

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.

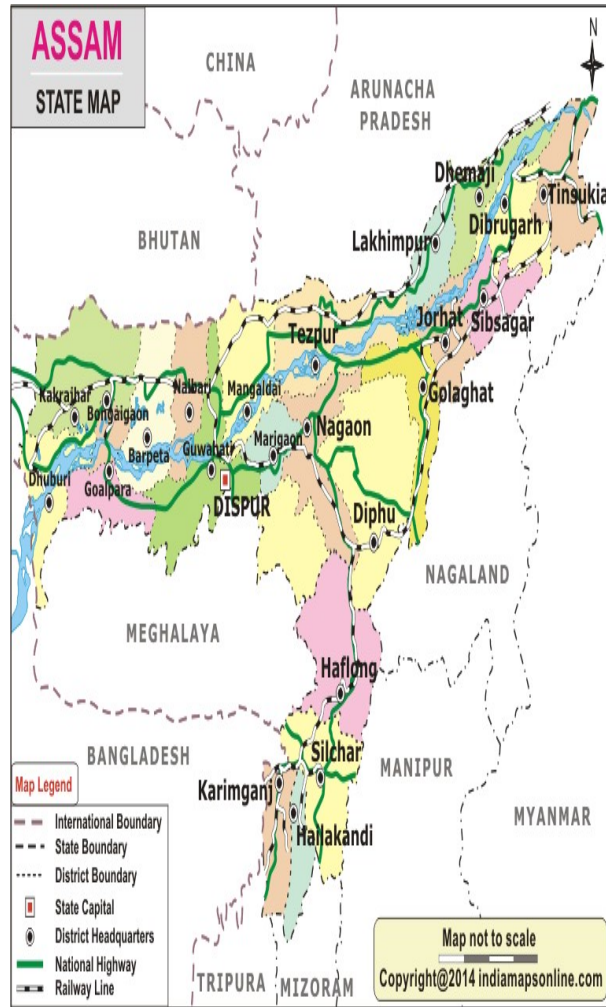
- **Issue** - Encroachment by illegal settlers and construction of temporary and permanent structures on Professional Grazing Reserves (PGR) and Village Grazing Reserves (VGR).
- The PGR was announced by the British government in 1933 and its boundary was demarcated in 1946.
- The KAAC said that the 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 <i>components</i> 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 |
|--|---------------------------------------|

| | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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%). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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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