

Important Current Affairs of Assam

Vrindavani Vastra Museum in Assam

Context

- The Government of Assam, led by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, has initiated the construction of a **world-class Vastra Museum complex in Guwahati**.
- The museum aims to showcase the **historic Vrindavani Vastra**, one of Assam's most significant cultural textiles.
- The textile will be **loaned by the British Museum for 18 months starting in 2027**, marking its **first public display in Assam in modern times**.



What is Vrindavani Vastra?

- *Vrindavani Vastra* is a **16th-century woven silk tapestry** depicting **episodes from the life of Lord Krishna**.



Key Features

- Created under the guidance of Srimanta Sankardeva, the founder of **Ekasarana Dharma**.
- Woven by skilled Assamese artisans associated with the **Satra tradition**.
- Crafted using **indigenous silk on traditional looms**.
- Illustrates **Krishna's life in Vrindavan**, primarily based on the *Bhagavata Purana*.
- Recognized as **one of the earliest narrative textiles in Asia**.

Historical Significance

- Commissioned by Srimanta Sankardeva in the **16th century**.
- Originally woven in the **Barpeta region of Assam**.
- Over time, it moved outside Assam through collectors and is now housed in the British Museum.
- Currently preserved in **fragmented form**.
- Its temporary return to Assam is viewed as a **significant cultural repatriation effort**.

Proposed Vastra Museum

Key Highlights

- **Location:** Guwahati
- Designed as an **international-standard textile museum**
- **Exhibitions will include:**
 - Vrindavani Vastra
 - Assamese textile heritage
 - Vaishnavite art and culture

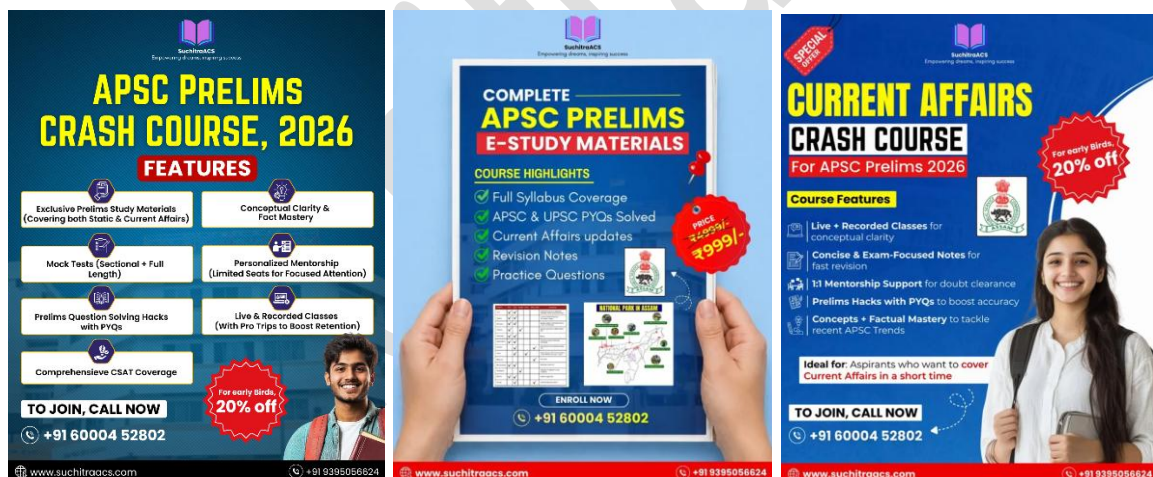


Collaboration

- Supported by the **JSW Foundation**
- Coordinated with the British Museum

Important

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Waterbirds of Kaziranga

Context

- The **7th Kaziranga Waterbird Estimation** recorded **1,05,540 waterbirds belonging to 107 species** across the **Kaziranga-Laokhowa-Burhachapori floodplain complex**.
- The survey was conducted in the Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve, reaffirming it as **one of the largest wintering habitats for waterbirds in the Brahmaputra Valley**.
- The findings highlight the region's significance within the **Central Asian Flyway**, which connects **Arctic breeding grounds to South Asia and Africa**.



Key Findings of the Waterbird Census

- **Wetlands surveyed:** 166

Geographical Coverage

- Eastern Assam Wildlife Division
- Biswanath Wildlife Division
- Nagaon Wildlife Division

Indicates **high ecological productivity and wetland diversity** in Kaziranga's floodplain ecosystem.



Species of Global Conservation Concern

Endangered Species

- Greater Adjutant Stork (*Leptoptilos dubius*) – 66
- Pallas's Fish Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucoryphus*) – 61

Vulnerable Species

- Lesser Adjutant (*Leptoptilos javanicus*) – 257

Near Threatened Species

- Ferruginous Pochard – 5,594
- Oriental Darter – 1,102

Many species are protected under the **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972**.

