

Man-elephant conflict takes serious turn in Udalguri district



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Jayanta Kumar Das 6 September 2011 9466 views

“Man-elephant conflict” has taken a serious turn in Udalguri district in last two months causing deaths of five wild elephants and six human beings. A high level discussion was held at Deputy Commissioner's Conference Hall at Udalguri on September 2 to find out solutions to mitigate the conflict. The meeting was organized by Bankim Sarma, DFO, Dhansiri Forest Division, in association with Udalguri district administration. Thaneswar Malakar, Deputy Commissioner, Udalguri presided over the discussion which was attended by Mitha Ram Basumatari and Santias Kunjur, both BTC EM; Debojit Deuri, SP, Udalguri; MP Sarma, PD, DRDA, Udalguri; Pradip Kumar Daimari, MCLA, BTC; Dr. Anupam Sarma and Hitesh Baishya, of WWF India; Circle Officers of Mazbat, Harisinga and Udalguri; Managers of Hatigarh TE, Orangajuli TE, Borangajuli TE and Nonai TE; representatives of small tea growers, NGOs; ABSU and all the media persons.

Speaking on the occasion, DFO, Dhansiri Division said that no financial grants had ever been sanctioned for the maintenance of Bornadi Wildlife Sanctuary of Udalguri district during last two years. It needs mention that Situated in the foot hills of Himalayas, bordering Bhutan in the North of Udalguri district, Barnadi Wildlife Sanctuary (26 46' 49 N and 91 45' 31 E; at the elevation of 175 M above sea level) with an area of 28.22 sq km could well have attracted large number of inland and foreign tourists for its exotic virgin beauty, had there been good infrastructures like drinking water, communication system, forest guides etc. The only known abode of pig my hog (*sus salvinous*) and Hispid hare (*caprolagus hispid*), Barnadi wild life sanctuary had been neglected by both state and BTAD authorities since its up gradation to wild life sanctuary in 1980. Earlier it was known as the Barnadi Reserve Forest. The sanctuary had been an ideal bhabar tract. The sanctuary has at least 14 species of mammals including Indian elephants, Tiger, Leopard, Slow loris, Capped languor, Barking deer Gaur, Himalayan black bear, wild bore, Pangolin, Particoloured flying squirrel, Assamese macaque, Peacocks, Eurasian otter, fishing cat and Porcupine etc. Non availability of maintenance funds has virtually stopped all kinds of developmental activities in side the Bornadi WLS, paving the ways of the smugglers deep inside the WLS. Patrolling is near impossible in the WLS due to lack of man power and blockage of interior forest roads. Debojit Deuri, SP, Udalguri urged the civil and forest officials immediately to take steps to control the deaths of elephants and man. He also suggested the use of tear gas cells to disperse unruly wild elephants causing menace in the villages. The matter of illegal allotment of 450 bighas of forest lands to Bahmo Sewashram at Newlee PRF was also raised during the discussion. From all the records it was found that on the basis of the report of then Circle Officer, Harisinga Revenue Circle, the SDLAC, Bhergaon had allotted the said plot of forest lands to the religious body, which violated forest rules as directed by the Supreme Court of India. Mitha Ram Basumatari and Santias Kunjur, both BTC EM

assured that they would place the matter before BTC so as to take steps to cancel the allotment.

The meeting further requested the tea gardens of the district not to encroach more forest lands; maintain their own staff to monitor movement of wild elephants; engage one Kunki elephant at their own expenditure; not to stock chemical fertilizers and pesticides etc out in the open; to stop erection of loose electric fencing to drive away wild elephants; not to dig deep trenches (serving as death traps for baby elephants). The district administration directed the Circle Officers of the district to find out actual possession of lands of the tea gardens both small and big. The issue of declaration of Dhansiri Forest Division as a wild life division was raised by senior journalist and Hony. Wildlife Warden Bhargab Kumar Das. Thaneswar Malakar, Deputy Commissioner Udalguri directed forest officials to form a high level committee to take steps to supervise the man elephant conflict in the district.

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BY JAYANTA KUMAR DAS

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