Prelim Bits 24-02-2024 | UPSC Daily Current Affairs

Illegal encroachments in Assam

Notices issued by the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) to evict illegal settlers from the grazing reserves have sparked unrest in Assam.

- **Issue -** Encroachment by illegal settlers and construction of temporary and permanent structures on Professional Grazing Reserves (PGR) and Village Grazing Reserves (VGR).
- The PGR was announced by the British government in 1933 and its boundary was demarcated in 1946.
- The KAAC said that that the decision was in line with a Supreme Court order and the Karbi Anglong (Land & Revenue) Act of 1953.

  In Jagpal Singh & Others v. State of Punjab, the Supreme Court has urged that states to take necessary measures for the eviction of illegal occupants of Gram Sabha or Gram Panchayat lands.

- **Mission Basundhara 4.0** - Assam Government has proposed to launch the mission to reclaim the chars (sandbars or river islands) from encroachers to safeguard the ecological integrity of the Brahmaputra Valley.

Quick Facts

- **KAAC** - It is one of the 10 Autonomous District Councils administered under the 6th Schedule.
- The KAAC administers the tribal-majority Karbi Anglong and West Karbi Anglong districts of Assam.
- **6th Schedule** - It contains provisions related to the administration of tribal areas in the states of *Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram*.
- Currently, there are ***10 ADCs*** under the 6th Schedule in the North East Region.

References

1. The Hindu | Eviction of illegal settlers in Assam
2. The Hindu | Mission Basundhara 4.0

Egg-Freezing

Indian cities are becoming hotspots of the global fertility tourism market due to its

competitive cost and high success rate.

- **Egg-freezing** – It is an Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART) in which a woman's eggs (oocytes) are extracted, frozen and stored as a method to preserve reproductive potential in women of reproductive age.
- **Process** - It involves the hyper stimulation of the ovaries with hormones, which leads them to release *more than one egg per cycle*.
- The egg is then retrieved and flash-frozen unfertilised in a process called ***vitrification*** to minimise ice crystal formation, and stored in ***liquid nitrogen*** to preserve it until the donor wishes to opt for pregnancy.
- When opted for pregnancy, the egg is then thawed, combined with sperm in an ***IVF (in-vitro fertilization)*** lab and the fertilized embryo transplanted into the uterus.
- The process is also known by the name ***Oocyte Cryopreservation***.

The Indian Society for Assisted Reproduction (ISAR) has claimed that there is a 10-25% rise in egg-freezing procedures compared to the years before Covid-19.

- **Time Period** - Under Assisted Reproductive Technology (Regulation) Act, 2021, eggs can be stored for ***up to 10 years***, after which they are destroyed or donated for research.
- **Cost** - *1 lakh to 5 lakh* and it is almost 1/3rd of that in advanced economies causing India as a global fertility tourism market.

Quick Facts
Anti-Müllerian Hormone (AMH) Test • The test measures the amount of AMH in a blood sample. • In males, AMH is made by the testicles (or testes), which are glands that make sperm and male hormones. • In females, the ovaries make AMH. • The ovaries are glands where eggs form and female hormones are made.

References

1. The Indian Express – India's egg-freezing boom
2. India Today – Egg-freezing, a growing choice for young mums
3. Times of India – Reshaping future fertility through egg freezing

Nordic-Baltic Eight (NB8)

The India-Nordic-Baltic Eight (NB8) meeting was held recently on the sidelines of the Raisina Dialogue, 2024 in New Delhi.

- **NB8** - A regional framework consisting of 8 countries from the Northern Europe.
- **Members** -
  - **5 Nordic Countries** - Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden.
  - **3 Baltic countries** - Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.
- **Established in** - 1992
- **Aim** - To discuss important regional and international issues in an informal

atmosphere.

- **Chair** - In 2024, the NB8 is chaired by ***Sweden*** which was taken over from ***Latvia***.
- **NB8 Wise Men Report** - It is also known as Birkavs-Gade Report.
- It provides concrete guidelines for promoting cooperation between the 8 countries.
- **e-PINE -** Enhanced Partnership in Northern Europe (e-PINE) was launched by the United States in 2003.

References

1. Times of India | India-Nordic-Baltic Meet
2. Republic of Estonia | Nordic-Baltic Cooperation (NB8)
3. GCC | NB8 Cooperation

Buffalo fights & Bulbul fights

People for Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) have mounted a legal challenge against the practices of buffalo and bulbul fighting in the Gauhati High Court.

- These fights are part of the folk culture associated with the ***Assamese*** winter harvest festival of ***Magh Bihu***.
- **Moh Juj -** It is a traditional *buffalo fight* organized in Assam.
- **Bulbuli -** It is a traditional *bird fight* organized in Assam.

This traditional folk culture was recently organized in January 2024 after a 9 years ban.

Magh Bihu

- Magh Bihu, also known as Bhogali Bihu or Maghor Bihu, is a harvesting festival celebrated in ***Assam***.
- The festival has its roots in the agricultural traditions of Assam and falls in the month of Magh, which falls in January.
- It marks the end of the harvesting season, and it is celebrated in other parts of the country such as *Makar Sankranti, Pongal and Lohri*.

Quick Facts
People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) • It is the largest animal rights organisation in the world. • PETA focuses its attention on 4 areas in which includes, in laboratories, in the food industry, in the clothing trade, and in the entertainment business. • It also works on other issues, including the cruel killing of rodents, birds, and other animals.

