

IDU MISHMI CULTURAL & LITERARY SOCIETY (IMCLS)

Apex body of Mishmi (Idu) community

Roing - 792110, Lower Dibang Valley, Arunachal Pradesh

Registration no: SR/ITA/122 dt. 27/10/1987

Unique identifier of NGO Darpan, NITI Aayog Portal: AR/2018/0218419

www.imcls.org email: imclsroing@gmail.com

PRESS STATEMENT

Date:02/04/2023

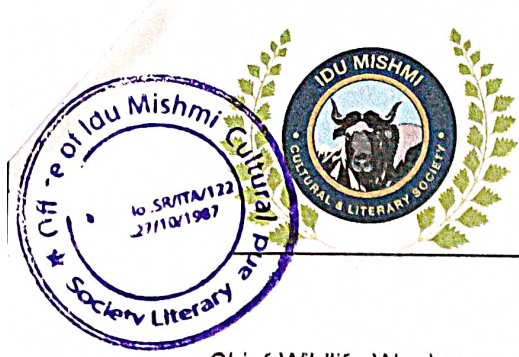
We, the Idu Mishmi Cultural Literary Society (IMCLS), would like to express our strong opposition to the article published in the Hindustan Times on March 29, 2023, titled "Centre Likely to Soon Notify Dibang Tiger Reserve." This article has caused great concern among our community, as we have been fighting against the Dibang Wildlife Sanctuary (DWLS) since its proposal stage.

We would like to remind everyone that a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) was filed in the Gauhati High Court of Itanagar permanent bench, and the matter was disposed of with a direction to the state government to address the issues and make a report with the help of a committee, including locals.

On April 3, 2018, a fact finding report was submitted to the Deputy Commissioner (DC) Anini from the committee headed by the Circle Officer (CO), which stated that the proclamation was not disseminated to all the affected people far and wide, especially Etalin, Anelih, and Arzoo circle, and the declaration dated 2nd January 1998 found in official record states that after the expiry of the 8 months periods as specified in the said proclamation no claims and objections were received however the fact finding committee found out many letters of claims and objections in the official record. This contradicts the statement made in the notification for the declaration of DWLS on January 2, 1998. This raises serious concerns regarding the transparency and fairness of the decision-making process.

The declaration of the DWLS did not follow the due procedure as mentioned in the provisions of Wildlife Protection Act 1972 and The Land Acquisition Act 1894, therefore the said declaration is unilateral, arbitrary and illegal. The problem of the DWLS is not even sorted out and the govt, has imposed the idea of Dibang Tiger Reserve (DTR) over the DWLS. The IMCLS had written to National Tiger Authority (NTCA) objecting and stated there shall be no tiger reserve unless the legal process of recognition, determination and settlement of the legal rights of the indigenous communities in notifying the DWLS are addressed. The intention of NTCA, PCCF and the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) are also clear from its desperation to support and approve final approval for the declaration DTR on 9th April 2022 at Pakke despite of the WLP Act 1972 (Section 38V) in complementary to FRA 2006 that provides cognizance of the consultation right of Gram Sabha and consent of STs based on mutually agreed terms and condition in the declaration of tiger reserve. But after the final approval for the declaration of Dibang Tiger Reserve the Principal Chief Conservator of Forest (PCCF) conducted a meeting on 25th November 2022 at Anini but no Gram Sabha meeting held nor consent seeking process to date with rights holders and affected areas of the proposed tiger reserve. It is akin to putting the cart before the horse. Even during the cosmetic consultation meeting of 25th November 2022 in Anini, they distorted the language and message of the speakers in the minutes of the meeting when several practical questions and issues were raised regarding the feasibility of tiger reserves in higher elevation. A written objection against the said distorted minutes of the meeting has been placed before the District Administration, Anini (dated 3rd March 2023). Several resolutions passed by the villagers objecting to the tiger reserve to the PCCF Itanagar have been submitted. The govt. cannot impose on us, while not following the due procedure, they cannot bypass the law.

