

UPSC CURRENT AFFAIRS NOTES 19-01-2024

PAKKE PAGA HORNBILL FESTIVAL



The 9th edition of the Pakke Paga Hornbill Festival (PPHF), a state festival of Arunachal Pradesh, will take place at Seijosa in the Pakke Kessang district from January 18-20, 2024.

Details

Inaugural Year and Objectives

- **First Edition:** The inaugural Pakke Paga Hornbill Festival was held in 2015.
- **Nyishi Tribe Recognition:** The festival aimed to recognize the significant role played by the Nyishi tribal group in conserving hornbills within the Pakke Tiger Reserve (PTR).
- **Alternative Income Sources:** An objective was to explore and establish alternative sources of income for the region, moving away from practices like hunting and logging.
- **Awareness Creation:** The festival sought to create awareness across India about the natural wonders of the Pakke Tiger Reserve and its surrounding areas.

2024 Theme

- **Domutoh Domutoh, Paga hum Domutoh:** This year's festival theme translates to 'Let Our Hornbills Remain' in the Nyishi language.
- **Preservation Focus:** The theme underscores the critical importance of preserving these iconic birds, highlighting the need for conservation efforts.

Pakke Tiger Reserve

Location and History:

- **Geographical Location:** Pakke Tiger Reserve is located in the East Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh in Northeast India.

- **Former Name:** Initially known as Pakhui Tiger Reserve, it was renamed in April 2001 by the Governor of Arunachal Pradesh.
- **Recognition:** The reserve is a Project Tiger site, spanning an area of 862 km², protected by the Department of Environment and Forest of Arunachal Pradesh.

Flora:

- **Habitat Types:** Lowland semi-evergreen, evergreen forest, and Eastern Himalayan broadleaf forests.
- **Woody Species:** 343 woody species recorded, with a high representation of species from the Euphorbiaceae and Lauraceae families.
- **Orchids:** About 600 species of orchids reported from Arunachal Pradesh, including orchid species in Pakhui Wildlife Sanctuary.
- **Vegetation Types:** Assam Valley tropical semi-evergreen forest, tropical semi-evergreen forests, and subtropical broadleaved forests.

Fauna:

- **Mammals:** Over 40 mammal species, including Bengal tiger, Indian leopard, clouded leopard, Asiatic jackal, and wild dog.
- **Birds:** At least 296 bird species recorded, including globally endangered white-winged wood duck, ibisbill, and hornbills.
- **Butterflies:** Estimated to host at least 500 butterfly species out of the over 1500 found in India.
- **Reptiles and Amphibians:** 36 reptile species and 30 amphibian species reported, including the Assam roofed turtle and king cobra.

Conservation Initiatives:

- **Nyishi Community Involvement:** The Nyishi community plays a crucial role in wildlife protection, engaging in conservation efforts and enforcing customary laws.
- **Awards and Recognition:** The Ghora Aabhe Society, formed in 2006, has received awards and media recognition for its conservation efforts.

Nyishi Community of Arunachal Pradesh

Demographics and Language:

- **Largest Ethnic Group:** The Nyishi community is the largest ethnic group in Arunachal Pradesh, with a population of around 300,000, making them the most populous tribe in the state.

- **Language:** The Nyishi language belongs to the Sino-Tibetan family, although its origin is disputed.

Social Structure and Practices:

- **Prevalent Practice:** Polygyny is prevalent among the Nyishi.
- **Social and Economic Significance:** It signifies one's social status and economic stability. It proves advantageous during hard times, such as clan wars or social activities.
- **Diminishing Practice:** The practice is diminishing with modernization and the spread of Christianity.
- **Descent:** The Nyishi trace their descent patrilineally.
- **Clans:** The community is divided into several clans.

Etymology:

- **Meaning:** In Nyishi, "Nyi" refers to "a human," and "shi" denotes "highland."

Distribution:

- **Geographic Spread:** The Nyishi community is spread across eight districts of Arunachal Pradesh.
- **Concentration:** The Kurung Kumey and Kra Daadi districts have the largest concentration of Nyishi population.
- **Outside Arunachal Pradesh:** Nyishis also live in the Sonitpur and North Lakhimpur districts of Assam.

Economy and Livelihood:

- **Jhum Cultivation:** Nyishi are agriculturalists practicing jhum, a form of shifting cultivation.
- **Principal Crops:** Paddy (rice), maize, cucumber, ginger, yams, millet, pumpkin, beans, and various leafy vegetables.
- **Rice as Staple Food:** Rice is the staple food, supplemented by fish, meat, and edible tubers.

Traditional Economic System:

- **Barter System:** Before the arrival of a Western market economic system, Nyishi used a barter system.
- **Reciprocity:** They valued generalized and balanced reciprocity in their economic system.

