

Ganesh Puja at Bornadi WLS to mitigate man-elephant conflict



Comments 1



Jayanta Kumar Das 13 September 2011 22160 views

Large scale human encroachment of the age old elephant corridors of Udalguri district of Assam has posed serious threat to ecology of the district as well as the state. Unabated felling of trees and destruction of the green cover have compelled wild elephants to roam in the near by villages, once belonged to them. A visit to India-Bhutan international border would reveal this horrific truth of forest destruction. All the PRF (Proposed Reserve Forests) namely- Neewly, Kundarbi and Bhairabkunda etc have been encroached by various people and organisations. Even 450 bighas of forest land had been allotted to one Brahmo Sewashram on Neewly hills near Bhutan ,for commercial use. (Actually the organisation has illegally encroached more than 2500 bighas of forest land,as per report of the Circle Officer,Harisinga Revenue Circle. Memo No.HRC/S-27/2001/98 Dated 01-01-2006)The Circle Officers working in Harisinga Revenue Circle,Udalguri Revenue Circle and Mazbat Revenue Circle earned millions of rupees during 1990-2006 period by allotting pattas to the encroachers. The Lat Mandals and Kanangus offered full cooperation in the matter in return of huge amount of money. This is the untold story behind so called man - elephant conflict in the district. Bornadi Wildlife Sanctuary and Khalingduar Reserve Forest have virtually been shrinking day by day. Banana and bamboo trees are vanishing fast in the forests because of roaming of thousands of domestic cattle inside the forest causing food crisis for the wild elephants. A full grown wild elephants needs 170-200 kg of food items and 80-200 litres of water daily. It can easily be assumed what amount of food and water a herd of wild elephants (generally 10 to 20 in a herd,but sometimes there are more than 100) would require daily.

Unfortunately with the destruction of forests, several herds of wild elephants have started coming down to villages in Udalguri district in search of food and water. The deaths of seven wild elephants and seven human beings in the district during last three months alone have proved the seriousness of the problem. Lack of fund, material and man power forest department could not meet the situation. There are only 65 numbers of forester and guards in the Dhansiri Forest Division. It is near impossible for them to cover areas from Bogamati to Pachnoi. In each Range Office, the working field duty staff number is not more than 20.

Debajit Deuri, SP, Udalguri and TR Pegu, SDPO, Bhergaon Subdivision in association with forest staff have taken up a massive programme in the district to create awareness and to minimize man-elephant conflict. As part of the programme, Ganesh Puja was arranged at No.4 pukhuri well inside Bornadi Wildlife Sanctuary on September 10 with day long programme. Police and forest department organised the puja in association with Green Valley Forest and Wildlife Protection Society, Nonaipar and Pigmy Hog Eco-Tourism Society of Bornadi WLS. After the puja ceremony, five truck loads of banana tree and one truckload of salt had been kept inside the forest for the wild elephants. TR Pegu, SDPO, Bhergaon told accompanying media persons that more banana and salts would be placed at different places inside the sanctuary next week. Another awareness meeting was organised at No.4 Rajagarh village near Bornadi WLS on September 7 where people of most effected villages interacted with police and media. The meeting was also attended by a few conservation activists .

Jayanta Kumar Das

Environmental journalist.

BY JAYANTA KUMAR DAS

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