

Climate change, large scale lumbering, deforestation, script a telling story at the abode of Lily Siroy biodiversity takes a beating, Leihao gives way to Yongchak

Source: **The Sangai Express**

Imphal, October 10 2011: Thanks to the drastic climate change brought about by large scale lumbering, U-Morok plants which could never grow on Siroy hills due to its cold climate are now growing there luxuriantly. Siroy village is home to the famed Shirui Lily and is 12 kms from Ukhrul district headquarters. While native trees like Leihao have almost disappeared from Siroy, its changing climate has become very suitable for tree beans (Yongchak) . Siroy hills which is 2764 metres above mean sea level has undergone drastic changes in its climatic conditions due to incessant lumbering for the last many decades. U-Morok and tree beans which could not grow in Siroy due to its cold climate are now growing luxuriantly, bearing fruits. This was observed by this reporter during a recent trip to Siroy hills. The State flower, Siroy flower which grows only in Siroy, and nowhere else in the world has also been affected by the climate change. The total number of flowering Siroy Lily is diminishing every year and this year is no exception.



Shirui hill range where its fauna and flora has changed and David Shang a treasure house of info

A native of Siroy village, 84 year old David Shang Shimray who was the Principal of Ukhrul Higher Secondary School earlier said that thick sheets of snow could be seen on the paddy fields of Siroy in October during the 1930s. But today, no flake of snow can be seen in October. He observed that the climate of Siroy has become much warmer. Subsequent upon large scale lumbering, levels of water table have sunk much deeper and the quantity of water available in springs has also diminished alarmingly, David Shimray said. Notably, Siroy hills is a perennial source of water for supplying water to Ukhrul district headquarters as well as surrounding villages. Water from Siroy Hills is also used in paddy cultivation. Siroy Hills is also the origin of Thoubal river. If the water source at Siroy hills dries up, Ukhrul district headquarters would be uninhabitable due to unavailability of water.

Moreover, all the people using water of Thoubal river would be severely affected, David said. At one time, Siroy hills looked all white because of blooming Leihao flowers which once covered the whole hill slopes. As Leihao trees have been cut down continuously, it is now hard to find a Leihao tree in the entire Siroy hill range. Consequently, the number of migratory bird the Grey Sided Thrush (Siri in the local parlance) which used to feed on Leihao fruits have depleted considerably. "During our childhood, a villager could catch 300 to 400 number of this species of bird", David recalled while lamenting that these birds would never come again. Though Siroy Hills was declared a national park in 1984, it remains only in paper till now. Nothing concrete has been taken up till date for protection of Siroy Hills. The hill range is still owned by private individuals. While talking to some villagers, they questioned how could they afford education of their children if they stop felling trees from Siroy hills. "If the Government can arrange some alternative source of livelihood, we would happily give up lumbering", they said.