Attire and Ornamentation:

- **Hair:** Traditionally, plaited hair tied neatly with a brass skewer passing horizontally through it.
- **Cane Rings:** Worn around the waist, arms, and legs.
- **Headgear:** Men wore a cane helmet with the beak of the great Indian hornbill, now often made of cane due to wildlife protection laws.
- **Men:** Sleeveless shirts made from thick cotton cloth, adorned with beads for decoration. Carried machetes, knives, spears, large swords, bows, and arrows during war.
- **Women:** Sleeveless mantle, ribbon at the waist, girdle with metal disks, beads, and cane garters. Ornaments include bead necklaces, brass chains, metal bells, earrings, and bracelets.

Religion:

- **Ancestral Commemoration:** Nyokum is the festival celebrated by the Nyishi people, commemorating their ancestors.
- **Introduction of Christianity:** Christian missionaries began operating in the 1950s, and by 2011, many Nyishi people had embraced Christianity (31%). Hinduism is followed by 29%, and some still adhere to the ancient indigenous Donyi-Poloism.

Conservation Efforts:

- **Traditional Attire Impact:** The Nyishi tradition of wearing cane helmets with hornbill beaks has affected the hornbill population.
- **Conservation Organizations:** Organizations like the Arunachal Wildlife and Nature Foundation and the Wildlife Trust of India are working to stop hunting and protect hornbills.
- **Hornbill Nest Adoption Program (HNAB):** Since 2011, a community-led conservation initiative protects hornbill nest trees, turning hunters into protectors.

DEFENCE TECHNOLOGY COUNCIL



A top body chaired by the Prime Minister, with the Defence Minister and the National Security Advisor as its Vice Presidents, should determine the country's defence technology roadmap and decide on major projects and their execution, an expert committee spearheaded by the former principal scientific advisor, Prof K Vijay Raghavan, is learned to have told the government.

Background of the Vijay Raghavan Committee

- The committee was set up by the government last year to review the functioning of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).
- The decision to review DRDO's functioning was prompted by concerns over delays in several of its projects.
- The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Defence and the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) had raised issues about project delays and extensions.

Recommendations of the Vijay Raghavan Committee

- The committee recommends that DRDO should focus on its original goal of research and development for defense, rather than involving itself in production cycles and product management.
- It suggests that DRDO should refrain from engaging in certain technologies, such as drone development, and should identify expertise within India and internationally for various technologies.
- The Defence Technology Council is proposed to play a crucial role in identifying the right players for specific defense technologies.

About the Defence Technology Council

- The Defence Technology Council is suggested to be chaired by the Prime Minister, with the Defence Minister and the National Security Advisor as its Vice Presidents.

- An executive committee, chaired by the Chief of Defence Staff, is proposed.
- Membership includes the Principal Scientific Advisor, three service chiefs and their vice chiefs, along with two representations each from academia and industry.

Secretariat of the Defence Technology Council:

- The committee recommends the creation of a separate department under the Defence Ministry, named the Department of Defence Science, Technology, and Innovation.
- This department, headed by a technocrat, will promote defense research and development in the academic and start-up ecosystem.
- It will serve as the secretariat for the Defence Technology Council, operate labs for testing and certification, and draw scientists from DRDO and academia.

Roles of the Proposed Department:

- Promotion of defence research and development in the academic and start-up ecosystem.
- Serving as the secretariat for the Defence Technology Council chaired by the Prime Minister.
- Drawing scientists from DRDO and academia for background research and decision support.
- Operating labs for testing and certification, a function currently performed by DRDO.

DELISTING KUKI-ZOMI TRIBES



The Union Government has directed the Manipur State Government to examine a representation sent by Maheshwar Thounaojam, the National Secretary of the

Republican Party of India in Manipur, seeking the delisting of certain Kuki and Zomi tribes from the Scheduled Tribes (ST) list of Manipur.

Details

- The move follows the eighth month of ethnic conflict between the valley-based Meitei people and the hills-based Kuki-Zo (ST) people.
- Conflict triggered by an order of the Manipur High Court directing the State government to recommend the Meiteis' inclusion in the ST list to the Centre.

Representation by Thounaojam

- Representation objects to the inclusion of "Any Mizo (Lushai) Tribes," "Zou," and "Any Kuki Tribes" in the ST list, claiming they are not "indigenous" to Manipur.
- Argues that these entries were not mentioned in pre-independence Censuses, and their inclusion has allegedly facilitated illegal immigrants obtaining ST benefits.

Claims and Counter-Arguments

- **Indigenous Status:** Representation claims a lack of indigenous status for the mentioned tribes. Counter Argument suggests historical documentation contradicts this claim, as these tribes were listed in the first Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) list in 1950.
- **Illegal Immigration Facilitation:** Representation alleges that the inclusion of these tribes aids illegal immigrants. No empirical evidence supports this claim; the counterargument challenges the assertion as rhetoric without substantial proof.