References

1. The Indian Express | PETA wants ban on Assamese traditions
2. Times of India | After 9 years, buffalo, bulbul fights to return

3. Aljazeera | Bird & buffalo fights back in India's northeast
4. Deccan Herald | PETA moves High Court to ban bulbul fight

100% FDI in Space Sector

Union Cabinet has recently approved the amendments which allowed 100% FDI in space sector.

Amendment -

Areas in Space	Automatic Route	Government Route
Satellite manufacturing and operation, satellite data products and ground/user segment	Up to 74%	Beyond 74%
Launch vehicles and associated systems or subsystems, and creation of spaceports for launching and receiving spacecraft	Up to 49%	Beyond 49%
Manufacturing of *components* and systems/sub-systems for satellites, ground segment and user segment.	Up to 100%	-

Benefits

- India as an attractive destination for foreign investments.
- Boost the participation of non-governmental entities (NGEs) in space research.
- Indian space products can access the global pool of capital to expand manufacturing and production capacity.

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)

- **FDI -** It is a type of cross-border investment in which an investor from one country establishes a lasting interest in an enterprise in another country.
- FDI remains vital for bolstering domestic industry, stimulating growth, and enhancing global competitiveness.

Two types of investment routes	
Investments under the Government route	**Investments under the Automatic route**
• Prior to investment, approval from the Government of India is required. • It is permitted in sectors like defense & telecom (beyond 49%), mining (100%) and print media (26%).	• It require no prior permission, resulting in minimal monitoring. • It only require the investor to inform the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) after the investment is made.

References

1. The Economic Times | Space companies shoot for the moon
2. The Hindu | The next frontier: On India's space sector
3. The Hindu | 100% FDI to be allowed in space sector

Other Important News

Sepahijala Wildlife sanctuary

• Sepahijala Wildlife Sanctuary is located in ***Tripura***.
• The sanctuary was established in **1972**.
• It is famous for its "Clouded Leopard enclosure" and ***Clouded Leopard National Park*** is a part of SWL.
• It has 2 natural lakes, namely ***Abasarika and Amrit Sagar.***

Kiru Hydel Project

• The Kiru Hydroelectric Power Project is a run-of-river scheme on the ***Chenab River*** in ***Jammu and Kashmir*** to be completed in 2025.
• It is being constructed between the existing ***Kirthai II and Kwar hydel power projects.***
• It will be developed near the convergence point of river ***Chenab and the Singad and Bela*** streams.

Gemma

Google has recently introduced Gemma, latest open artificial intelligence (AI) model.
• Gemma is a family of open-source AI models developed by Google DeepMind.
• Its name is derived from the Latin word ***'gemma,'*** which translates to precious stone.
• It has been built using the same research and technology used in ***Gemini models*** by Google.
• Gemma is being offered in 2 model sizes, Gemma 2B and Gemma 7B, which have been released with pre-trained and instruction-tuned variants.

J0529-4351

Scientists has recently discovered the fastest-growing black hole known to date in the quasar named Jo529-4351.
• The object was first detected using a 2.3-m telescope at the Australian National University.
• The quasar is so far away from our planet that its light took more than ***12 billion years*** to reach us.
• Quasars are the known as the brightest objects in the sky thus J0529-4351 is over ***500 trillion times*** more luminous than the Sun.

Spur-winged lapwing (Vanellus spinosus)

Recently, a birdwatching team from Telangana for the first time spotted a spur-winged lapwing near Warangal.
• The spur-winged lapwing (Vanellus spinosus) is a wading bird in ***Charadriidae family***, native to North Africa, the Middle East and Mediterranean regions.
• It is abundant in tropical Africa and can be found at almost any wetland habitat in its range.
• The spur-winged lapwing is a carnivore that eats insects, insect larvae, and small invertebrates.
• **Conservation status**
  - **IUCN**- Least Concern.

Dosti-16

The 16th edition of the Dosti-16 exercise has been recently concluded with observers from Bangladesh.
• Dosti-16 is a trilateral exercise between the coast guards of ***India, the Maldives, and Sri Lanka***.
• The exercise aims to improve maritime interoperability, enhance cooperation, and strengthen friendship.
• The exercise has been held ***every 2 years*** since 1991, except in 2021.

Cerrado savannah

• The Cerrado is a ***tropical savanna ecoregion*** in South America.
• It's the ***world's most biodiverse savanna***, home to 5% of the planet's animals and plants.
• The Cerrado covers mainly within ***Brazil*** and extending into parts of Bolivia and Paraguay.

U Tirot Sing

A statue of U Tirot Sing was unveiled recently at Indira Gandhi Cultural Centre, Dhaka.
• Tirot Sing is a tribal chief known as '***the Hero of the Khasi Hills***' of Meghalaya against the British colonizers.
• He was born in **1802** and died in Dhaka on July 17, 1835.
• Every year on July 17, Meghalaya commemorates U Tirot Sing Day.

Skill India Centre in Odisha

Union Minister of Education and Skill Development inaugurated the 1st Skill India Centre (SIC) in, Odisha recently.
• The SIC will play a pivotal role in designing curriculum along with industry experts to promote standardization and create employment opportunities across industries.
• It aims to leverage modern technologies, gain technology-driven learning experiences and explore potential career avenues with renowned organizations.
• The training process will be implemented by ***National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC).***

Special Tiger Protection Force

Arunachal Pradesh recently signs MoU with NTCA to raise first special tiger protection force.
• It is the ***Arunachal's 1st Special Tiger Protection Force (STPC)*** in order to revamp conservation efforts.
• The special force would be deployed in the frontier state's 3 tiger reserves, Namdapha, Kamlang and Pakke.

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