

## State environment forum suggests government steps for conservation



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Jayanta Kumar Das 30 May 2016 Updated 31 May 12350 views

Expressing concern [over](#) the rampant deforestation in the State and other associated burning issues such the man-elephant conflict, the Assam Environmental [NGO](#) Forum today urged the new Forest Minister, [Pramila](#) Rani Brahma to take sincere steps to protect the State's invaluable forest wealth. Addressing a press conference at Guwahati press club today on May 30, office-bearers of the Forum called upon the authorities to expedite the relocation of 1,500-odd families living inside Dibru Saikhowa [National](#) Park. "The two forest villages Dadhiya and Lika inside Dibru Saikhowa have resulted in huge anthropogenic pressure on the [national](#) park. While the villagers cannot be blamed for the development because they have been living inside the forest before it was declared [as](#) a national park, a plan to relocate the people outside the park has not materialized for reasons best known to the Government," Mubina Akhtar said, adding that the people had readily agreed to the [compensation package](#) because they were not getting any amenities inside forestland. Akhtar said that the Forum had made several representations before the State Government but to no avail. Moloy Baruah, while terming growing organized encroachment [as](#) a bane to the State's forests, said that the Amchang wildlife sanctuary located at a stone's throw from the State capital had borne the brunt of encroachment, with [over ten](#) per cent of its land under illegal occupation under the very nose of the forest authorities.

Raj Phukan said that shrinking forestland had been a conspicuous phenomenon since the past 30 years during which the State parted with [over](#) 3,000 sq km forest. Calling for restoration of lost forestland through large-scale afforestation, he demanded that the practice of allotment of proposed reserved forest (PRF) land for various purposes be stopped forthwith.

The Forum also opposed the Bodoland Territorial Council's move to [grant](#) more than 3,000 bighas of land to Yoga guru Baba Ramdev on [India](#)-Bhutan international border which would cause destruction of flora and fauna. The forum also requested BTC authority to reconsider official allotment of 450 bighas of land in Newlee PRF. It was further disclosed that more than 4500 bighas of forests lands had been occupied by a religious organization on Indo-Bhutan border in Newlee PRF causing severe man-elephant conflict. On the recent death of a rhino in Burhachapori wildlife sanctuary, it alleged foul play and demanded an impartial inquiry. "The rhino was badly injured while her ear was cut for marking during translocation. It resulted in gangrene and ultimately resulted in her death," it said. Referring to the escalating man-elephant conflict in the [state](#), Jayanta [Das](#), environmental journalist of Assam said that large-scale deforestation along the Bhutan border on the Assam side was responsible for the [crisis](#). He said that 83 people and 33 wild elephants had been killed during last five years in [Udalguri](#) district alone. The process of [compensation](#) to [victims](#) had been made during last two years. The Forum was critical of the functioning of the 'top-heavy' Forest Department, saying that it was uncalled for at a time while the crucial frontline force was depleted for want of manpower and running without even the basic amenities. "A top-heavy department with very little work for the officials bodes ill for conservation, more so because the department is facing serious shortage of frontline personnel. They frontline staff are also working without any amenities," it said, adding that it was also time the top officials were made accountable for matters like the mounting poaching-induced rhino deaths. Welcoming the recent directives of the [National](#) Green Tribunal (NGT) in the recent past, the Forum said that those including the directive for restoration of lost wildlife corridors in [Kaziranga](#) landscape should immediately be implemented by the State Government. The Forum also welcomed the recent closing down of forest check-gates by the State Government.

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Jayanta Kumar Das

Environmental journalist.

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**BY JAYANTA KUMAR DAS**

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