Historical Recommendations

- **First Backward Classes Commission (1955):** Recommended individual tribe names for tribes in Assam and Manipur instead of umbrella tribes. Suggested redrawing of ST lists due to outdated information.
- **Lokur Commission (1965):** Noted a "splintering tendency" among Kuki tribes and recommended mentioning tribe names to address inter-tribe differences. Choose to classify tribes as a larger group with sub-tribes, including synonyms.
- **Bhuria Commission Report (2002-2004):** Observed confusion regarding the entry "Any Kuki Tribes" in the ST list. Recommended mentioning tribe names to resolve inter-tribe differences.

Current Developments

- **Government Response:** The Manipur Government was directed by the Centre to examine the representation. The Chief Minister suggests the formation of a special committee to investigate the matter.
- **Potential Implications:** The representation raises concerns about potential widening of divides among communities in the State. Implications on the criteria used to define groups as STs, with a focus on Meiteis' argument for ST status.

Kuki-Zomi Tribes

The Kuki-Zomi tribes inhabit the northeastern Indian states of Manipur, Nagaland, Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram, extending into neighbouring Myanmar and Bangladesh.

Belonging to the Kuki-Chin language family, the Kuki-Zomi tribes share linguistic and cultural affinities with the Chin people of Myanmar and the Mizo people of Mizoram.

The term "Kuki" has been historically used to encompass a broader grouping, while "Zomi" emerged as a preferred term by some sub-tribes seeking a distinct identity. This complex issue continues to spark debate and discourse.

Vadnagar

The remains of a 2,800-year-old human settlement have been recently discovered in Gujarat's Vadnagar.

About Vadnagar

Vadnagar is a town and municipality in the Mehsana district of the North Gujarat region of Gujarat state.

It is a multi-layered and multi-cultural mercantile settlement, with its history stretching back to nearly 8th Century BCE.

As a historical city, it was known by various names, such as Vridhanagar, Anandapur, Anartapur and Nagar.

The town represents a continuously evolving historic urban landscape/area that played a major role in the hinterland trade network of Western India.

It is mentioned often in the Puranas and even in the travelogue of the great Chinese traveler, **Hieu-en-Tsang (7th century)**, as a rich and flourishing town.

Features:

The ancient town of Vadnagar is an L-shaped town with **Sharmishtha Lake** located on its northeastern edge.

The whole ancient town of Vadnagar is built over an ancient mound. The topography of the mound is gently rising, with its highest point in the middle of the settlement, also called **Darbar Ghat**.

Vadnagar town is divided into several blocks, also called Mohallas or Madhs. These mohallas are named after a temple, a community, or an occupation.

The town's fortifications, arched gateways (toranas), temples, wells, residential structures (kothis), and excavated sites like Buddhist monasteries and dedicated stupas showcase the architectural influence of various cultural periods.

The oldest temple, Ambaji Mata Temple, dates back to the 10th-11th Century CE, while other important Hindu and Jain temples within the town are from 17th Century onward.

The current residential layer of the town is from late Gaekwad period (late 18th Century CE).

Vadnagar town is surrounded by fortifications made of bricks and partly stone, covering an area of 1km east-west and 700 m north-south.

Scheme for Residential Education for Students in High Schools in Targeted Areas (SHRESHTA)

Scheme for Residential Education for Students in High Schools in Targeted Areas (SHRESHTA) Blog Image

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) recently issued instructions for Residential Private Schools interested in joining SHRESHTA Scheme.

About Scheme for Residential Education for Students in High Schools in Targeted Areas (SHRESHTA)

The scheme aims to provide access to the best private residential schools for meritorious students from Scheduled Caste (SC) communities.

It will provide scholarships to meritorious students from SC communities to study in private and NGO-run residential schools for Classes 9-12.

The scheme is expected to provide admissions to around 3,000 students in Classes 9 and 11 each year.

The core objectives of the scheme are to enhance the reach of the development initiatives of the government and fill in the gap in service-deprived SC dominant areas in the education sector.

The scheme will collaborate with voluntary organisations to provide an environment that can help create conditions for socio-economic upliftment and the overall development of the SC communities.

Implementation agency: The Department of Social Justice and Empowerment, Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment.

The scheme is being implemented in two modes.

First, there are **SHRESHTA** schools, which consist of the best CBSE/ state board-affiliated private residential schools.

Under SHRESHTA, outstanding students from SC communities, across states and UTs, will be selected annually through the National Entrance Test for SHRESHTA (NETS) and will be admitted to these schools for education in Classes 9 through 12.

The schools that will be part of this scheme will be selected based on a performance score of above 75 percent pass rate in Class 10 and 12 board examinations over the past three years.

The second mode is based on NGO and voluntary organisation-run schools and hostels. The institutions run by such organisations that run up to Class 12 will also be made part of the scheme.

Eligibility:

Students whose annual parental income is less than Rs 2,50,000 and who belong to SC communities are eligible to participate in this scheme.

Only those candidates who have passed or are appearing in Class VIII/X in the given academic session can apply for taking admission to Class IX/XI.

The scheme will cover the tuition fee, the hostel fee, and the mess fees for qualifying students.

Students will also be allowed to choose from a range of schools based on their merit.