

**Rhino Protection Force for one-horned rhinoceros in Kaziranga**

**Kaziranga, January 30:** In a move to strengthen the conservation efforts of the great one-horned rhinoceros in Kaziranga, Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi said that a Rhino Protection Force with more than 12 hundred strong personnel to be raised for the protection of the rhinos.

Attending a review meeting on the anti-poaching measures and other related issues at Kohora Range of the Kaziranga National Park yesterday (January 29<sup>th</sup>, 2015), Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi said that his government has already sent a proposal to the Union Minister of Environment, Forests and Climate Change and the force will take the shape very soon. Lauding the untiring efforts of the field staff in protection of Kaziranga, the Chief Minister said that modern technology will be vigorously used to curb the menace of poaching. He also suggested a slew of measures to be taken up by the Forest Department, the Park authorities and the concerned District Administration for the protection of the World Heritage Site.

For up scaling anti-poaching infrastructure, high end equipment such as night vision devices, thermal scanners, surveillance cameras, GPS etc. to be deployed at the earliest. The Chief Minister assured that fund would not be a constraint for protection of the rhino.

The Chief Minister also directed the District Administration to sanitize the bordering areas adjoining the Kaziranga National Park by deploying young and energetic commando force. He announced that Chief Minister's Gallantry Award would be instituted for the security guards for showing exemplary services on anti poaching. He also asked the park authorities to take the help of the National Investigating Agency to deal with the rhino poachers and bust its trade routes across inter-state and international borders. Direction has also been given to erect watch posts in vulnerable areas and put to use modern surveillance equipment including high surveillance camera to check intrusion of poachers and monitoring the Park boundary in sensitive areas such Agoratoli and Burapahar.

Chief Minister Gogoi further said that he is already in touch with several public sector undertakings for getting corporate social responsibilities funding for

modernization of anti-poaching infrastructure in the Park. He directed the Director, Kaziranga National Park to prepare suitable project proposals for the same.

Expressing his assertion in dealing with poachers, he stressed that the Government would provide modern arms and fighting gears to the front line forest guards in Kaziranga, by amending the existing provisions of law. He also assured to take up the matter of UAV flying in Kaziranga National Park with the Ministry of Defence and the DG, Civil Aviation.

The Chief Minister also stressed that development and conservation should go in tandem. He said that the fringe villages of Kaziranga could not be left behind while rest of the State marches on the road of progress. He acknowledged the cooperation rendered by the fringe populations in conservation efforts, and appealed to them not to shelter poachers. He announced that he would soon constitute a Development Authority for the Kaziranga Landscape under his Chairmanship to address comprehensively the issues of the conservation and development. He said that the local people should be provided green development opportunities and livelihood options in sync with wildlife conservation. The Chief Minister also directed the park authority to streamline rehabilitation measures for those park staff got injured while on duty. Chief Minister announced that Chief Minister's Awards for Wildlife Conservation would be instituted from this year for exemplary services rendered in wildlife conservation and anti poaching activities.

He also lauded the efforts of the staff in tiger conservation. He announced that a state of the art Interpretation Centre and Wildlife Museum with modern 3D shows, tea tourism and tea museum to be taken up in Kaziranga. He said that this would keep the flow of tourists round the year. He asked the Park authorities to explore possibilities of promoting off season tourism through eco-tourism and traditional activities such as weaving handicraft etc.

Member of Lok Sabha from Koliabor, Gaurav Gogoi while sharing his insights said that an Integrated Tourism Plan will be drawn for Kaziranga and the adjoining areas involving the Forest, Tourism, Cultural Affairs Departments and the District Administration. He also said that a Master Plan for erosion control of Kaziranga will be drawn up using expertise from the Water Resources Department. The erosion control master plan would be executed in phases starting from most

vulnerable areas such as Agoratoli and Arimora. He also said that steps will be taken for the development of fringe villages with green growth mantra.

The review meeting was attended among others by Gaurav Gogoi, MP, Kaliabor, M.K.Yadava , Director, Kaziranga National Park, Nitin Khade, Deputy Commissioner, Golaghat, P.P Singh, S.uperintendent of Police, Golaghat along with other senior officials.

**SD/January 30, 2015.**