

EDITORIAL

'Financial Crunch' emerges as the root of all problems taken for discussion at any level to-day. Assam is perhaps on the sharpest edge in this regard. The social, cultural and individual status of ninety percent Assamese people have been unbelievably degraded during the past years due to immense financial crisis. At least forty percent of Assam population are still living below the poverty line, who, requiring to be awfully concerned with their food, cloth and shelter affairs, have little chance to think about their status.

The magnitude of fund crunch in Assam has reached such a degree that, even at the Government level the administrators have to spend most of their times in formulating ways and means for payment of the monthly salary of the employees to avert agitation. Developmental programme becomes secondary for them. Most of the private sector enterprises are pulling on hand to mouth. Everywhere the same music. How long the people shall suffer in this way is known to the Almighty alone.

The only development (?) one can see is in the political field of the State. There is no dearth of fund in the political arena. Hectic political activities under influence of money have polluted and fragmented the social, linguistic and religious spheres so -damagingly that, the question of repairing these can-not even be dreamt by the peace-loving people. There seems to be none in the political community to think about the impending economic catastrophe. They are never found to be in a mood to take past experiences for future planning. Power greed, lawlessness and exploitation have overpowered all ethics. The 'food for thought' produced by the intellectuals proved to be of no use -for the policy makers.

Man has mercilessly occupied the animal habitats taking the advantage of their innocence and weakness. Human influx from across the borders has further aggravated the position. Some political stalwarts, with a view to win their political game are abetting encroachment of the resourceful wilderness in the interest of settling their favourite new comers. The slogan of preservation and protection of Assam's flora and fauna thus rendered wild cry. As observed by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru 35 years ago— "in spite of our culture and

civilisation, in many ways man continues to be not only wild but more dangerous than any of the so called wild animals."

Kaziranga Wildlife Society, perhaps the oldest NGO of the kind in this part of the country was established as back as in 1969. It is also in the grip of severe financial crunch. We never received any big fund from any source. It is not denied that the organisation had to remain dormant for more than a decade due to inadvertent reasons. We would like to assure our readers that during the coming days, KWS will leave no stone unturned for achieving its desired goal. We are happy to mention that, in spite of the on going financial constraints, KWS, with assistance from the well wishers and sincere efforts of the members could be able to take up some positive steps during the past three years for its infra-structure development and also some welfare works. The establishment of KWS Head Office at Kohora has been renovated and expanded making it now suitable for accomodating some poor tourists at reasonable cost. One reference library in the name of Padmashree Dr. Robin Banerjee was opened at Kohora in the month of August '98. Study circle within the vicinity of Kaziranga National Park has been orgnised with a view to motivate the forest fringe inhabitants for protection and preseration of the wild resources in the spirit of 'Joint forest management'. Free animal treatment programme was taken up in co-operation with the like minded NOG's and the doctors from the College of Veterinary Science, Guwahati in the KNP are just after the devastating floods of Sept '98. KWS also did the best possible to pursue the vehicle drivers -passing through the NH across the KNP to refrain from killing or otherwise disturbing the wild animals taking shelter on the road due to flood havoc. Some awareness progrmmes were also organised in the Nameri National Park, Pabitora Sanctuary and other places.

It may indeed be a question for our readers as to why 'the Rhino' was in deep slumber for more than a decade till it was revived in August '97 as the souvenir issue on the occasion of the Silver Jubilee celebration of KWS. But we would only request our readers to look forward for better performance of KWS in future and at the same time appeal for their generous contribution, co-operation and participation.

We are grateful to the contributors of articles and the space sponsors who are instrumental in publication of this issue of 'The Rhino".