

RFRI trains Indian Army on Forestry

For the first time, the men-in-uniform has undergone a week long training on forestry at Rain Forest Research Institute, Jorhat (Assam). The trainees comprised 18 officials from 134 & 135 Infantry Battalion on Territorial Army, Eco Task Force (Assam). There were two Lt. Col. rank officers, four JCOs and twelve Jawans. 134 Infantry Battalion is based at Sonitpur & involved in ecorestoration activities in an around Nameri National Park in the Sonitpur district. This Battalion has planted large number of tree in the degraded forest land in collaboration with Assam Forest department. Many of these trees are fruit bearing trees such as Mango, Jamun, Jackfruit etc. 135 Infantry Battalion is based at Kokrajhar involved in ecorestoration work at lower Assam areas. Lt. Col. S.S. Dagar, Project officer, 135 infantry Battalion, ETF told that entire ETF is involved in ecorestoration of already heavily degraded areas of Assam. The ecorestoration works are being conducted in active collaboration of Assam Forest Department. Thousand of saplings have already been planted. Local people were also engaged under certain employment generation program like MNREGA.



The main objective of undergoing this training is the capacity building of the trainees. The training was organized from 30th May to 4th June 2011. The trainees were provided with theoretical as well as practical session during the training. They also visited field, forest areas apart from Institute's nursery and Bambusetum. Some of the topics covered in the training were propagation and commercial cultivation of bamboos, principles and practices of nursery and plantation management, vermicompost and biofertilizer, rattan and orchid diversity in Assam/North-East, disease and pest management, biotechnology application, climate change, ecology etc.



The trainees were well acquainted with Joint Forest Management activities jointly operated by Assam Forest Department, Sivasagar and local bodies at Geleki. They experienced the Agroforestry model under JFMC sites at Geleki. The Forest Development Agency, Sivasagar developed plantation of bamboo, *Michelia champaca*, agar wood along with few other agricultural cash crops for effective utilization of land and also income diversification. Plantation of Som (*Machilus bombycina*), a food plant of famous *Muga* silk of Assam is also raised under JFMC. More than hundreds of families are benefitted by raising cocoons on the *Som* trees. Plantation of another tree Mezankori (*Litsea cubaba*) were also raised. *Muga* cocoon feeding on Mezankori leaves produces world's best quality *Muga* silk. The trainees interacted with local farmers to understand the operational modalities of JFMC.

The trainees experienced different technology transfer and implementation at 'Meleng Grant', a village in the fringe area of Gibbon Wild Life Sanctuary adopted by RFRI as "Demo Village". RFRI has been demonstrating different technologies such as vermicomposting, forest nurseries, agroforestry, bamboo treatment etc. through the active participation of the villagers. The trainees visited the Gibbon Wild Life Sanctuary, Jorhat to understand animal habitat and other associated aspects.



Attending at the concluding session of the training, Ms. Imtiena Ao, Conservator of Forests, RFRI appreciated the effort of Indian Army for involving in ecorestoration of degraded areas of NE. She told that RFRI is always eager to extend all possible help to Eco Task Force in their endeavour to achieve its goal. She distributed the certificates of excellence to the trainees at the concluding Session. The entire programme was efficiently coordinated by Sri Rajib Kumar Kalita, Scientists & Training Coordinator, Rain Forest Research Institute, Jorhat (Assam).

