



**Press Brief**

**35<sup>th</sup> Session of UNESCO World Heritage Committee, Paris, France ,June 19-29,2011 takes Manas Wildlife Sactuary off the List of World Heritage Sites in Danger**

In a historic decision the UNESCO World Heritage Committee (WHC), in its 35<sup>th</sup> Session being held in Paris from 19-29<sup>th</sup> June 2011, has decided to remove the Manas Wildlife National Park, Assam from the “List of World Heritage Sites in Danger”. In all the World Heritage Committee considered sixteen ‘world heritage sites in danger list’ from across various continents for their possible exclusion from the danger list and Manas is the only taken out of the danger list. The UNESCO- IUCN Reactive Monitoring Mission had visited Manas in January 2011 and reported significant progress in restoring and maintaining the Outstanding Universal Values (OUVs) of the Manas World Heritage Site. The WHC members led by the Chairperson and Australian and Bahrain representatives profusely complimented the Government of India, Government of Assam and various Civil Society Organizations for the initiatives taken for enhancing the effectiveness of management of Manas. WHC members also expressed keenness to know how India did it differently and wanted details of the approaches undertaken by India to get the “danger listing” tag removed, which could serve as a model for other countries having world heritage sites on the danger list, to emulate.

The Manas Wildlife Sanctuary was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1985. Due to various political and social problems that lead to deforestation, poaching and infrastructure damages of the Sanctuary,the site was put on the “List of World Heritage Sites in Danger” by UNESCO WHC in 1992. With the signing of the peace accord with the Bodoland Territorial Council, normalcy started returning and the local communities got purposefully and proactively engaged in conservation and infrastructure restoration activities.

A UNESCO-IUCN Reactive Monitoring Mission was impressed to see the range of species and habitat management and restoration activities including the re-introduction of rhinos at the site. Shri Jairam Ramesh, Minister of Environment and Forests (Independent Charge), who had been personally monitoring the progress in this regard, in a communication to the Chief Minister of Assam in January 2011 had emphasized the need for stepping up of conservation initiatives in Manas to get rid of the “danger listing” tag. While expressing his deep appreciation to UNESCO WHC on this development,the Minister said that the local communities and the leadership provided by the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC),Government of Assam and the Government of India, Ministry of Environment and Forests had played a decisive role in restoring the heritage values of the site.

Shri Vinay Sheel Oberoi,Ambassador and Permanent Representative of India to UNESCO thanked the UNESCO,WHC Members and the IUCN for their very objective assessment of the significant improvement in protection and conservation of Manas World Heritage Site.



**Ministry of Environment and Forests**  
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

Shri Jagdish Kishwan, Additional Director General (Wildlife), MoEF ensured that follow-up actions on the recommendations of the UNESCO-IUCN mission especially those pertaining to preparation of the “Recovery Plan for Swamp Deer” and development of an “Integrated Ecosystem-based Monitoring Framework” were met within the deadline and which led to the positive recommendations by the mission.

The unmatched synergy between government and non-government organizations backed up by technical support from scientific institutions like Wildlife Institute of India, and active engagement of local communities and frontline staff led to this singular, positive outcome. With Manas taken off the danger list tag, India's prestige in the world conservation history has substantially enhanced. It was a scene worth being spectacted when WHC announced the decision and there was tumultuous applause and hearty congratulations by the World Heritage Convention to India.