

Press release on Garo Hills workshop on HEC and wildlife crimes with BSF

BSF personnel deployed on Indo-Bangla border sensitised on HEC, WL crimes

Guwahati, February 11: A sensitization workshop on ‘wildlife crimes and the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972’ for Border Security Force (BSF) personnel deployed along the India-Bangladesh border was organised by the Department of Forests and Environment, Office of the Divisional Forest Officer, East & West Garo Hills Wildlife Division of Meghalaya in collaboration with the BSF.

The workshop, held on February 7 last at the Kilapara (Dalu) BSF camp, was tailored for BSF personnel stationed along the Indo-Bangladesh border, a region where human-elephant conflict (HEC) often rear its head.

Two experts from Aaranyak, Hiten K. Baishya, Deputy Head of the Elephant Research and Conservation Division (ERCD), and Ajoy Kumar Das, Senior Law Consultant of the Legal and Advocacy Division (LAD), took the floor. Their engaging discussions shed light on elephant conservation and the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.

With Kilapara (Dalu) BSF camp often caught in the crossfire of man-elephant conflicts, Hiten K. Baishya delved deep into elephant behaviour. The main goal of his lecture was to sensitise SSB personnel working in elephant-prone border areas to avoid conflicts during sudden encounters with wild elephants. He emphasized on staying alert when roaming in elephant areas and shared tips to stay safe while also supporting conservation efforts.

He also explained a few low-tech but very useful measures which can be adopted to minimize the conflict situation without much supervision from the experts. His insights urged BSF personnel to step up as guardians of wildlife, reinforcing the joint mission of the Forest Department of Meghalaya and NGOs in the region.

On the legal front, Ajoy Kumar Das, a practicing advocate at the Gauhati High Court, explained lucidly wildlife crimes and illegal wildlife trade as outlined in the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.

He tried drawing a link between the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 and the Border Security Force Act, 1968, emphasizing their role in tackling cross-border wildlife offenses. He also walked the audience through the Section 139(1) of the BSF Act, 1968, and also the notifications passed under said provisions, clarifying its significance in wildlife law enforcement.

Additionally, he outlined the legal *dos and don'ts* for BSF personnel when stumbling upon illegal wildlife trade, ensuring their actions stay within the law while helping to crack down on such crimes.

The event was attended by Inspector Simaha Chalam and Sub-Inspector Bhoora Singh of the BSF, along with S.B. Marak, Range Forest Officer of the East & West Garo Hills Wildlife Division among others. Their presence reinforced a shared commitment to tightening the grip on wildlife crime while bolstering border security.

This initiative put the spotlight on the crucial role of BSF personnel, placing them at the forefront of both national security and wildlife conservation. In India's border regions, where wildlife-related issues run rampant, especially in Garo hills of Meghalaya, their sharp vigilance and hands-on approach holds the line against both illegal trade and human-wildlife conflict. By weaving together conservation and security, they stand guard over not just the nation's borders but also its precious natural heritage.

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