

# Forest minister awards Pobitora team for wildlife protection

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Guwahati: A team of mahouts and casual workers from Assam's Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary was honoured on Tuesday for their outstanding contributions to wildlife protection and reducing man-animal conflicts. The awards and certificates were presented by state forest minister Chandra Mohan Patowary during the closing ceremony of the 71st Wildlife Week held in the city.

The recognised team members, including Deepak Deka, Bhumidhar Deka, Ganesh Boro, Biju Bordoloi, Kamal Boro, Anup Saikia, and Nakul Boro, were acknowledged under the 'protection category.' Their efforts in safely redirecting stray rhinos, wild buffalos, and other animals from human settlements have significantly reduced conflict incidents in the 2024-25 period.

Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary, known for its dense population of one-horned rhinos, often experiences wildlife-human conflicts.

"In 2024 alone, two people lost their lives and several others were injured due to rhino and buffalo attacks outside the protected zone. However, thanks to timely interventions and continuous field patrols by the mahouts, supported by the Pobitora Range Office, such incidents have sharply declined this year," said Pranjal Baruah, the range officer of Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary.

Baruah also highlighted that the team, led by Deepak Deka, has been instrumental in monitoring the sanctuary's captive elephants, enhancing their role in protection and anti-depredation efforts. Their leadership has also contributed to generating substantial revenue through safe elephant safaris for tourists worldwide.

