# Prelim Bits 13-07-2022 | UPSC Daily Current Affairs

## Indigenous Assam Muslims

*The Assam state Cabinet has approved the identification of five sub-groups as 'indigenous' Assamese Muslim communities.*

- Assam Muslims belong to two broad categories - Miyas and Assamese Muslims.
- Muslims outside these two categories account for very small numbers relative to Assam's large Muslim population.
- **The Miyas** form the larger of these two groups. They have their roots in Bengal. They speak Bengali language.
- They got settled in Assam at various times after undivided Assam was annexed to British India in 1826.
- **The "Assamese Muslims"** who speak Assamese as their mother tongue are numerically smaller of these two groups.
- They trace their ancestries in Assam back to the Ahom kingdom (1228-1826).
- By and large, they see themselves as part of the larger Assamese-speaking community, together with Assamese Hindus.
- Many of them are very conscious about being distinct from Bengal-origin Muslims.
- Now based on the demands from within the community and the recommendations of Wasbir Hussain subcommittee on "Cultural identity of indigenous Assamese Muslims" the Assam Cabinet has identified 5 Assamese Muslim sub-groups - Goriya, Moriya, Julha, Deshi, and Syed as "indigenous" Assamese Muslim communities.
- **Kachari Muslims** were not included in the list. They live in south Assam's Barak Valley - a region dominated by Bengali speaking Hindus and Muslims. They trace their origins to the Kachari kingdom (13th century to 1832) and consider themselves distinct from the Bengali Muslims. They perceive the omission as a great injustice.
- **DESHI** are believed to be the first batch of people to embrace Islam in Assam. They trace their lineage to Ali Mech, a Koch-Rajbongshi chieftain who converted to Islam during the invasion of Bakhtiyar Khilji around 1205 AD.
- **SYED -** Sufi preachers settled in Assam at various times. As per some accounts, the earliest to settle was Syed Badiuddin Shah Mada (Madan Pir) in 1497, and the best known being Syed Moinuddin Baghdadi (Azaan Pir or Azaan Fakir) around 1630. The Syed community comprises descendants of their followers.
- **GORIYA -** During the Mughals invasions between 1615 and 1682, the Ahom regime took several soldiers prisoner. Many of them belonged to Gaur in ancient Bengal, and hence got the name Goriya.
- These people settled in Assam and married local women and gradually became a part of the Assamese society.
- Some tribals/Hindus who embraced Islam during Azaan Pir's time also came to be known as Goriya.
- **MORIYA** are descendants of prisoners of war, captured by the Ahoms after an attempted invasion by Turbak Khan in the 16th century.
- They were taken to work in Brass.  Some of their descendants carry on the occupation to this

day.
- **JULHA** are a small community, originally from undivided Bihar, Odisha and West Bengal. They are believed to be converts from Adivasis.
- They migrated to Assam in two phases: as weavers during the Ahom regime, and as tea garden workers brought by British tea planters in the 19th century. Julha is listed as an MOBC community in Assam.

**Reference**


1. https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-who-are-assam-indigenous-muslims-8022121/


# Open Acreage Licensing Programme

*The Government has launched the eighth round of Open Acreage Licensing Programme.*

- The Hydrocarbon Exploration and Licensing Policy (HELP) was promulgated in 2016.
- It was launched with the vision of reducing hydrocarbon import dependency by 10% by 2022.
- The objective is to boost the production of oil & gas in the Indian sedimentary basin.
- It adopts the Revenue Sharing Contract model and has replaced the earlier model of Production Sharing Contract (PSC) to improve the 'Ease of Doing Business' in the Indian Exploration and Production (E&P) sector.
- Under HELP Open Acreage Licensing (OAL) mechanism has been launched.
- It allows the investors to carve out blocks of their choice by assessing Exploration and production (E&P) data available at National Data Repository (NDR) & by submitting an Expression of Interest (EoI).
- These blocks are subsequently offered biannually through formal bidding process.
- Special features of the programme are
    - **Single license** that will cover exploration and production of all types of hydrocarbon viz. conventional oil and gas, coal-bed methane, shale oil, gas hydrates, etc.
    - **Reduced and graded royalty rates –** To encourage exploration in deep water and ultra-deep water areas, the royalty was exempted for first seven years. Subsequently royalty of 5% and 2% applicable in deep water and ultra-deep water areas.
    - **Exemption of cess on crude oil** and custom duty applicable on equipment/ services for exploration and production activities.
    - **Full marketing and pricing freedom** of gas produced.
    - **Extended period for exploration and production** i.e. 8 years for onland/ shallow water and 10 years for deep water/ frontier areas.
- The Government has now launched the OALP Bid Round-VIII, offering 10 blocks, for International Competitive Bidding.
- The Ten blocks under present bid are spread across 9 Sedimentary Basins and include two on land blocks, four shallow Water blocks, two Deep Water Block sand two Ultra-Deep Water blocks.

**Reference**


1. https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=1840013
2. https://mopng.gov.in/en/exp-and-prod/help

# Mangarh Hillock

*National Monuments Authority (NMA) has submitted a report on declaring Mangarh hillock in Rajasthan as a monument of National Importance to Minister of State for Culture.*

- The unsung heroes and Mangarh hillock haven't received the importance in history which they deserved.
- **Mangarh Hillock -** The hillock is situated at the Gujarat-Rajasthan border.
- The place is also known as the Adivasi Jallianwala.
- 1500 Bhil tribal freedom fighters were brutally killed by the British army on 17th November 1913.
- To pay our tribute to them, on the occasion of Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav the GoI is exploring the possibility of declaring Mangarh Hillock a monument of national importance.

