

**05 MARCH 2019**

## New Delhi Declaration

### Why in News:

India will collaborate with Bhutan, Nepal, Indonesia and Malaysia to increase the population of three species of Asian rhinos, including the Greater one-horned rhinoceros found in the Indian sub-continent. The five rhino range nations signed a declaration 'The New Delhi Declaration on Asian Rhinos 2019' for the conservation and protection of the species at the recently held Second Asian Rhino Range Countries meeting here.

### Brief about New Delhi Declaration

- It is organised by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change of Government of India in collaboration with the IUCN Asian Rhino Specialist Group, WWF- India and Aaranyak, the meeting was attended by representatives of governments of the Asian rhino range countries, namely India, Nepal, Bhutan, Indonesia and Malaysia; non-government organisations like International Rhino Foundation (USA), Global Wildlife Conservation (USA), WWF-US, Zoological Society of London – Nepal Office, WWF-India, WWF-Indonesia, WWF-Nepal, Wildlife Conservation Nepal, National Trust for Nature Conservation (Nepal), Yayasan Badak (Indonesia), Freeland Foundation (Thailand) and Aaranyak (Assam, India).
- The objective is to increase the population of three Asian rhino species (Greater one-horned rhinoceros, Javan rhino, and Sumatran rhino), the New Delhi Declaration on Asian Rhinos 2019 was signed by representatives of the governments of India, Bhutan, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Nepal.
- As part of the declaration, the rhino range countries also agreed to review the population of the three Asian rhino species every four years to reassess the need for joint actions to secure their future.

### The twelve point strategic actions

- To collaborate to strengthen protection regimes, strategic information gathering, and real time sharing of actionable information on rhino crime and its horn trade to secure the rhino population within and between range countries;
- To initiate research on various habitat parameters including invasive species threatening the suitable habitats of Asian rhinos and take appropriate steps to optimally manage the habitats;
- To explore possibilities of expanding rhino ranges within country or between rhino range countries for optimal population management;
- To strengthen transboundary collaboration among India, Nepal, and Bhutan for the greater one-horned rhino conservation and protection;
- To identify connectivity and corridors across international boundaries and keep them functional, safe and secure for free movement of Asian rhinos and other wildlife;
- To increase the engagement of the local communities as stewards to secure the future of rhinos in range countries;
- To initiate proactive monitoring on potential adverse impacts of climate change on rhino health and their habitats in range countries;
- To undertake studies on Rhino health issues & potential diseases and take necessary steps for management intervention;
- To regularly organize exposure visits for managers and frontline staffs of the rhino range countries and to document the best practices for wider dissemination.
- To collaborate and strengthen wildlife forensics for the purpose of investigation.

### Note



- To accelerate natural and conservation breeding of critically endangered Sumatran rhino including best use of all available individuals and technologies.
- To call to the attention of all countries that possible opening of international trade of rhino horn and other derivatives will have a severe detrimental impact on rhino populations in Asian rhino range countries;

## Crop burning raises risk of respiratory illness threefold, says IFPRI study

### Why in News:

The burning of agricultural residue — a contributor to north India’s winter pollution — increases the risk of respiratory illnesses threefold for those who experience it. It may also be responsible for an annual \$30 billion (approximately Rs. 2 trillion) loss in terms of days of work lost in States affected by crop burning, according to a study by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI).

### Brief about the Findings

- The findings were based on a study of the health records of 250,000 people in Haryana (which sees a spike in crop burning episodes in winter), and Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, which don’t see similar burning episodes.
- Living in an area where crop burning is practised was a leading risk factor for respiratory disease in northern India. Whereas the total burden of diseases from air pollution declined between 1990 and 2016 due to efforts to reduce the burning of solid fuel for household use, outdoor air pollution increased by 16.6%.
- In Haryana, 5.4% of surveyed individuals reported suffering from ARI (Acute Respiratory Infection) whereas the reported ARI symptoms in southern States was only 0.1%.
- High-intensity fire exposure was virtually absent in south India, 17.5% of individuals in Haryana lived in a district where 100 or more fires per day were observed by the satellite. Living in a district that saw 100 fires a day was the “leading risk factor” for ARI.
- Study shows that it is not only the residents of Delhi, but also women, children and men of rural Haryana who are the first victims of crop residue burning. Much of the public discussion on the ill-effects of crop residue burning ignores this immediately affected vulnerable population



### Note

### What is Stubble Burning?

- Stubble burning is, quite simply, the act of removing paddy crop residue from the field to sow wheat. It’s usually required in areas that use the ‘combine harvesting’ method which leaves crop residue behind.

