

Women power to boost MNP conservation



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The mother and the wife are two most important women in a man's life because they can have great influence on his actions and thereby on the course of his life. Napoleon Bonaparte once said, "Give me good mothers and I will give you a good nation." Taking this truth into account Aaranyak in collaboration with authority of Manas National Park (MNP) has undertaken a unique initiative to facilitate about visit of 1200 women from fringe villages to the picturesque Manas National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site in Assam bordering Bhutan.

In the first phase Aaranyak and the MNP authority have organised a day-long trip for 100 women from villages bordering Bansbari, Bhuyanpara and Panbari ranges to Manas National Park to help them have the first hand experience of the park's wonderful ambience, its resources and its importance to our environment as a whole.

"These women from various villages at the fringe of the Manas National Park have visited the park for the first time in their life though they live so close to it. The objective of the initiative is to make the women folk understand the importance of the flora and fauna of the picturesque wildlife habitat so that they are motivated to contribute their mite towards its conservation efforts. They can play a great role to dissuade their men and sons to refrain from indulging in poaching and other illegal activities inside the Park," said Dr Bibhuti P Lahkar, a senior biologist of Aaranyak.

The women for the trip inside the MNP are being selected from 120 women SHGs which are working in coordination with Aaranyak for exploration of alternative livelihood options . Total 1200 village women will be facilitated to visit the MNP this winter in different groups. The MNP authority has promised not to charge any fees from such women groups visiting the park keeping in mind the important role they can play in boosting the conservation efforts in the national park.

A representative of Sonali SHG who was among the first batch of 100 women to have visited the MNP , said, " All along it (the park) has been so close to us, but have never got a chance to visit and see its wonderful inside. Now, after my visit, I have realized, how beautiful and importance it is for us all. We must preserve it at any cost."

The women visitors shared their experience during an interaction with Park's director Sonali Ghosh and Assistant Conservator of Forest D D Boro. All sounded overwhelmed by the experience.

Manas National Park is a 2840 square kilometer of picturesque landscape characterized by rich floral and faunal resources and located in Western Assam in the foothills of Bhutan Himalayas. It is a unique wildlife protection area in the country which has got five different conservation status -tiger reserve, world heritage site, biosphere reserve, national park and an elephant reserve. Manas is arguably the only wildlife habitat which harbours more than twenty Schedule I species as listed in the Wildlife Protection Act of India.

Dr M Firoz Ahmed

BY DR M FIROZ AHMED

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