## Bhil Tribes

- Bhils are popularly known as the bow men of Rajasthan. Their name is derived from the word villu or billu.
- They are the most widely distributed and the largest tribe of the South Asia. Bhils comprise 39% of Rajasthan's total population.
- Bhils are classified as
    1. Central or pure bills
    2. Eastern or Rajput Bhils.
- The central Bhils are found in the mountain regions in the Indian states of Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujrat and Rajasthan.
- Bhils are also found in the north eastern parts of Tripura.
- The name Bhil is also finds mentioned in the great epic called Mahabharata and Ramayana in context of Eklavya.
- The endogamous tribe speak Bhili, an Indo Aryan language.
- Earlier they were the great hunters but they now practice agriculture as the source of livelihood.
- They are also demanding a separate state of Bhil Pradesh.

**Reference**


1. https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1839658
2. https://trti.gujarat.gov.in/bhil
3. http://www.ecoindia.com/tribes/bhils.html


# Chenkurinji

*The species Chenkurinji is very susceptible to climate change. Their present condition is quite bad and requires greater conservation measures.*

- Chenkurinji (*Gluta travancorica*) belongs to the Anacardiaceae family. The heartwood is quite sturdy with deep red colour.
- It is endemic to the Agasthyamala Biosphere Reserve. The Shendurney Wildlife Sanctuary derives its name from the species.
- The tree is also seen inside the shola forests near Ponmudi, Pandimala, Vilakkumaram and Rosemala.
- The tree was once abundant in the hills on the southern parts of Aryankavu Pass but its

presence has been fast receding from the area over the years.
- It is very susceptible to climate change and the present condition of the species is quite bad with low regeneration performance. The species is facing inbreeding depression.
- Though there are seemingly enough number of the trees, most are not productive, generating a negative trend in its population.
- Majority of the trees are old with poor flowering and fruiting rates.
- At present, we have a few young generation trees, and if we plant some now, we will have flowering trees within the next 25 years.
- Flowering usually happens in January. However the species has reported a tendency to extend the process due to climate change.
- It's an adaptation strategy to increase the chances of germination and maintain a minimum viable population.
- The plant lowers blood pressure and treat arthritis.
- The conservation measures in the past weren't totally successful.
- As a new measure the department is launching 'Save Chenkurinji', a campaign to be implemented in various areas coming under the Achencoil Forest Division.
- The department looks to plant thousands of saplings in the ghat sectors of Kollam and Pathanamthitta districts.
- The officials have also identified around 75 schools in the area where Chenkurinji will be grown with the support of students.
- Apart from schools, saplings will be planted in public places.

**Reference**


1. https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/saving-chenkurinji-from-climate-change/article65592984.ece


# LANCE System

*Lockheed Martin has delivered a LANCE system to the Air Force Research Laboratory of the US Air Force for operational testing.*

- LANCE refers to Laser Advancements of Next-Generation Compact Environments (LANCE).
- The system is one-sixth the size of the other laser energy systems being developed by the company.
- Now the device will be tested after being mounted on an aircraft.
- The development holds importance as
    - it can be mounted on a fighter aircraft, or any aircraft for that matter.
    - It will give the US Air Force the capability of shooting down incoming anti-aircraft missiles, thus giving it a crucial edge over its adversaries.
- At present, LANCE has been manufactured for a defensive role.
- It could also be furthered as an offensive weapon, one that could not only shoot down aircraft and drones, but also be mounted atop ground- and sea-based mobile platforms for offensive roles.
- Apart from the US, several other countries have robust laser energy weapon development programmes. This includes China, Russia, Israel, Germany, France and India.
- Israel recently tested its laser weapon to shoot down a drone from the ground.
- India, too, is developing a directed energy weapon named DURGA II, which stands for Directed Unrestricted Ray-Gun Array.
- It is said to be a light energy weapon of 100 kilowatt capacity.

**Reference**

1. https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/lockheed-martin-lance-laser-energy-weapon-united-states-air-force-8023972/

# Agumbe Ghat

*Landslip-affected Agumbe Ghat was thrown open for light motor vehicle traffic.*

- Heavy rain caused a landslide in Agumbe ghat connecting Shivamogga and Udupi districts.
- Agumbe Ghat - Agumbe, popularly known as the 'Cherrapunji of South'.
- It is a tiny village nestled in the thick rainforests of Western Ghats in Karnataka.
- It is situated in the Thirthahalli taluka of Shimoga district of North Karnataka.
- It is one of the last surviving rainforests in India which receives an average of around 7,000mm of rainfall annually.
- Agumbe is registered as a UNESCO World Heritage Site and is famous for its rich biodiversity, waterfalls and red-hazy sun-set over the Arabian Sea.
- The village is also known as the 'Cobra Capital' of India because of the number of Cobras that are found here and could be encountered while driving along the Ghats.
- It is also a home to more than 70 other species of snakes.
- The debris of the landslide were cleared and the ghat is now open for light motor vehicle traffic.

**Reference**

1. https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/agumbe-ghat-thrown-open-for-light-motor-vehicles/article65633257.ece
2. https://www.thrillophilia.com/cities/agumbe

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