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SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION OFFICERS CONFERENCE

A two-day Soil & Water Conservation Officers' Conference was held on the 22nd and 23rd May, 2007 at the Departmental Auditorium, Shillong.

Attending the inaugural session of the Conference was a number of dignitaries among whom Shri P.W. Ingty, IAS, Commissioner & Secretary of Soil & Water Conservation Department was the Chief Guest. Guests at the function include Dr. P.P. Nageshwara Rao, Associate Director of NESAC, Nongsder; Smti. I.R. Sangma, Director, SIRD, Nongsder; Dr. T.K. Giri, Associate Professor, NIRD, Guwahati; Father Cyril Tirkey, Director RRTC, Umran; Dr. K.K. Satpathy, Principal Scientist of ICAR, Umiam and Kumari E. Tariang from NABARD, Shillong.

Shri K.C. Momin, Director of Soil & Water Conservation, Meghalaya welcomed all the guests and gave a brief introduction to the purpose and objective of the Conference. He explained that while the general performance of the field officers and staff is satisfactory, there is a need for improvement which could be achieved by efforts to supervise and monitor the ongoing works more intensively. He called for free discussion on the problems and solutions and emphasize on the need for expert advice for improving the implementation of projects and for evolving better strategies.

Dr. P.P. Nageshwara Rao, Director, NESAC pointed out the dangers of fast depletion of resources and increase in population. While referring to climate change due to global warming, he said that there is increased intensity of precipitation per day resulting in greater



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From Editorial Desk...

IMPORTANCE OF INTRA-DEPARTMENTAL INTERACTION

The Department of Soil and Water Conservation held regular Officers' Conferences every year. Such conferences are not merely routine exercises but their importance and impact went far beyond the mundane. These conferences are fora for interaction between key officers of the Department, scientists and researchers. The aspects of implementation or progress of implementation of projects undertaken by the Department, improvement of performances, evolving of better strategies are but a few of the major points of discussion. It is on such conferences that the nitty gritty and ground realities of the works taken up surfaced. Hence, they could be addressed to suitably. Problems get their way into the attention of the planning and project formulation levels and in the process facilitating the adoption of solutions and better strategies. It is also in such conferences that the need to strengthen supervision and monitoring are taken into account.

The interaction and flow of information between different levels and sections of officers working in different fields of interest and areas, without doubt, account for the sterling performance of the Department in the State. Moreover, the conferences also serve as forum for interaction on a personal basis and develop the spirit of comradeship amongst the officers of the Department which is an important factor in an organization that need periodical reshuffling of posts. In short, it may be said that the Officers Conferences serve as a springboard for better implementation of projects and the overall performance of the Department in its quest for meeting the aims and objectives of natural resources conservation and management.

> K.C. Momin Director of Soil & Water Conservation, Meghalaya, Shillong & Editor-in-Chief.

potential to erode the soil. He said that there is a large quantity of carbon dioxide remaining in the atmosphere and pointed out that due to recent deforestation taking place in private lands in and around Shillong, the required sequestration might get stalled. Dr. Rao also dwelled on short term measures like efficient use of fertilizers, water sources, horticulture, sericulture and agriculture development applications as well as identification of satellite-based communication. Smti. I.R. Sangma, Director, SIRD while lauding the role of the Department also offered assistance for training to grassroots level functionaries, block level functionaries as well as capacity building for officers in watershed and wasteland development schemes.

In his speech, the Chief Guest, Shri P.W. Ingty, IAS said that there is a lot of work and expectation and that the Conference is an exercise to take stock of the performances of the Department and also a forum for examining implementation, discussing about problems and finding solutions. It offered a good forum for interaction between officers, scientists and researchers to evolve better strategies. The Vote of Thanks was offered by Shri A. Syiem, Additional Director of Soil & Water Conservation, Meghalaya.

At the 1st session of the Conference, Shri K.W. Marbaniang, DSWCO, Shillong (T) gave a powerpoint presentation on physical and financial implications of various schemes/projects undertaken by the Shillong (T) Division. This was followed by presentations from Jowai (T) Division, Ri-Bhoi Division and Nongstoin Division on schemes taken up by their respective division and observation and comments from participants of the Conference. The Report on review of last year's conference was also presented at the Conference. Other issues taken up at the sessions of the Conference include account matters, general areas schemes, new schemes, cash crops plantation development and establishment matters.