Namdapha Tiger Reserve (NTR) was declared in 1983 and as of now there is hardly any tiger in the Namdapha Tiger Reserve, what was the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) conserving all these Forty years? Where is the fund gone, Can the National Tiger Conservation Authority justify the amount of expenditure incurred for protecting the Tigers in Namdapha Tiger Reserve and still coming out with hardly any tiger population in Namdapha Tiger Reserve? What were they protecting? Can the



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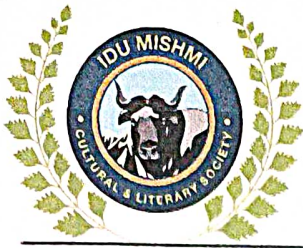
Chief Wildlife Warden answer these questions? Why do we need to conserve the Tiger in our Mishmi Land when it is conserved naturally through our beliefs and cultural practices that strongly forbids the hunting of tigers. It is scientifically known that several cultural taboos have their unique role in the conservation of wildlife. This is also the reason why many tigers and Idu Mishmi Community have co-existed in a harmonious and cohesive way since immemorial times and the same has been published. We also did not kill any tigers in the past despite knowing that they have preyed upon the livestock in Dibang Valley (for instance in Brango village) which the district administration, Anini have also known.

In Fact the conservation is reasonable in plains of Urban areas where every perimeter of forest has seen intrusion of unbalanced development. This haste in trying to declare the Tiger Reserve in Dibang Valley, is it because some few officials want their ACR to be placed in good record and claim it was declared under so and so tenure? The timing of the recent statements in the electronic media ("Tiger Poacher red handedly caught with Tiger Skin, body parts and weapons, arrested accused in Dibang Wildlife Sanctuary, Anini" MPL News Live, Itanagar, Feb 27 2023/IST 9:24 AM using the word "with support of the local poacher" and the Pasighat News Post using the word "the tiger was actually poached from Malinye area" and media statement by PCCF, Itanagar (1 March 2023 Arunachal Today) using the word "local poacher" respectively was a subtle attempt to directly or indirectly malign entire Idu Mishmi as 'killers' of tigers and discredit its cultural way of wildlife conservation. It may be noted that neither the police nor any investigating agency has so far produced any conclusive evidence beyond a reasonable doubt to state that the indigenous inhabitants of Dibang Valley were specifically involved in any manner for such an alleged offence whatsoever. Several FIRS (dated 2 March 2023), a complaint letter to DFO (2nd March 2023) in Anini and FIRS in Roing (dated 7th March 2023 17th March 2023) have been lodged by indigenous inhabitants of Dibang Valley and Lower Dibang Valley district respectively against alleged offenders. It is also learnt that FIR lodged vide dated 7th and 17th March 2023 the person named Mr Taga Mapikam from Chaglagam, Anjaw who is allegedly absconding and whose vehicle bearing registration AS-23V 2160 was allegedly used by one, Mr Jakir Hussain, an accused arrested by Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB), Sub-regional Office Guwahati and Forest Department of Arunachal Pradesh; and Mr Sankhrolum Bellai of Mithumna, Anjaw and Kaling Lego of Pasighat are not indigenous inhabitants of Dibang Valley district.

It is relevant to understand that the term 'local poacher' is a case of clever drafting to confuse the entire public to malign the people of a particular district and community. However, it could also mean any APST, not necessarily indigenous inhabitants of Dibang Valley and Lower Dibang Valley. Therefore, concerned local media of Arunachal Pradesh and desperate PCCF officials of the state and WCCB should have carefully applied their mind to distinguish the 'local poacher' rather than resorting to 'naming and shaming tactics' to malign entire people of a particular district, whatsoever.

We request the concerned authorities to conduct a thorough and impartial investigation into the matter and take appropriate action to address the concerns raised by the local communities. We also urge the media to present a fair and unbiased view of the situation and not to ignore or downplay the grievances of the indigenous people.

We urge the concerned authorities to take into account the objections raised by the local communities and to ensure that their voices are heard before making any decisions regarding DWLS. We also call



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upon the media to present a fair and balanced view of the situation and to refrain from publishing articles that are one-sided and biased.

We Idu Mishmi Community have deep faith in our cultural ethos that emphasizes the protection of natural resources and its wildlife, but it should not be done at the cost of the lives and livelihoods of the local communities. **We strongly demand the authorities to work towards finding a solution that benefits everyone and respects the rights of the indigenous people, otherwise we will be forced to resort to other democratic means for which National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) and the State Govt. should also be held responsible in future.**

Sincerely,

President
IMCLS, **PRESIDENT**
IDU MISHMI CULTURAL
& LITERARY SOCIETY

General Secretary
IMCLS, **GENERAL SECY**
IDU MISHMI CULTURAL
& LITERARY SOCIETY

