



Sacred Groves CIC for restoration of forestlands near Kaziranga

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It was willing to make a 10-year investment for restoration of forest lands near Kaziranga National Park with a view to increasing the habitat of the one horned rhino

Sacred Groves Community Interest Company (CIC) was willing to make a 10-year investment for restoration of forest lands near Kaziranga National Park with a view to increasing the habitat of the one horned rhino. The Sacred Groves CIC's India representative Dr. Arvind Kumar Jha in a meeting with Assam Minister for Environment and Forests Parimal Suklabaidya on Saturday said that the environment conservation oriented social enterprise was committed to preserve the planet's natural habitats all over the world.

The organisation believes in using the latest technologies, management practices, geospatial imaging, regulatory frameworks, and analytics and potentially involving environmentally conscious individuals and companies all over the world through a digital platform to participate and contribute to the process of conservation, Mr. Jha said. "We are keen to partner with countries and more specifically the states/provinces that are potentially rich in natural biodiversity and have set an example of good conservation practices for the world. In this regard, we are very inspired by the biodiversity, rich culture and the intent of Assam in particular and would welcome an opportunity to collaborate," he said. The organisation is looking forward to investing on lands belonging to the government as well as private/public agencies for a minimum period of 10 years with a focus on natural bio-diverse habitats that include forests as well as lands contiguous to forest lands from where encroachers have been evicted, which have a significant rewilding potential, he said. In the initial stages, the organisation is looking to invest on about 100 hectares and depending on its popularity and success, will extend support up to 1,000 hectares over the course of the next five years subject to approval by the forest department. The funds will be made available by Sacred Groves to the department or agency as per an express agreement in that regard. Following the identification of the specific piece of the forest/land, a Forest Conservation and Community Management Plan will be established as per local need, he said. During the investment period, no part of the forest/natural habitat shall be felled or physically harnessed for any commercial gains – the entire natural cycle of forest evolution will be allowed to manifest, he added. "The area treated by using Sacred Groves funds shall not be diverted for any non-forestry purpose for 20 years from the year of determination of the same," Mr. Jha said. The Minister thanked him for evincing keen interest in starting a project in Assam that would help in restoration of forest lands and assured his department's help and support in this regard.

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