At the Valedictory Session, the Conference adopted its recommendations and also resolved to take up 17 numbers of agenda for action by the department.

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PASSING OUT CEREMONY

The Conservation Training Institute, Byrnihat held the Passing Out Ceremony for the 34th Batch of Field Assistant Trainees on 15th September, 2007.

The batch consisted of 19 numbers of trainees drawn from the Soil & Water Conservation Department, Forest Department of the Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council, the Forest Department of Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council, the Rural Works Department of Arunachal Pradesh and Soil & Water Conservation Department, Mizoram. The three toppers from amongst the trainees are Shri Wingilbert Chyrmang, Ariston Roque Mynsong and Pynkmenlang Nongpiur, all from the Soil & Water Conservation Department, Meghalaya.



Trainees with Instructors

Shri Ranjan Chatterjee, IAS, Chief Secretary to the Government of Meghalaya was the Chief Guest at the Passing Out Ceremony, who in his speech, exhorted the newly passed trainees to work for the service of the people and the State. Other speakers at the function include Smti. R.D. Marak, IAS, Secretary to the Government of Meghalaya, Soil & Water Conservation, Dr. D. Syiem and the Joint Commissioner, Rubber Board. The function also saw the presentation of the P.S. Ingty Award, the P.R. Mawthoh Award, David Memorial Award, the Bor-Bis Prize, Prartiva Memorial Prize and the M.E. Roy Kharmawphlang Memorial Prize for trainees who excelled in various disciplines.

WORKSHOP ON SCHOOL SANITATION AND HYGIENE EDUCATION

The Soil & Water Conservation Department in collaboration with an NGO, CEREBRUM from Bhubaneshwar, Orissa organized a two-day Workshop on 'Accelerating School Sanitation & Hygiene Education' on the 28th & 29th May, 2007 at the Departmental Auditorium, Polo Hills, Shillong. Shri M.N. Mukhim, Minister i/c. Soil & Water Conservation, Meghalaya inaugurated the Workshop.



School children: in rapt attention

The main purpose of the Workshop was to inculcate in young children the need for proper sanitation and conservation of water. Twelve students from the School Sanitation Club of Orissa and 20 students coming from various schools of Shillong participated in the workshop which was conducted by two teachers of the School Sanitation Club. As part of the workshop, the participants visited schools, hospitals and homes of some individuals to see that type of sanitation existed at the moment. It also taught them to find out ways and means to find the solutions to sanitation problems faced today. The other purpose of the workshop was to encourage the school students to form sanitation clubs in their own schools and spread the need of sanitation in their own schools and in other public places and individual homes.

WORLD ENVIROMENT DAY CELEBRATIONS

The Soil & Water Conservation Department celebrates the World Environment Day with zest and enthusiasm on June 5. Various Divisions organised different programmes of awareness, tree planting and distribution of seedlings.

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Tree planting in the premises of the C.T.I. English School and Field was the main programme during the celebration of the World Environment Day at the Conservation Training Institute, Byrnihat. Around 200 persons attended the function in which speakers include Instructors of the Conservation Training Institute, teachers of the C.T.I. English School and trainees of the Institute besides school children. The function was presided over by Shri D.S. Kharsyntiew, Joint Director of Soil & Water Conservation, (R&T), Conservation Training Institute, Byrnihat.



A Resource Person delivering speech at Chibra Agal, West Garo Hills

The seedlings of Jatropha, arecanut and blackpepper are planted by the students and this time, a strategy was adopted in which each student was entrusted for the upkeep and maintenance of each sapling planted. Students will be awarded marks in their academics for maintenance of the trees planted.



Teacher and students planting a saplingduring World Environment Day

In Garo Hills, the Tura Directorate organized a programme at Chibra A'gal under Te'bronggre Range of Tura (T) Division where around 100 villagers including

elders, Nokmas of Chibragre and Gandgre villages, school children and officers and staff of Soil & Water Conservation attended the function besides members of the Watershed Committees, Watershed Associations and Self Help Groups. At the same time, a training programme under the IWDP schemes was also organized for Andura-Aratola watershed under Thebronggre Range of Tura (T) Division.

