



PRESERVING RHINO Part Of Lonely Battle

Chanda Rana, chairperson of Save the Environment Foundation (SEF), is a lonely voice against a plant which is threatening the rhino habitat

By A CORRESPONDENT

At a time when, on the World Rhino Day, various organizations have been raising voices to save the rhinos from poaching, Chanda Rana, chairperson of the Save the Environment Foundation (SEF), who has been launching a crusade against a wild plant Mikania Micrantha, which is invading the habitat of Rhinos in Chitwan National Park, is more concerned about the habitat loss.

Due to the infestation of plant Mikania Micrantha, endangered wild animals like rhinos and other important plants are under threat. "If we cannot clean and make efforts to wipe out the plant, it will destroy the whole ecosystem as well as the livelihood of the nearby villages."

Raising the issues since 2008, Rana also released a video documentary in 2009 and highlighted the state of the wild plant that infested a large swathe of grassland. Her documentary drew the concerned national and international personalities over the issue. "I am very concerned about the way the plant is gradually threatening the habitat of the one horn rhinos, other wild plants and threes of the Chitwan National Park," said Rana.

Like last year, Rana also joined the save the rhino campaign with her one slogan to save the Rhino and other wild

animals and important vegetation from the invasion of the wild plant. Unlike other organizations, she organized the program on her own initiative for protecting the bio-diversity of Chitwan National Park.

With the growth of Mikania Micrantha, a wild plant, in and around Chitwan National Park, the habitat of one horned rhinos are now under serious threat. As the plant is gradually covering the areas, rhinos are migrating to new areas in search of habitat.

In an effort to contribute to the fight against rhino poaching, the 3rd World Rhino Day is being celebrated in Nepal and other countries with the theme "Five Rhino Species Forever".

Although the world rhino day has been celebrated to generate the level of awareness regarding rhino poaching, organizers still ignore the threat coming from the wild plants such as Mikania Micrantha. However, president of Save the Environment Chanda Rana is not letting up on her battle to raise the awareness against the plant.

Chitwan is one of the major habitat areas of one horned rhinos. According to a recent survey, there are over 534 rhinos in Chitwan. However, the habitat area is gradually shrinking due to invasion of the wild plant Mikania. Due

to the plant, the grasslands of Chitwan are gradually drying. This forced wild animals to move to other areas. Since last many years, Save the Environment Foundation has been launching various programs against this deadly plant.

Although the government has deployed Nepal Army to protect rhinos from poachers, nobody is concerned about the habitat being lost due to the invasion of the wild plants.

Nepal Army deployed at the park held the view that all the concerned stakeholders need to work together to weed out the plant from the national park so that the habitat of world's endanger rhinos can be protected.

Ram Chandra K.C of Nanda Box Battalion of Chitwan held the view that Nepal Army is able to prevent the poaching due to its better coordination with the local community and local level organization working in the conservation sector. Concerned authorities need to remember the rhinos not only once in a year but in the remaining 364 days as well.

With Chanda Rana's lonely battle against the plant, people at different levels are gradually realizing the severity of infestation. However, the speed is too slow and effort is too little. Rana's message for this year's third world rhino day is clear: take prompt action to contain the plant. ■

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