

IV. (3.30 - 5.00 PM)**J - STATUS AND DISTRIBUTION OF TRANSLOCATED RHINOS****Mr. Kanchan Thapa**

Mr. Kanchan Thapa reported that altogether 87 rhinos have been translocated successfully from Chitwan National Park since 1986: 84 have been moved to Bardia National Park and four rhinos were moved to Shuklaphata Wildlife Reserve. The paper presented the preliminary results of the monitoring program for these translocated rhinos. Data were collected from direct observations, signs, and interviews with reserve staff and local communities. Monitoring results showed that the translocated rhino population has increased in Suklaphanta Wildlife Reserve to six. Unfortunately, there was a sharp decline in population of rhinos in Bardia National Park.

There are two distinct sub-populations of translocated rhinos in Bardia National Park: one in Babai River Floodplain where 70 rhinos were released, and the other in Karnali River floodplain where 13 rhino were released. There has been sharp decline in the Babai rhino population as result of conflict situation and lack of protection. The Karnali floodplain rhino population has increased to 35 since 1986. Further translocation is needed in Suklaphanta Wildlife Reserve to safeguard the current population of rhinos. There is strong need for a transboundary effort to conserve rhinos and to ensure their protection in western part of Terai Arc Landscape.

**K CHANGING RHINO HABITATS
IN ASSAM AND GEO SPATIAL ANALYSIS****Mr. Pranjit Sarma and
Dr. Bibhab Talukdar**

Mr. Pranjit Sarma highlighted the current vegetation pattern of rhino bearing areas of Assam. The presentation covered five rhino sites in Assam: Kaziranga National Park, Orang National Park, Manas National Park, Pabitora Wildlife Sanctuary and Laokhowa Wildlife Sanctuary. Mr. Sarma showed satellite imageries of 1980s, 1990s and 2000s for all the five rhino sites in Assam and pointed out the landmass loss in case of Kaziranga due to shift of river Brahmaputra towards the south. He highlighted the human pressure on Pabitora Wildlife Sanctuary and changes in suitable rhino habitat in the sanctuary that has led to rhino straying out of the sanctuary, especially in winter (the dry season). He further mentioned that the rapid increase in human population around Pabitora Sanctuary (from about 9,571 in 1971 to about 23724 in 2001) has further curtailed the scope of expansion of the Pabitora Wildlife Sanctuary. This increase in the human population around Pabitora is responsible for increased cattle populations, which are sent into the prime rhino habitat areas within the sanctuary for grazing. Mr. Sarma showed an area adjacent to Pabitora, Borbeela (with an area of 24.7 km²) that is suitable habitat for rhino. This new area may eventually be included in Pabitora Wildlife Sanctuary to ensure long term conservation of rhino.

L LOCAL COMMUNITIES IN RHINO CONSERVATION**Mr. Basu Dhungana and
Mr. Lava Bista**

Mr. Basu Dhungana and Mr. Krishna Prashad Bhurtel discussed the role of local communities in rhino conservation in Nepal's Chitwan National Park, mentioning the role of the Buffer Zone Management Committee formed in Chitwan National Park. This includes allocation of resources for conservation-related activities. Mr. Dhungana and Burtel highlighted the initiation of electric fencing, observation tower, community library, education and awareness. The Management Committee also initiated livelihood enhancement activities for the fringe communities, including mushroom cultivation, handicraft, weaving, fisheries, etc. The presentation addressed various problems the Chitwan National Park faces, including wildlife poaching, invasive species (e.g., Eupatorium and Michania), poisoning of water bodies and human encroachment.