The Tura (T) Division organized World Environment Day-cum-Training on Watershed Management for Watershed Associations, Watershed Committees and Self Help Groups at Chibra Agal village under Andura-Aratta Watershed (IWDP) Projecrt VII. About 80 persons from the two villages of Ganol Sangma and Chibra Agal attended the programme. The programme was followed by a training on Watershed Management for Community Organization under IWDP. The training programme was followed by a short interactive session during which the communities actively participated.

The Baghmara (Cash Crop) Division in collaboration with the Baghmara Social Forestry Division celebrated the World Environment Day at the Capt. Williamson Memorial College Complex, Baghmara. Smti. R.D. Marak, IAS, Deputy Commissioner of South Garo Hills was the Chief Guest at the occasion. Participants at the function included school children of various schools from Baghmara town. After the function, the ceremonial tree planting was carried out in and around the College campus.

In West Khasi Hills, the Nongstoin Division held an Awareness Programme and tree planting at Presbyterian Girls Secondary School, Mawlangwir with Shri Niandro Syiemiong, Syiem of Maharam as the Chief Guest.



A World Environment Day function in progress in Jaintia Hills

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The Jowai (Cash Crop) Division and the Rymbai Village Dorbar jointly observed World Environment Day by holding a function at the Rymbai Presbyterian Higher Secondary School. The gathering was attended by farmers, businessmen, womenfolks, school-teachers and students of different school. After the function, the guests and participants planted about 300 nos. of saplings of trees and ornamental species inside the school premises.

The Jowai (T) Division organized a full day 'Awareness Campaing cum Tree Planting Programme' at the Kyndong Tuber Secondary & Upper Primary School in which the Chief Guest was Shri J.M. Kyndiah, lolcal MDC. The gathering included large number of the student community and villagers of Kyndong Tuber.

Officers from the Department delivered lectures on the importance of preserving the environment while the Chief Guest exhorted the people to contribute to the efforts of the different Government Departments in preserving the environment. After the function, about 150 nos. of tree saplings were planted in the school compound.

The Office of the Divisional Soil & Water Conservation, Nongpoh in collaboration with the Synjuk Pynneh Mariang, Nongkhrah Nonglyngdoh celebrates the World Environment Day at Pahambir village, Ri-Bhoi District. Tree saplings were planted at the village and surrounding areas.

The Shillong (Cash Crop) Division celebrated the World Environment Day at Balat Rim Nursery on 6th June, 2007 by distributing 12,202 nos. of arecanut seedlings to the villagers of the border areas falling under Bhowal Syjemship.

DEPARTMENTAL TRAINING PROGRAMMES

The Department organised a five day Training Programme for the ministerial staff of the Directorate and its subordinate offices from 7th to 11th May, 2007.

The purpose of conducting the training programme was to build the capacity of the trainees on subject matters pertaining to management and establishment and accounts related aspects to enable them to deliver improved and better service in the interest of the Department and public service at large.

The Resource Persons at the Training Programme were senior retired officers from the Meghalaya Financial Service cadre. The Training Programme was inaugurated by Shri P.S. Ingty, IAS, Commissioner & Secretary, Soil & Water Conservation Department, Meghalaya.

SI. No.	Name of Officers	Training Course	
1	Smti. P.R. Marak, ASWCO, Survey Division	NIRD Off-Campus Course on 'Sustainable Development of Agriculture' from 8 th to 13 th January, 2007 at SIRD., Meghalaya.	
2	Shri K.S. Pale, ASWCO, Directorate, Shillong.	-do-	
3	Shri F. Rynjah, DSWCO (Instructor), Conservation Training Institute, Byrnihat.	Direct Trainers Skills (DTS) at Institute of Secretarial Training Management, Department of Personnel & Training, New Delhi from 29 th January to 2 nd February, 2007.	
4	Shri D.K. Khonglah, DSWCO (Instructor), Conservation Training Institute, Byrnihat.	-do-	
5	Shri D. Langstieh, DSWCO, Project Formulation Cell.	Series of training programmes at	
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TRAINING COURSES ATTENDED (from January, 2007 up to June, 2007)

