Terang, Ex-HAD Minister, Govt. of Assam; Chandrasing Kro, President, KCS; Sunil Tokbi, General Secretary, KCS; Chandrakanta Terang, Ex-EM, KAAC; Kamsing Hanse, President, Karbi Lammet Amai (KLA); Karon Hansepi, Vice President, KLA; Rebecca Kramsapi, Assistant Professor, Department of Geography, Pandu College, Guwahati; Longsing Bey, folk artist; Khogen Engti, writer; and members of Karbi Rong Asar Amai (KRAA).

In his inaugural address, Chandrasing Kro, President of KCS, stated, "For the first time, Aaranyak and KCS have organised an event focused on community awareness to restore our cultural identity and integrity while keeping our house in order. KCS will continue to support such programmes in the future." This was followed by a curtain-raising song, *Lahelo Ne Khei* (translated as "This is my land and my people"), performed by Chandrakanta Terang.

The discussion revolved around four thematic areas, with insights from the distinguished speakers. Karon Hansepi, Vice President of KLA, emphasised the deep connection between Karbi culture and nature, stating, "According to the Karbi way of life, our culture and traditions have a strong relationship with nature. Conservation and the promotion of our natural surroundings are integral aspects of Karbi culture." She concluded her speech by posing a reflective question: "Are we truly aligned with the ideal Karbi way of life?"

Holiram Terang discussed the current state of natural resource management, governance, and challenges in Karbi Anglong. He highlighted that, despite Karbi Anglong having the largest forest cover and natural resources in Assam, Global Forest Watch reports indicate a tree cover loss of 119,000 hectares (15%) between 2001 and 2023. He posed a critical question: "For the sustainable management of natural resources in Karbi Anglong, should we consider promoting it as a natural resource-based special economic zone to conserve biodiversity and protect our flora and fauna?"

Rebecca Kramsapi noted that Karbi Anglong has the highest potential for forest resources and non-timber forest products (NTFPs) in Assam. She suggested that "Promoting bamboo-based industries, natural farming, and sustainable NTFP harvesting could be key avenues for developing Karbi Anglong into a special economic zone."

Aaranyak's Sarlongjon Teron shared insights into the organisation's ongoing Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) programme in the Kaziranga-Karbi Anglong landscape. He highlighted Aaranyak's efforts to engage local communities in alternative sustainable livelihood practices such as eco-cultural tourism, natural farming, value addition, and sustainable NTFP harvesting as part of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

A book release session followed, featuring the launch of *Teke Lapen Monit*, transliterated from Assamese into Karbi by Chikari Tisso and Sarlongjon Teron. Dr Firoz Ahmed, a senior scientist from Aaranyak provided a brief background on the book, explaining, "This book has been published in four languages—English, Assamese, Bodo, and Karbi. It is not just for children but for all age groups, as it explores fascinating facts about tigers and their relationship with humans." The session concluded with a traditional Karbi song by Longsing Bey, depicting the cultural significance of the tiger-human relationship.

Kamsing Hanse, President of KLA, emphasized the need for Karbi civil society, literary bodies, and young minds to come together to create platforms for discussing important and pertinent issues. He expressed gratitude to Aaranyak for organising the event and expressed his hope for future collaborations.

The event organised on February 18 concluded with a vote of thanks by Horiram Engti, a member of PIRBI - a community owned ethnic enterprise, who expressed gratitude to KCS for providing the platform, the distinguished guests and participants for their

valuable time and support, and the organising team for their efforts in making the event successful.

The event was made possible through the efforts of Aaranyak team members and local volunteers from Diphu.

“Aaranyak is committed towards conservation of biodiversity, ecosystem and supporting the indigenous communities residing in Kaziranga- Karbi Anglong 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.”, says Aaranyak through a press statement.

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