

Assam's Molai Forest: When a man created a 550 hectare forest single-handedly

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Majuli Island is always a good reason to visit Assam. The place never fails and here is one more reason why you should always consider a trip to Assam. Molai Forest, named after its visionary creator, Jadav "Molai" Payeng, stands as a verdant sanctuary in Assam's Majuli district, inspiring all with its lush canopy and vibrant biodiversity.

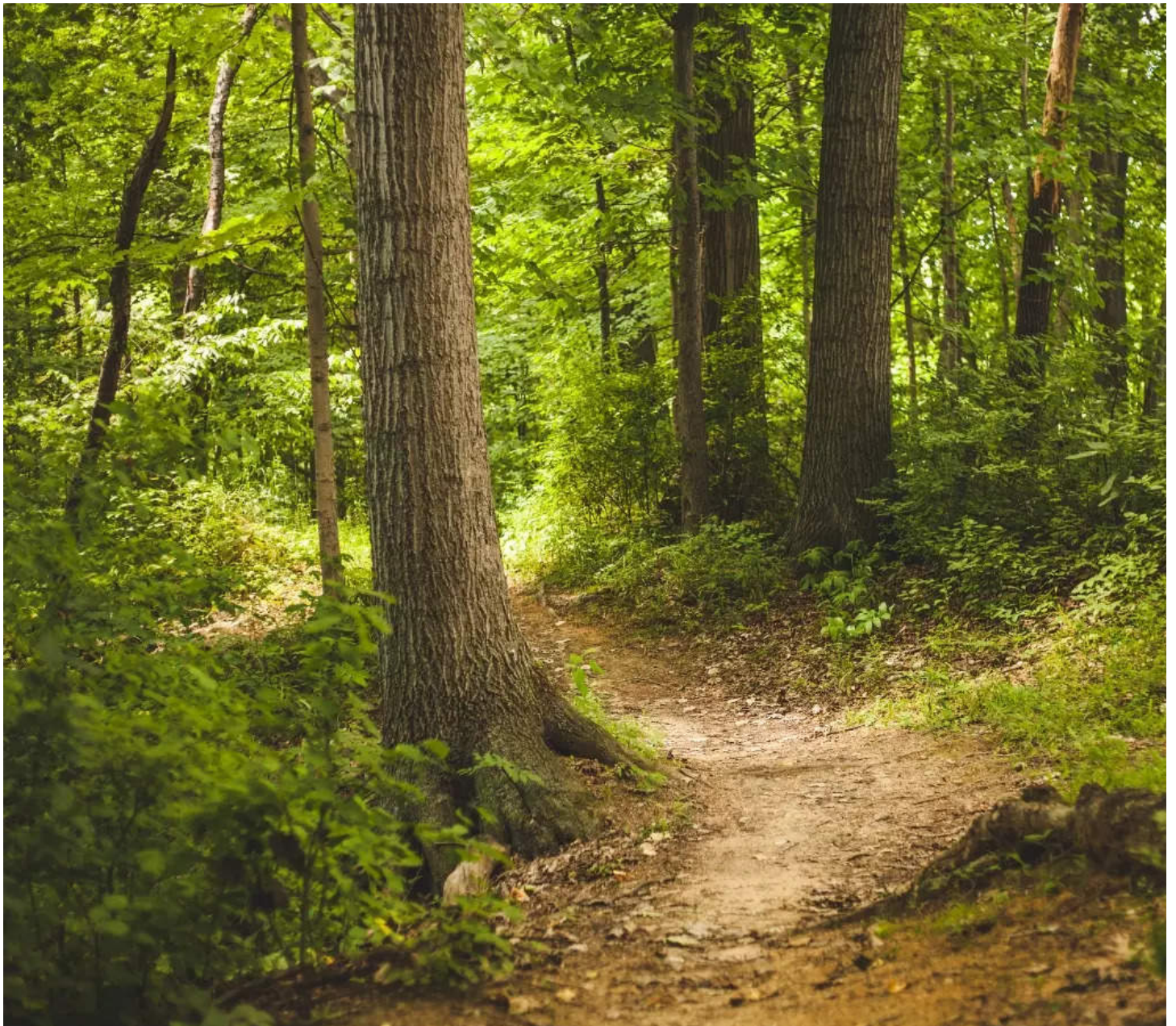
Jadav Payeng, a member of Assam's indigenous Mising tribe, embarked on his remarkable journey over three decades ago. In 1980, the social forestry division initiated a tree plantation project to combat soil erosion on a 200-hectare stretch of land at Aruna Chapori. Payeng initially joined the project as one of the labourers. Sadly, the project was abandoned prematurely, but not for Payeng. He chose to continue work, all by himself.



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Shri Pranab Mukherjee, the former president of India, presented the Padma Shri Award to Jadav Payeng on April 08, 2015.



Payeng dedicated himself to the arduous task of planting seeds and saplings across 550 hectares of land. Despite the challenges of isolation, physical labour, and the fact that he was trying to do all these on a sandbar, his vision of creating a forest never wavered. Speaking of efforts, to solve the problem of less-than-fertile soil, Payeng even transported several red ants to this sandbar. Over a period of time, the red ants transformed the soil quality and helped tremendously in improving the condition of the sandbar.

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Through his efforts, what was once a desolate landscape blossomed into a dense forest teeming with life. Today, Molai Forest spans an impressive 550 hectares, making it not only the world's first man-made forest on a sandbar but possibly the largest forest within a river. This unique forest's diverse ecosystem harbours an array of wildlife, including Bengal tigers, Indian rhinoceroses, Asian elephants, deer, vultures, and countless bird species. Molai Forest provides a vital sanctuary for endangered species, serving as both a refuge and a breeding ground.



It was reported that in recent years, large herds of wild elephants regularly visit the forest. There have been the births of at least 10 calves in the forest. It was also reported that at least 5 royal Bengal tigers inhabit the forest. And over a decade ago it was reported that one of the tigers even gave birth to two cubs.

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Payeng and his Molai Forest reminds us that even in the face of seemingly insurmountable challenges, the power to effect change lies within each and every one of us. For Molai Forest is not just a testament to one man's resilience, but a living testament to the boundless potential of the human spirit.