6	Shri P. Rapthap, ASWCO, Nongstoin	-do-	
7	Shri A. Syiem, Additional Director of Soil & Water Conservation.	Regional Training Programme on Comprehensive Landslide Risk Management at GB Pant Institute of Meghalaya Environment & Development, Gangtok.	
8	Shri D.S. Kharsyntiew, Joint Director of Soil & Water Conservation, Conservation Training Institute, Byrnihat.		
9	Shri Nigel Joshua Sawian Kharmalki, ASWCO, Project Formulation Cell, Shillong.	97 th Course of 5½ month Regular Training Course in Soil & Water Conservation at Central Soil & Water Conservation Research & Training Institute, Dehradun from 16 th April, 2007.	
10	Shri Wanshan Kupar Kharkongor, ASWCO, Nongstoin.	-do-	
11	Shri G. Kharmujai, DSWCO, Shillong (CC)	Computer course on 'Office Management Usage' at NIRD, Guwahati from 30 th April to 5 th May, 2007.	
12	Shri D.L. Warbah, DSWCO, (Instructor), Conservation Training Institute, Byrnihat.	-do-	
13	Shri J. Swer, ASWCO, Jowai (CC)	Training Course on "Hands-on Practice of GIS Software for Rural Development" at NIRD, Guwahati from 11 th to 16 th June, 2007.	
14	Smti. B.H. Syiem, ASWCO, Nongstoin Divn.	-do-	
15	Smti. M. Diengdoh, ASWCO, Directorate, Shillong.	-do-	
16	Shri O.T. Lyngwa, ASWCO, Directorate, Shillong.	Training course on 'Computerize Database Management at NIRD from 18 th to 23 rd June, 2007.	
17	Shri S.K. Pale, ASWCO, Directorate, Shillong.	-do-	

YEAR OF THE FARMER

The Shillong (T) the Wah Bhowal Watershed Year of the Farmer, 2007 at June, 2007. Shri A. Syiem, Water Conservation was the which was attended by a large area. The occasion saw the of materials like sewing p u m p s, a g r i c u l t u r a l etc.

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Division in collaboration with Association observed the Dangar L.P. School on 8th Additional Director of Soil & Chief Guest at the occasion number of farmers of the handing over to the farmers machines, sprayers, water implements, carpentry tools,

Shri A, Syiem, Additional Director of Soil & Water Conservation Department distributes farm machinery to a farmer.

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SEEDLING DISTRIBUTION

The Tura (T) Division organized a seedling distribution programme on 29th May, 2007 where arecanut seedlings are distributed to farmers belonging to two micro-watersheds under IWDP Project-III. The Division also distributed 50,000 nos. of arecanut seedlings to 194 nos. of farmers drawn from three villages under Dare Micro Watershed. Another 50,000 nos. of arecanut seedlings were also distributed to another two villages.

PARTICIPATION

The Department participated at the Regional Agricultural Fair for Farmers of North Eastern Region organized by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, Umiam from $5^{th} - 7^{th}$ March, 2007. The event has been partially sponsored by the Department of Agriculture and Co-operation, Government of India, New Delhi. The theme for the Fair is "Agricultural Production Optimisation in North Eastern Region."

EVENTS

One of the landmark events in the Department is the shifting of the office of the Director of Soil & Water Conservation, Shillong from its location at the Meghalaya Additional Secretariat Building to the newly constructed Administrative Building at Lower Lachaumiere on 25^{th} June, 2007.

The Directorate of Soil & Water Conservation occupies 11 rooms at the second floor of the new building. Officers and staff were now allocated with spacious rooms in a fairly serene working atmosphere. Through the shifting to this new building, the Department wore a new working atmosphere where the previous congestion had largely been addressed to and the officers and staff could savour the novelty not only of the new building but also of the ambience and atmosphere.

The Soil & Water Conservation Society, Meghalaya Chapter organized a Fishing Competition at Umjalynshir, East Khasi Hills on the 18th September, 2007. 50 numbers of anglers participated at the competition.

At the Prize Distribution Ceremony presided over by Shri A. Syiem, Secretary of the SWCS, Meghalaya Chapter, the Chief Guest was Shri K.C. Momin, Director of Soil & Water Conservation and President of the Society. The Vote of Thanks was offered by Shri K.W. Marbaniang, Member, SWCS, MC.