### What is combine harvesting?

- Combines are machines that harvest, thresh i.e separate the grain, and also clean the separated grain, all at once. The problem, however, is that the machine doesn’t cut close enough to the ground, leaving stubble behind that the farmer has no use for. There is pressure on the farmer to sow the next crop in time for it to achieve a full yield. The quickest and cheapest solution, therefore, is to clear



the field by burning the stubble.

### Alternative Solutions and use of Stubble

- The most efficient technology to counter crop burning at the moment, seems to be the Turbo Happy Seeder (THS). The THS is basically a machine mounted on a tractor that not only cuts and uproots the stubble, but can also drill wheat seeds on the soil that has just been cleared up. The straw is simultaneously thrown over the sown seeds to form a mulch cover. The THS can also be fitted with the Super-Straw Management System (S-SMS) that spreads the straw evenly.
- Produce biomass with the residue to generate power. The straw can similarly be used to make pellets that serve as the sub-strata for mushroom cultivation, but the problem is not in finding alternatives to paddy straw, as there are many.

### Why is this only a problem in the Northern States?

- India relies on its northern states of Punjab, Haryana, western Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand for wheat.
- Now, states in the south use combine harvesting too. But the clinching difference is that they don't have the urgency to remove the stubble to make it ready for the next crop.
- A farmer burns paddy crop residue in south east Punjab.
- To sow wheat right after paddy, the field has to be harvested and readied for the next crop. In the Punjab-Haryana-UP belt, the crucial time for the wheat crop to mature is in mid-April, when the temperature is about to cross 35 degree celsius. For the wheat crop to reach full maturity and give maximum yield by then, the farmer has no option but to sow the crop latest by 15 November, so that it grows for a full 140-150 day duration.
- Add to this complication the Punjab Preservation of Subsoil Water Act 2009 – Punjab's water-saving law – which bans sowing of paddy before 15 May and transplanting it before 15 June. This leaves the farmer with very little time to sow and reap paddy, and then ready the field for wheat in just about 20 days.

### Is it only farmers Fault

- Clearly farmers have little choice but to burn the stubble, given the pressure under which they have to sow the next crop.
- The National Green Tribune recommends penalising farmers who burn stubble. Punjab has attempted this, but to no avail. Stubble burning continues, and disgruntled farmers – who are already under debt – refuse to pay fines in the state. Up till the April-May wheat harvesting season this year, farmers in Punjab owed the Punjab Pollution Control Board (PPCB) fines up to Rs 61.32 lakh. Of this, only Rs 18 lakh was recovered, the Indian Express reported. Now, another harvest season is upon us, but not much seems to have changed.

## PSB Loans in 59 Minutes

### Why in News :

PSBloansin59minutes.com, launched by Prime Minister three months ago, has emerged as the country's largest online lending platform, with loan sanctions exceeding over Rs 35,000 crore.

### About PSB Loans in 59 Minutes

- PSB Loans in 59 minutes is an online marketplace, which will enable In-Principle approval for MSME loans up to INR 1 Crore in 59 minutes from Public Sector Banks.
- This Platform has reduced the loan processing turnaround time from 20-25 days to 59 minutes. Post receiving of In-Principle approval letter, the loan is expected to be disbursed in 7-8 working days.
- The loans are processed without human intervention till sanction and/

### Note



or disbursement stage. On this platform, MSME borrower is not required to submit any physical document for In-Principle approval. The solution uses advanced algorithms to analyze data points from various sources such as IT returns, GST data, Bank Statements etc.

- The initiative aims at automation of various processes to Loan Appraisal in such a way that you get an eligibility letter, In-principle Approval in less than 60 minutes and chooses the Bank that you may prefer to ease access to credit to smaller and micro enterprises.

- The Contactless Business Loans are currently provided for Value from INR 1 Lacs Upto INR 1 Cr. The Rate of Interest starts from 8% onwards. The Platform is directly connected to CGTMSE scheme.

