Prelim Bits 11-03-2024 | UPSC Daily Current Affairs

Super Emitter Events

Scientists have revealed that a drilling incident took place in Kazakhstan in 2023 was possibly the 2nd biggest man-made methane leak ever in history.

- **Incident -** The drilling incident took place at an exploration well in the *Mangistau region* of southwestern Kazakhstan in 2023.

- It caused a fire that raged and released ***127,000 tonnes*** of methane into the atmosphere.

Super emitter' events refer to instances where a site gushes significant amounts of methane into the atmosphere.

Methane

- Methane is the ***2nd most abundant greenhouse gas*** in the atmosphere, after carbon dioxide (CO2).

- **Potential -** It is a potent Green House Gas (GHG) which traps heat in the atmosphere and adds to global warming.
- **Life time** - Methane has a much *shorter atmospheric lifetime* (12 years) but it is 80 times more potent greenhouse gas than CO2 over a period of 20 years.
- Methane is the primary contributor to the formation of ground-level ozone, a hazardous air pollutant.

Sources of Methane	
Natural Sources	**Man-made Sources**
Contribute to 40% of methane emissions	Contribute to 60% of methane emissions

Examples	Examples
• Wetlands • Oceans • Cows' digestive systems • Digestive processes of termites	• Landfills & Coal mining • Agricultural activities • Wastewater treatment • Certain industrial processes • Oil and natural gas systems (largest)

Global Methane Pledge was signed by more than 150 countries in 2021, to cut their collective methane emissions by at least 30% from 2020 levels by 2030.

Reference

1. The Indian Express | Super Emitter Events

Asiatic Lions

*The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) recently recategorized the Asiatic lion status as **vulnerable** from endangered indicating a positive shift in its conservation status.*

Nomenclature change

- Due to genetic similarity between Central African, West African and Asiatic Lions, IUCN has clubbed all three under ***Panthera leo leo***.
- Earlier, the Asiatic lions were classified as *Panthera leo persica*.

Asiatic Lions

- **About -** The Asiatic lion is a subspecies of lion, slightly smaller than African lions.
- They are also known as ***Persian lions or Indian lions.***
- **Scientific Name -** Panthera leo leo.
- **Family –** Felidae.
- **Distribution -** They used to range from Turkey, across Asia, to eastern India.
- **Habitat -** At present ***Gir National Park, Gujarat*** is the only abode of the Asiatic lion.
- They are one of the 5 big cats found in India and are better known as 'the king of beasts'.

Conservation Status	
IUCN	Vulnerable
WPA	Schedule I of Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972

CITES	Appendix I

Project Lion

- The Project Lion envisages landscape ecology-based conservation of the Asiatic Lion in Gujarat by integrating conservation and eco-development.
- The Project is being implemented in the *Gir landscape in Gujarat* which is the last home of the Asiatic lion.
- **Implementation** - The State Government of Gujarat and other stakeholders like Central Zoo Authority.

References

1. Times of India | Lions 19 Times Safer In Gujarat Than In Africa
2. WWF India | Asiatic lion
3. National Geographic | Asiatic Lion

Lokpal

Former Supreme Court Judge Ajay Manikrao Khanwilkar was administered the oath of office as the Lokpal chairperson by the President recently.

- The Lokpal is an ***independent statutory body***, or body of ombudsman, that has jurisdiction over the ***central government to investigate allegations of corruption against public officials*** including the Prime Minister.

Ombudsman is a swedish term which means a person who is authorised to act for someone else.

- The Lokpal was recommended by the Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC) of India, established under the ***Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act 2013.***

LokPal	Lokayukta
It has jurisdiction to investigate public officials in Union level	It has jurisdiction to investigate public officials in state level.

- **Appointment -** Lokpal would be appointed by the ***President*** after consultation with the *Chief Justice of India*, the *Speaker of Lok Sabha* and the *Chairman of the Rajya Sabha*.
- **Members -** The Lokpal to consist of a Chairperson with a maximum of **8 members** of which ***50% shall be judicial members***.

- **Power -** The Lokpal will have the power of superintendence and direction over any investigating agency, including the CBI, for cases referred to them by the Lokpal.
- **Report -** The Lokpal is required to present ***annually to the President*** a report on the work done by it, which is caused to be laid in ***both the Houses*** of the Parliament.

Reference

1. NDTV | AM Khanwilkar Administered Oath As Lokpal Chairperson
2. LokPal | LokPal

Sela Tunnel

Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently inaugurated the world's longest twin-lane tunnel 'Sela Tunnel' in Arunachal Pradesh.

- The Sela Tunnel is an all-weather connectivity tunnel.
- It connects ***Guwahati to the strategic Tawang sector bordering china*** across Sela Pass.
- It aids faster military movement to the Line of Actual Control (LAC).
- It is built by the ***Border Roads Organisation (BRO).***
- The project comprises **2 tunnels**
  - 1st tunnel is a single-tube tunnel,
  - 2nd tunnel serves as an emergency escape route.
- The tunnel has been designed to reduce the traffic density with achieving a maximum speed of vehicles at 80 kmph.

Sela Pass is a high-altitude pass connecting Tawang with the rest of India.

References

1. Hindustan Times | Sela Tunnel
2. India Today | Sela Tunnel
3. Indian Express | Sela Tunnel

Statue of Valour

Prime Minister recently unveiled a 125-foot bronze statue of 'Ahom general' Lachit Borphukan in Assam's Jorhat.

Lachit Borphukan

- Lachit Borphukan was a legendary army commander of the Ahom kingdom (1228-1826).
- Borphukan ascended through the military hierarchy to attain the highest leadership position, having served in esteemed roles such as
    - **Ghora Barua** - Overseeing the royal horses,
    - **Dolaksharia Barua** - Commanding the royal household guards.
    - **Soladhara Barua -** He later became the Commander of the Simulgarh Fort and appointed as the Chief of the Ahom army by King Chakradhwaj, following his tenure as the monarch's Private Secretary, known as ***Soladhara Barua.***
- **Battles -** In 1669, Aurangzeb dispatched the ***Rajput Raja Ram Singh I*** to recapture territories won back by the Ahoms in previous battles.
- **Battle of Alaboi** - The ***Battle of Alaboi*** was fought the Alaboi Hills in North Guwahati between the Ahoms and Mughals in which the Ahoms suffered severe reverses.
- **Battle of Saraighat -** In the ***Battle of Saraighat (Naval battle***) in 1671 on the River Brahmaputra, he thwarted an invasion by the Mughal Forces under the command of Ramsingh I.
- Employing guerrilla tactics and strategic terrain selection, he guided the Ahom army to a conclusive triumph.
- He was buried at the ‘maidam’ burial grounds for Ahom royals and nobles at Hollongapar, after passing away a year after the battle at the age of 49 due to illness.
- **Lachit Diwas –** It is celebrated every year on 24th November Assam to commemorate the heroism of Lachit Borphukan and the victory of the Assamese army at the Battle of Saraighat.

References

1. The Hindu Business Line | Statue of Valour
2. Indian Express | Lachit Borphukan
3. NDTV | Lachit Borphukan
4. India TV News | Lachit Borphukan

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