The winners at the competition are Shri G. Marbaniang who was awarded Rs. 500 and a chicken; the second prize was bagged by Shri D. Langstieh; 3rd prize Shri A.S. Kharlukhi, 4th prize, Shri S.R. Nonghuloo and 5th prize Shri R. Massar.

THE SACRED GROVES OF MEGHALAYA IN A NUTSHELL

K.K. Kharlukhi, Directorate of Soil & Water Conservation, Shillong

A profusion of greenery set in virgin patches of forests with dense vegetation, thick canopies and seemingly impenetrable undergrowth that harbours an abundance of flora from trees to orchids to herbs are the sacred groves of the Khasis.

Some are big, some are small; some well-known, some obscure but the sacred groves share the same unique position in that they are protected by social and religious strictures. In most of the sacred groves, it is forbidden to pluck a flower let alone felling the trees or abusing it in any form. There are no records of when the practice of setting up sacred groves was first started but they have been in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills for a very long time. Their existence was widely accepted by the people either out of respect and belief or out of fear of the taboos attached to them. Another important feature of the sacred groves is that it is widely believed that they are guarded by a sylvan deity - ryngkew or basa. The Khasi people believed that the basa who presided over a sacred grove would come in the form of a tiger or serpent to punish anyone who abuse or defile it. Those who inadvertently commit any misdeed within the groves were let off with a warning after they had admitted their offence and ask for forgiveness, usually from the Lyngdohs or priests of the communities or clans that looked after the groves. Harsh punishments were meted out for intentional or repeated offences.

There are also some religious rites and rituals connected with the sacred groves. These rites, usually sacrifices and religious ceremonies were performed by the community or clan that oversees the upkeep of the groves. The rites, though differing from one place to

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another, were usually made to the guardian deity of the groves believing that he will protect the people from their enemies, sickness and natural calamities and that he would also make them prosperous, healthy and strong. In bygone eras, elaborate rituals and sacrificial ceremonies were made, for instant at the Bleibah sacred grove at Mawsmai and the Phod Sohlang sacrifice at the Mawphlang sacred groves. These ceremonies were performed inside or just in the periphery of the sacred groves and the people from the particular community actively participated in such rituals. In olden days, it is also the usual practice to erect monoliths at the sites of the sacred groves to commemorate their establishment or any event related to the groves or the community or any heroic and notable deed. However, in most of the surviving sacred groves, rituals connected with them have been discontinued or beginning to disappear.

There are three categories of sacred groves - the Law Lyngdoh, Law Kyntang and Law Niam which were looked after by the priest, community or traditional religious fraternity respectively. Today, there are as many as 79 numbers of sacred groves in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills and it is estimated that the total area covered by them is around 10,000 acres. The Mawphlang sacred grove alone covers an area of 75 acres; the Sunapur sacred grove five square kilometers and the Raliang sacred grove a little more than one square kilometer. The other notable sacred groves are the Mawlongsyiem at Mawsmai and the groves at the ridges of Shyllong peak. It is very unfortunate that many of these groves cannot retain their pristine position anymore as they have been disturbed and defiled by man in his guest for material gains. Only a handful of them belong to the undisturbed category.

However, the role of the sacred groves in ecological preservation cannot be denied. The moot question is how and why our forefathers could have thought of such an idea in ages where the land is covered with dense forest and conservation of natural resources a totally unknown concept? The late Dr. Bevan L. Swer, prominent scholar and author opined that the main reason for establishment of such sacred groves is to ensure perennial supply of drinking water near the areas of human habitation. Religious credo however, seems to be the more obvious explanation although its underlying motive of conservation cannot be ruled out. Whatever the case may be, the sacred groves have played a great role in the conservation aspect of environment. Without doubt, they are the ecological banks that help to harbour and nurture a cornucopia of a wide variety of local flora. At the Mawphlang Sacred Grove alone, over 400 species of vegetation have been known to exist covering wide genre of tree species, wild flowers, vines, creepers, herbs, medicinal plants and even scented grass. Out of the above, close to 300 are tree species alone. Besides, the presence of vegetation protects the soil from hazards of erosion, helping to stabilize it and more importantly ensuring a healthy water regime in the soil. It is because of this that many of the sacred groves are the sources of many springs, streams and rivers. While affecting the micro-climatic condition in the areas where they are established, the sacred groves also serve as habitat for a wide variety of local fauna particularly, small animals and insects. In the long run, they not only provided water to the human settlements but also indirectly help the geoclimatic conditions of the area which are beneficial to the farming communities around them.

