

Govt. urged to solve problems of Khalingduar Reserve Forest



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Situated on the remote Indo-Bhutan international border, Khalingduar RF (Reserve Forest)under Dhansiri Forest Division, Udalguri, has always been a unique virgin beauty of nature. With an area of 7033 hectare, Khalingduar has been the abode of many rare species of flora and faunas and really deserve a berth next to none in the field of bio-diversity .Unfortunately, poor infrastructure step motherly treatment of the government the surface areas of the reserve forest have been decreasing day by day rapidly due to deforestation and human habitation to the utter displeasure of the nature lovers.

The important animals which could be seen in the RF are-elephant,marble cat (a very rare species of wild cat),tigers,wild buffalo,bison,common

langur,wild dog,barking deer, spotted deer,hog deer,chital,hyanea,wild pig and common fox.Among birds,hornbills and peacocks are important.'Kuha Ban' a different types of grass could be seen on either side of the Nonoi river. Apart from a range forest office with a Ranger at Nonoi,Khalingduar RF had a beat office at Samrang (both inside the RF).Other four numbers of beat offices are there outside the RF.Construction of forest IB s have been completed,one each at Nonoi and Samrang (but not opened for the visitors yet).The whole RF has been guarded by just one Range Officer,one Dy.Range Officer,two Forester-I and eight forest guards with no weapons nor vehicles except one damaged truck. That was perhaps the cause of the death of a Range Officer,Bipul Bharali,a decade ago at the hands of the mafias. An anonymous forest official said that most of the forest resources had been destroyed during Bodo movement.He also said that the primitive life style of hunting and felling of trees of the Bodos and Adivasihad been the biggest problems to Khalingduar RF. The southern side of the RF have been inhabitant by Bodo,Adivasi and Neplai people, who used the RF as the grazing land for their cattles, thereby causing untold damage both to animals and plants. Unless and until their leaderships understand the importance of conservation, no laws could save the flora and faunas of not only Khalingduar RF but NE as a whole. Situation has now of course improved with the deployment of three SSB camps, one each at Samrang,Nonoi and Bangurum.

Another source said that grazing of thousands of domestic cattle inside the RF has been posing serious setback to animals.The two PRFs (Proposed Reserve Forest)under Nonoi range namely,Newlee,Kundarbill 2nd and 3rd edition attached to Khalingduar RF had never been declared as RF for decades. And a heavy price would have to be paid in near future if not declared soon. Thousands of hectares of land belonging to these PRF have already been encroached. The areas of the RF would have been much larger had Nonoi TE not encroached thousands of hectares of forest land for tea plantation, without paying royalty to the government. Moreover in the compartment No.14,called Barmukali, more than hundred families have now settled occupying forest land. The Range Officer was killed at that place decade ago.

According to Bharat Deka,FR-1,the infrastructure inside the RF,if developed, would,would attract flows of tourists to Jalimukh, Samrang and Koramore.He said that the distance between Jalimukh (the most spectacular place of the

RF);and Nonoi range office was just 12 km. But the forest road had always been worse. The British build big water reservoir and water pipe line (flowing water from Jalimukh to various TE gardens)well inside the RF has been causing water logging on parts of the only link to Jalimukh disrupting normal movement. The tea gardens had never paid any taxes to the government, causing loss of revenue to the state.It was also learned that there had been a short cut forest road well inside deep forests, connecting Jalimukh and Samrang has now been covered with wild thick grasses.A forest personal said that if the forest road was opened (a very little amount of money required),it could have been used as an adventure safari for the tourists. Another 6 km long forest road from Samrang to Bangurum has now been damaged .If repaired ,visitors would be able to make a complete tour of the RF.It was also brought to notice that, the journey from Nonoi to Jalimukh and back would have been exciting if a new temporary approach (for winter only) through the beds of fast flowing shallow Nonoi river with several tributaries was made ;then the one way 12 km journey to Jalimukh through deep and dark forest and returning by the open river roads back to Nonoi range office would be worth remembering which would be the first of kind in India.The opening of the new approach would require not more than rupees twenty thousand.

Another place called Kharmati, just 1 km from Jalimukh (not motorable)could be converted in to a adventure trip.This required only the arrangement of forest guides as one has to cross two fast flowing streams with ice cold waters and a narrow passage through two steep hills. It would be another addition to watch animals of various species coming to eat salty soil at Kharmati.(The place had always been heaven for the poachers)Visitors would be thrilled to watch herds of wild elephants sliding down the steep hills!



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