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Orang 'intrusion' angers AASU

- Students' body to apprise PM of threat to parks by illegal settlers

A STAFF REPORTER

Suspected illegal migrants set up huts at Orang National Park on Thursday.

Guwahati, May 8: The AASU today reacted strongly to the report of an attempt by suspected illegal migrants to encroach upon Orang National Park stating that a team of the students' body would meet Prime Minister Manmohan Singh soon and apprise him of the "dangerous" situation.

Today's edition of The Telegraph highlighted the encroachment bid by thousands of illegal migrants who entered Orang National Park on Thursday from its southern boundary. The invaders thereafter started constructing houses, forcing the forest guards and the army to resort to blank firing. The migrants were later pushed back.

The students' body also came down on chief minister Tarun Gogoi, alleging that it was under his patronage that the illegal migrants were settling in various parts of Assam.

"Illegal migrants have already encroached upon large patches of Kaziranga National Park and the state government has done nothing to evict these illegal settlers," AASU president Sankar Prasad Ray said.

Stung by the development, the Assam forest department has beefed up security along the border of not only Orang but also at Kaziranga. Both the national parks are located on the bank of the Brahmaputra and the numerous chaporis (sandbars) along the river have illegal settlers, mostly infiltrators from Bangladesh.

The AASU had launched a series of agitation demanding eviction of illegal settlers from near Kaziranga about a decade back.

The students' body had also formed a human chain on National Highway 37 near Kaziranga to highlight the seriousness of the issue.

The AASU president said that as a student body, it could not take the law in its hands and could only apprise the government about the serious situation arising because of illegal influx from Bangladesh.

Ray said that despite repeated requests to the state government to stop encroachment of Kaziranga land by illegal migrants, Dispur had done nothing.

"We have information that more areas near Kaziranga are being encroached upon by illegal migrants," he said.

The AASU leader said the Congress had been using these illegal migrants as vote banks and as such no steps were taken to evict them. "It is because of these illegal settlers that poaching of rhinos in Kaziranga and Orang is increasing every day.

These settlers are involved in rhino poaching and unless they are evicted from the national park areas, such killings will continue," he said. Ray said a team of AASU leaders would visit Delhi soon and meet the Prime Minister to apprise him of the situation.