The sacred groves are unique examples of what a vibrant environment should look like. They have and still maintained their enviable role of harbouring bio-diversity in the midst of universal environmental degradation. But whether the sacred groves are here to stay, it depends on how much and to what extent the present generation could emulate the precept and practice of creating such vegetational patches and whether it could relish, cherish and restraint from pushing these natural legacies to the brink of obliteration.

RETIREMENT - DURING JANUARY TO JUNE, 2007.

- 1. Shri Stone Nongpluh, Power Tiller Operator, Ri-Bhoi Division.
- 2. Shri Singdon A. Sangma, Power Tiller Operator, Tura (T) Division.
- 3. Shri Donbosco G. Momin

retired w.e.f. 28.2.2007

retired w.e.f. 31.3.2007.

retired w.e.f. 28.2.2007

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LEST WE FORGET

1. Smti A. Syiem, Chowkidar, Nongstoin Division.	expired on 4.6.2007
2. Shri Johny Lyngdoh, Driver Conservation Training Institute, Byrnhat.	expired on 13.6.2007
 Shri Sumit Koch, Mechanic Cleaner Tura (T) Division. 	expired on 4.6.2007
 Shri Marjonath K. Marak, Head Assistant Shillong (T) Division. 	expired on 31.4.2007
5. Shri Siril Marngar, Soil Conservation Demonstrator (Sr), Nongstoin Division.	expired on 15.3.2007
6. Shri Prothindro R. Marak, S.C.F.W., Tura (CC) Division.	expired on 13.6.2007
7. Shri Siril Marngar, Soil Conservation Demonstrator (Sr), Nongstoin Division.	expired on 15.3.2007
8. Shri Jowelsmard Ch. Momin S.C. Ranger, Williamnagar.	expired on 12.7.2007
9. Smti Ibanylla Langshiang, Range Assistant, Jowai (T)	expired on 28.4.2007
10. Shri Pharaoh Kharmujai, Shillong (T) Division.	expired on 30.5.2007
11. Shri Isroy Kharkamni, S.C. Ranger, Ri-Bhoi Division.	expired on 13.10.2006

Appointment:

Shri P. Nikhla, LDA recommended by the Meghalaya Public Service Commission.

Appointment on compasssionate ground:

Shri Mykinson Blah, s/o. (L) Shri P. Laloo, appointed as LDA-cum-Typist in the Directorate, Shillong. Joined on 21.3.2007.

Smti. Lapynshai Rynjah, LDA (Gr.III) joined on 22.01.07.

Transfer and posting:

Shri Luhotsing K. Marak, Soil Conservation Ranger, Simsanggiri transferred to Soil Survey Division and service attached to Office of Joint Director of Soil & Water Conservation, Tura vide O.O.No. 360, dated 28.2.2007.

Promotion:

Smti S. Kharmynthon, LDA allowed officiating promotion to UDA vide O.O. No. 381, dt. 12.3.2007.

Shri Ramsing R. Marak, Accountant, Shillong (T) Division allowed officiating promotion as Head Assistant in the same Division.

Smti. Merabel Suting, U.D.A., Shillong (T) Division allowed officiating promotion as Accountant in the same Division vice Shri Ramsing R. Marak relinquishing the post on officiating promotion.

Smti. M. Khyriem, L.D.A., Shillong (T) Division allowed officiating promotion as U.D.A. vice Smti. M. Suting relinquishing the post on officiating promotion.

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Photospeak





All ears: young environmental campaigners

Our Director, Shri K.C. Momin: making a statement



Farming equipments: tools of the trade



World Environment Day: remembering the call



Young hands for young plants

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Seedling distribution: intensifying production

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VIGNETTES FROM THE ONE DAY MEET OF SELF HELP GROUPS PROMOTED UNDER UMJAUD AND UMSA WATERSHED OF IWDP (2005-06) Pr-XI HELD ON 5TH JULY, 2005 AT MAWBEH









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Soil & Water Conservation, New Administrative Building, South Block (First Floor), Lower Lachaumiere, Shillong-793 001.

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