

PALANGKA RAYA, CENTRAL KALIMANTAN, 3/6/2021

Ahead Of World Environment Day, Seven Rehabilitated Orangutans Are To Return To Their New Home In Bukit Baka Bukit Raya National Park

The Central Kalimantan Natural Resources Conservation Agency (BKSDA) together with the Bukit Baka Bukit Raya National Park (TNBBBR) Office in collaboration with the Borneo Orangutan Survival (BOS) Foundation and other parties release rehabilitated orangutans in natural forests in Bukit Baka Bukit Raya National Park area in an effort to protect and conserve Bornean orangutans (*Pongo pygmaeus*).

Seven orangutans from the Nyaru Menteng Orangutan Rehabilitation Centre are scheduled for release today into TNBBBR in Katingan Regency, Central Kalimantan Province. The operation was started with a symbolic opening ceremony at the Central Kalimantan KSDA Office, overseen by the Director of Biodiversity Conservation of the Directorate General of KSDAE on June 3, 2021.

Drh. INDRA EXPLOITASIA, M.Si, the Director of Biodiversity Conservation, in her remarks, expressed her appreciation for all parties involved in the release of these orangutans, even though the operation takes place in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, requiring all parties to carry out their various conservation endeavours under strict health protocols.

The government is committed to preserving Indonesia's biodiversity through systematic conservation efforts and the sustainable use of natural resources, ensuring that the health of the natural ecosystems and the vast species diversity they contain are preserved. One of the efforts to preserve biodiversity is through the reintroduction of rehabilitated wildlife, especially orangutans, into their natural habitat. Reintroduction is a long process that starts from rescuing animals and is followed by rehabilitation, release, and monitoring to ensure that these rescued animals can live and breed in their habitats.

The orangutan is one of the great ape species whose existence is vital in maintaining the balance and health of their ecosystem. A well-breeding population of orangutans is an indicator of good forest health and this is not only beneficial for the species itself, but also for other animals with whom they share an ecosystem. The Bornean orangutan is a species protected by Law no. 5/1990 and it holds the status of Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List. As a protected animal with such precarious status, orangutan conservation efforts have become a concern not only at the national level but also internationally. Support and collaboration from all parties, both central and local governments, universities, NGOs, the private sector, the community, and the media, including involvement of younger generation, is very important to the sustained preservation of this species and its habitat long into the future.

Today's orangutan release event is part of "Living in Harmony with Nature: Preserving State-Owned Wildlife", a series of activities launched by the Minister of Environment and Forestry in 2021. The series also commemorates World Environment Day which falls on June 5 and welcomes the National Nature Conservation Day on August 10.

HANDI NASOKA, S.HUT., Acting head of the Central Kalimantan Natural Resources Conservation Agency (BKSDA) said that the seven orangutans to be released consist of four males (Barlian 10 y.o., Darryl 12, Randy 14, and Unggang 10), and three females (Amber 16, Reren 8, and Suayap 22). Of these seven individuals, five individuals were handed over from residents, one orangutan was repatriated from Thailand (Suayap), and one individual was rescued during a joint operation between the Central Kalimantan BKSDA wildlife rescue team and the BOS Foundation. All of these orangutans have gone through a rehabilitation period between 7 and 16.5 years and have been declared healthy. Their SARS-

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CoV-2 PCR swab results are negative so we can declare them ready to be released into their natural habitat.

AGUNG NUGROHO, S.Si, M.A., Head of the Bukit Baka Bukit Raya National Park Office (TNBBBR) said that the orangutans that will be released will need to undertake a long journey before finally reaching their new home within the Bemban Watershed of TNBBBR, specifically in National Park Management Section Region II Kasongan. The journey to the release points will take approximately 15-20 hours (including rest), by land and river. After the release, intensive monitoring will be carried out for two months by the monitoring team, to ensure that the orangutans successfully adjust to life in their new habitat.

To date, the TNBBBR Office, together with the Central Kalimantan BKSDA and in collaboration with the BOS Foundation and other parties, have reintroduced 174 orangutans since 2016 including those that will be released today. All releases that have been carried out since 2016 throughout TNBBBR in both the provinces of Central Kalimantan and West Kalimantan with assorted partners totals 234 released individuals, with 5 (five) new-born babies in the wild.

DR. IR. JAMARTIN SIHITE, BOS Foundation CEO said that, "In carrying out the orangutan rehabilitation process, we take care of all staff and orangutans at the rehabilitation center to help them avoid the risk of COVID-19 transmission by implementing strict health protocols. All personnel and orangutans released from the rehabilitation center have undergone a rigorous health test and were negative for the SARS-CoV-2 virus."

The success of this release could not have been achieved without the support and participation of various parties. The BOS Foundation together with the Central Kalimantan BKSDA and the Bukit Baka Bukit Raya National Park would like to thank the Central Kalimantan Provincial Government, the Katingan Regency Regional Government, and the community for their support and cooperation.

The BOS Foundation would like to extend its highest appreciation for the support and contributions by our global partner organisations: BOS Australia, BOS UK, BOS Germany, BOS Swiss, and Save the Orangutan; other supporting organisations such as Orangutan Outreach, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Orangutan SAFE; supporters from the prominent business entities such as PT. BCA and PT. SSMS; and various other conservation organisations, alongside individual donors from around the world, who support our work and the conservation of nature in Indonesia.

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