

'State has only 711 sq km of forest area'

Source: Hueiyen News Service

Imphal, June 05 2011: In a matter of serious concern, there is a huge difference between the government report based on the state forest department and those of other environment related world bodies.

Speaking in a one day discussion programme on Climate Change at Manipur Press Club, Imphal organised by The Sangai Express, Associate Professor, MU Life Science Dept Dr P Kumar said that Manipur has only 711 sq km which is only about 3.2 % of the total land area of the state according to reports of environment related world bodies. The state forest department claims that state has 4936 sq km of forests which is 22 % of the total land area of the state.

Dr Kumar said that the state will face severe irregularity in rainfall and increased warming if the forest area of the state is not increased up to 33 %. He also said that introduction of new forest species in the state has become a serious threat to the survival of the Sangai and the Siroy Lily. Many indigenous grass species has become extinct in the Loktak Lake due to the introduction and mass plantation of new species for cattle grazing by the Veterinary Department. The alien grass has begun to invade Keibul Lamjao National Park which will drive Sangai to extinction in the next five or six years. The alien grass will kill all indigenous grasses like Eeshing Kambong which is not be found in other states, and rushes and other varieties of water plants.

Since Sangai cannot survive without these indigenous grasses and water plants, it will become extinct in the near future, Kumar said. There is an immediate need to create a vast water body around the park without any kind of alien weeds and plants, he said. On the other hand, Tenwa (a type of bamboo which is use to make bow and arrow) has become a menace to the survival of Siroy Lily. Tenwa has begun to invade the area in the past few years since the state government marked the area as a protected area. It is high time to control the invasion by this bamboo by using a scientific technique so as to save the Siroy Lily, Kumar said. The increasing trend of global warming is also playing a major role in agricultural production and other environment related issues. The state has been witnessing serious climatic changes in the past few years due to mass deforestation and global warming. It is high time both for the people of the state and the state government to devise a mechanism to prevent



Lok Sabha MP from state, Thokchom Meinya planting a sapling during the environment day observation organized by the Vision Fondation Manipur and Pioneer Health Club Manipur under the sponshership of Environment and Ecology Wing, And Central Forest Department

further deforestation and motivate afforestation to save the state from upcoming serious threats, Kumar exhorted.

L Manglem, Director MANIREDA said that MANIREDA had so far produced around 3 MW of electric power from natural resources like, sunlight, hill water streams and wind. Besides providing electricity to various areas, the project has saved 4500 tons of oxygen every year which would have been consumed if electric power was produced by petroleum fueled power generators. AIR Imphal, News Consultant BB Sharma was the moderator of the function.

Dr Brajakumar, Scientist Environment and Ecology Wing and senior journalist, I Arun also participated in the function. AMWJU president A Mobi released a 10 minute documentary film before the discussion began as a part of the function.

Speaking as resource person at a session on climate change and the release of a short documentary film christened 'The Untold Story' on the occasion of World Environment Day on Sunday at Imphal, Kumar said paragrass was brought from outside by a Government department and planted in Loktak lake for development of fodder. "If the massive expansion of this alien grass is not checked in time, the threat to the existence of the Sangai looms large as many of its natural food are on the verge of extinction as the exotic plant species has killed many of them,"

Kumar, who spoke on the topic "Climate change and food security," said. Besides the paragrass's silent attack on the indigenous plant species at Keibul Lamjao that covers around forty square kilometers, other aspects threatening the existence of Sangai are poaching, wild fire etc.