

NGO team visits Bhairabkunda



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A high level delegation of Assam Environmental NGO Forum visited JFMC (Joint Forest Management Committee) Sapangaon near Indo-Bhutan border at Bhairabkunda on May 2 recently to study and suggest its up gradation to an eco-tourism hot spot. The delegation included Mubina Akhtar, Green Reporter and Coordinator, Assam Environmental NGO Forum, Guwahati and its core members namely Nitul Nath (Aranya Surakhya Samiti); Dr. Bibhuti Lahkar, Dr Abdul Wakid and Ashoka Dey (Aranyak), Raj Phukan (Green Guard), etc.

Thaneswar Malakar, Deputy Commissioner, Udalguri; Girindra Adhikari, DFO and MP Sarma, ACF of Dhansiri Forest Division; Jayanta Kumar Das, Hony. Wildlife Warden, Udalguri also visited the 5 Sq KM pictureque man-made forest along with the visiting environmental workers. The visiting members had a discussion with the DC and DFO where a large numbers of JFMC members and media persons were also present. The Deputy Commissioner offered to do infrastructure development like construction of cottages with drinking water and sanitation facilities for visitors. Aranyak, Assam offered to install nine Solar light panels in the JFMC. Green Guard and Aranyak also offered to provide installations of early warning system in the district to check “Man-elephant Conflict” The Forum members also decided to organise awareness meeting at vulnerable locations in the district in cooperation with district civil and forest administration.

It needs mention that six villages on the India-Bhutan border at Bhairabkunda joined hands with the Forest Department in successfully regenerating a stretch of barren sandy forest land. The results of this quiet community initiative done under joint forest management (JFMC) are evident with the regenerated forest expanse of 5 sq KM already emerging as a shelter of wild animals and birds. The 22.24 sq KM Bhairabkunda Reserve Forest (RF) was left without a single tree by the early 1980s due to rampant illegal logging. Afforestation drive by forest Deptt. in association of people of six villages namely- Sonaigaon, Goroimari, Bhairabpur, Sapangaon, No.1 Mazargaon and No.2 Mazargaon started in April 2007 and within five years a spectacular man made forest known as JFMC forest has grown up at Sapangaon by converting plot of barren sandy lands measuring 500 hectare (5 sq KM) in to a new picturesque forest by planting khoir, gomari, simul, shisum etc near Dhansiri river, very close to Bhutan and Arunachal.

Conservation activists hoped that the place would draw the attention of tourists all over the world, if government developed infrastructure of the area. The regenerated forest land now has rich vegetation and has given shelter to wild elephants, deer, monkeys, leopard, bears etc. beside various species of flora. A small river with several canals -a few of those man made runs throughout the forest, providing replenishment for the green cover.

Jayanta Kumar Das

Environmental journalist.

BY JAYANTA KUMAR DAS

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