



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

**PRESS RELEASE**

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**Pact to restore Assam's forests and preserving biodiversity**

**French Development Agency and Assam Govt. sign 50m euro agreement**

**Dispur, Nov. 4:** The French Development Agency (AFD) and the Government of Assam signed a 50 million euro Project agreement (total budget of 62.5 million euro) towards supporting the State government's initiative to restore Assam's forest ecosystems and preserve their biodiversity.

AFD Country Director Bruno Bosle and Additional Chief Secretary to the Government of Assam, Environment and Forest Department Jishnu Barua signed the agreement in presence of Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal, Ambassador of France to India Emmanuel Lenain and Assam Environment & Forest Minister Parimal Suklabaidya in a meeting held at the conference hall of the Chief Minister's office at Janata Bhawan today.

Today's signing marks the launch of the second phase of Assam Project for Forest and Biodiversity Conservation (APFBC), which aims to reforest an additional 12,000 hectares of land, scale up efforts in biodiversity conservation and skill the members of 135 additional communities in different trades. This second phase of financing will continue for five years with the aim of increasing the project's coverage area and corresponding impacts.

Earlier, in between 2012 and 2019, APFBC was implemented with support from AFD in response to the threats posed by deforestation, poaching, and overdependence of local communities on forest resources across the state to reforest 21,000 hectares of land, build 33 flood refuge sites for wildlife, and train over 6000 members of the local communities in alternative livelihoods so as to reduce their dependence on forests. The project has also built up the capacities of Forest Department, particularly its frontline staff, to reinforce its key missions.

Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal while speaking on the occasion said that the State government after coming to power took a resolve to plant 100 million trees in the State and remarkable achievement has been made in this regard so far. Stating that Assam is very rich in natural resources, he said that the State government is committed to preserve its bio-diversity. He also urged the students to take active part in plantation drive to increase the green cover in the State.

Sonowal further said that responding to the call of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to turn the north eastern region as an organic hub, the State government has



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already initiated a number of steps. He said that the Act East Policy enunciated by the Prime Minister offers tremendous opportunity for the north eastern region to develop close linkages with the ASEAN and BBIN countries to reap high dividends in the economic sector. He said that during last three years, visit of many foreign Ambassadors to Assam further gave a major boost to bilateral relations. He also viewed that the agreement signed today would lend positive impact on conservation of nature and bio-diversity in the State.

Speaking at the event, Ambassador of France to India Emmanuel Lenain said, "This project reinforces the commitment of India and France towards the restoration and preservation of rich and diverse natural ecosystems. Biodiversity conservation will remain a priority for our 2020 bilateral agenda, and we look forward to lessons from this collaboration, which has already yielded tangible results, being shared in India and international forums".

Noteworthy that this project works particularly closely with the women of local communities, empowering them through participatory planning and training them in new skills, thus enabling them to revive the local economy, protect forest resources and increase their financial independence. The project also reinforces its climate focus, with specific attention on supporting the Forest Department to monitor contributions of forests to climate change, and mitigate climate related vulnerabilities.

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