



**JANASANYOG, ASSAM
CHIEF MINISTER'S PUBLIC RELATIONS CELL, DISPUR**

PRESS RELEASE

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President Droupadi Murmu inaugurates Gaj Utsav 2023

State government is giving top priority to elephant protection and conservation: CM

Dispur, April 7: President Droupadi Murmu inaugurated Gaj Utsav 2023 in presence of Governor Gulab Chand Kataria and Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma at Kohra Ranga in Kaziranga National Park in Golaghat today.

It may be noted that the two day Gaj Utsav is being celebrated synchronizing with the completion of 30 years of Project Elephant which was started in the year 1992 for the protection and conservation of elephants.

Speaking on the occasion, Chief Minister Dr Sarma said, "Elephants are integral to India's civilizational heritage and their conservation is of national importance. Therefore, our government is taking a series of steps for the conservation of elephants. I am extremely grateful to President Droupadi Murmu for inaugurating Gaj Utsav 2023 and prioritising this noble endeavour which will go a long way in the conservation of wild elephants and welfare of captive ones".

The Chief Minister said that the Gaj Utsav is a great occasion to celebrate the prized position of elephant in Indian culture. Elephants are very important animals towards the social and cultural civilization of the society. So the celebration of Gaj Utsav will help all the stake holders to attach more importance to the conservation exercises of the elephants. Moreover the Utsav will also generate more focused awareness among the people for the conservation and protection of elephants.

The Chief Minister said that along with five elephant reserves, there are nine elephant ranges in the state. He said that in order to establish link with their habitats, State government has earmarked 12 elephant corridors. For safeguarding the corridors, State government has been working relentlessly. He said that as per the National Green Tribunal, steps have been taken to build ramp over six elephant corridors crisscrossing the railway lines through Rani Reserve Forests. He moreover said that in the Kaziranga National Park, State government has also taken steps to build 34.8 KM elevated corridors bridging nine animal corridors on both sides of the national highway with an estimated project cost of Rs 4926.01 crore.

The Chief Minister said that the relationship between humans and elephants is an integral part of the ancient civilization and culture. The relationship between elephants and humans has been there since the time of the Ramayana and Mahabharata. He said that elephants have been an integral part of the life of the people of Assam since long times. He said elephants also played an important role in the military exercises during the ancient period and during Ahom rule.

The Chief Minister said that the loyalty and love of elephants towards humans is beautifully expressed in art and literature. He also said that Assamese films portray a vivid picture of the relationship between elephants and humans. The Chief Minister said that most of the states in the North East have become suitable habitats for elephants. He said that the Kaziranga National Park,



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Manas National Park, Sonai-Rupai Forest in Sonitpur district, Nameri National Park, Burha Chapari forests, the Orang National Parks etc are the main habitats of elephants in Assam.

The Chief Minister said State government has launched an eviction drive in encroached areas of reserved forests, national parks and wildlife sanctuaries. In the past few months, the state forest department cleared about 5,299 hectares of land from encroachers. The Chief Minister said that the victims of the man-elephant were given immediate assistance and compensation.

Union Minister for Environment Forests and Climate Change Bhupender Yadav, Union Minister of State for Environment Forests and Climate Change Ashwini Kumar Choubey, Environment and Forests Minister Chandra Mohan Patowary, Agriculture Minister Atul Bora, Finance Minister Ajanta Neog, C.P. Goyal Special Secretary to the Ministry of Environment Forest and Climate Change Govt of India, Chief Secretary Paban Kumar Borthakr and a host of other dignitaries were present on the occasion.

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