

Greater One-Horned Rhino

Why in News

The claims by different political parties over significant reduction in poaching of Greater One-Horned Rhino has become an issue in Assam Assembly Elections.

According to the Assam Forest Department, poaching has reduced by 86% in the last three years.

Key Points

- About:
 - The Greater One-Horned Rhino is one among the five different species of Rhino. The other four are:
 - Black Rhino: Smaller of the two African species.
 - White Rhino: Recently, researchers have created an embryo of the northern white rhino by using In vitro Fertilization (IVF) process.
 - <u>lavan Rhino</u>: Critically endangered in IUCN Red List.
 - Sumatran Rhino: Recently gone extinct in Malaysia.
 - There are three species of rhino in Asia—Greater one-horned (Rhinoceros unicornis),
 Javan and Sumatran.
 - · Only the Great One-Horned Rhino is found in India.
 - Also known as Indian rhino, it is the largest of the rhino species.
 - It is identified by a single black horn and a grey-brown hide with skin folds.
 - They **primarily graze**, with a diet consisting almost entirely of grasses as well as leaves, branches of shrubs and trees, fruit, and aquatic plants.

Habitat:

- The species is restricted to small habitats in Indo-Nepal terai and northern West Bengal and
- In India, rhinos are mainly found in Assam, West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh.
- Assam has an estimated 2,640 rhinos in four protected areas, i.e. <u>Pabitora Wildlife</u> <u>Reserve</u>, Rajiv Gandhi Orang National Park, Kaziranga National Park, and <u>Manas National</u> <u>Park</u>.
 - About 2,400 of them are in the <u>Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve</u> (KNPTR)
- Protection Status:
 - IUCN Red List: Vulnerable.
 - Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES): Appendix I (Threatened with extinction and CITES prohibits international trade in specimens of these species except when the purpose of the import is not commercial, for instance for scientific research).
 - Wildlife Protection Act. 1972: Schedule I.

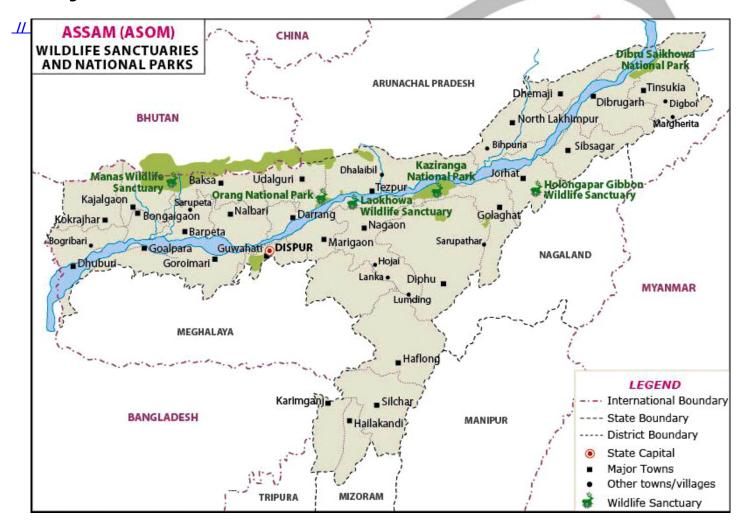
Threats:

- Poaching for the horns
- Habitat loss
- Population density
- Decreasing Genetic diversity

Conservation Efforts by India:

- The <u>five rhino range nations</u> (India, Bhutan, Nepal, Indonesia and Malaysia) have signed a declaration 'The New Delhi Declaration on Asian Rhinos 2019' for the conservation and protection of the species.
- Recently, the Ministry of Environment Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) has begun a project to create **DNA profiles of all rhinos** in the country.
- **National Rhino Conservation Strategy:** It was launched in 2019 to conserve the greater one-horned rhinoceros.
- Indian Rhino Vision 2020: Launched in 2005, it is an ambitious effort to attain a wild population of at least 3,000 greater one-horned rhinos spread over seven protected areas in the Indian state of Assam by the year 2020.

Kaziranga National Park



Location:

• It is located in the State of Assam and covers 42,996 Hectare (ha). It is the single largest undisturbed and representative area in the Brahmaputra Valley floodplain.

Legal Status:

- It was declared as a National Park in 1974.
- It has been declared a <u>tiger reserve</u> since 2007. It has a total tiger reserve area of 1,030 sq km with a core area of 430 sq. km.

International Status:

- It was declared a **UNESCO World Heritage Site** in 1985.
- It is recognized as an Important Bird Area by BirdLife International.

Important Species Found:

- Much of the focus of conservation efforts in Kaziranga are focused on the 'big four' species— Rhino, Elephant, Royal Bengal tiger and Asiatic water buffalo.
- As per the figures of <u>tiger census</u> conducted in 2018, Kaziranga had an estimated 104 tigers, the fourth highest population in India after <u>Jim Corbett National Park</u> (231) in Uttarakhand, Nagarhole National Park (127) and <u>Bandipur National Park</u> (126) in Karnataka.
- Kaziranga is also home to 9 of the 14 species of primates found in the Indian subcontinent.

The Vision

Other National Parks of Assam:

- Dibru-Saikhowa National Park,
- Manas National Park,
- Nameri National Park,
- · Rajiv Gandhi Orang National Park,
- Dehing Patkai National Park



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