**Two Rehabilitated Rhino Calves Get Ready to Go Back To the Wild**

Manas National Park, Assam, 25 December 2019: In yet another rhino rehabilitation story, two hand raised rhino calves rescued by Wildlife Trust of India (WTI), during the Kaziranga floods of August, 2017 are being soft released in Manas National Park.

WTI in established procedure of rescue, rehabilitation and release have released these 2.5-year-old calves in a boma (an enclosed space used for acclimatizing hand reared rhinos), at a release site in the Kahitema Range. Located on the Western Bank of Brahmaputra, this site was selected after careful assessment done in collaboration with the Assam Forest Department.

Both rhino calves, a male and a female were rescued from the Kaziranga floods in August 2017. Since then, they were hand-raised by a team of veterinarians and animal keepers at the Centre for Wildlife Rehabilitation and Conservation (CWRC) at Kaziranga and then moved to a boma in Manas National Park with two other rhinos early this year.

“The release of the four (4) rehabilitated rhinos in Manas landscape including two (2) in Sidhajhar forest camp area especially under Bansbari Forest Range has its own significance. With this reintroduction of the two rhinos in this area, a new episode of revival of Manas begins” specified P Sivakumar (IFS), Director, Manas National Park.

Since 2006, and with these releases, WTI would have sent a total of 17 rhinos back to the wild, in an effort to repopulate the wild rhino population of Manas National Park. These releases also augment the repopulation efforts of Assam Government as envisioned by the Indian Rhino Vision 2020.

“Current efforts by WTI are towards range extension of the Indian rhino, especially in the Western Bank of the Brahmaputra, since previous releases have been done in the Eastern Bank, site assessment required a new boma at Kahitema for the rehabilitated rhinos to be able to establish home ranges with ease” specified Dr Bhaskar Choudhury the Head Veterinarian and Project Head, Greater Manas Recovery Project.

“The translocation of rhinos from Bansbari to Shidhajhar will help the park authority to extend the area with one of the important species, as rhino was never translocated to these areas in the park. The enforcement of that area would definitely be enhanced. The park authority will construct some anti-poaching camps in that area, so that rhinos can be saved and in future, more rhinos can be brought to this part of the landscape” added the Park Director.

IFAW – WTI has been working with the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) and the Assam Forest Department since 2003, to ‘Bring Back Manas’ and assisted colonization of rhinos is a part of this initiative.  After acclimatization of these calves in the Kahitema boma in Western Bank of Brahmaputra, they will be released into the wild, in what’s termed as soft release within the next two months.