Important Wetland Habitats in Kaziranga

Key bird congregation sites include:

- Rowmari Beel

- Donduwa Beel
- Wetlands in Agoratoli Range
- Wetlands in Bagori Range
- Sohola Beel

These wetlands form an **interconnected floodplain system**, crucial for both **resident and migratory species**.

Significance of the Findings

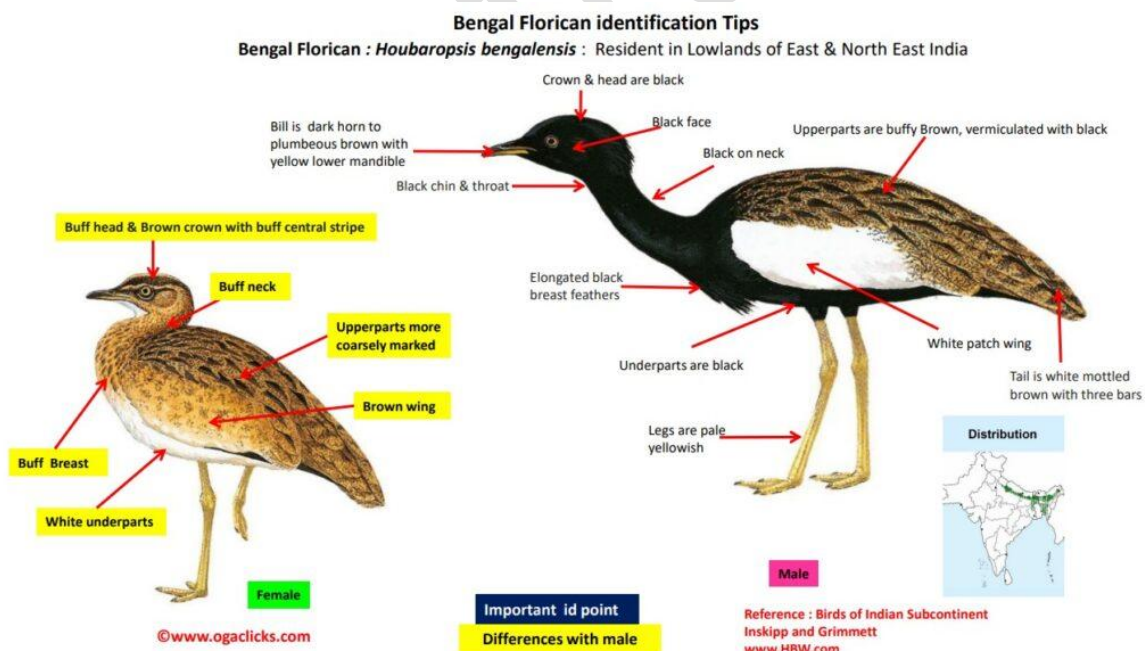
1. Ramsar Wetland Benchmark

- The count exceeds **20,000 waterbirds**, satisfying **Ramsar Convention Criterion 5**.

2. Indicator of Ecosystem Health

- Waterbirds act as **bioindicators**:
 - Sensitive to habitat changes
 - Reflect wetland quality
 - Provide early warning of ecological degradation

Bengal Florican



Conservation Status

- **IUCN Red List: Critically Endangered (CR)**
- **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972: Schedule I** (Grants it the highest level of legal protection in India, on par with tigers and rhinos).

- **CITES:** Appendix I

Habitat

- It is strictly a terrestrial bird that prefers **lowland tall grasslands** (specifically the Terai-Duar savanna and grasslands) interspersed with scrublands.
- It relies heavily on these tall grasses for camouflage and nesting.

Distribution

- **Global:** Its population is severely fragmented, found only in small pockets of India, Nepal, and Cambodia.
- **In India:** Found in Uttar Pradesh, Assam, and Arunachal Pradesh.
- **In Assam:** The state holds the **largest population** of Bengal Floricans in India. Look for these specific protected areas in exam options:
 - **Manas National Park** (A major stronghold)
 - **Orang National Park** (Known for a significant concentration)
 - **Kaziranga National Park**
 - Also found in parts of the **Dibru-Saikhowa National Park** and **Burachapori Wildlife Sanctuary**.

Distinctive Characteristics

- **Sexual Dimorphism:** Males and females look completely different. Males have striking black plumage with prominent white wings, while females are slightly larger and have a dull, brown/buff color to camouflage perfectly in the dry grass.
- **Mating Display:** The male is famous for its spectacular aerial courtship display during the breeding season, where it suddenly shoots up high above the tall grass and flutters down to attract females.

Asian Black Bear Sighting in Rani Reserve Forest

Context

- Recently, an **Asian Black Bear** was spotted roaming freely in a non-captive environment within the **Rani Reserve Forest**, Assam.

Rani Reserve Forest

- **Location:** Situated in the **Kamrup district**, sharing its southern borders with the hills of Meghalaya.
- **Ecological Contiguity:** It is immediately contiguous with the **Garbhanga Reserve Forest**. Together, they form the largest network of protected green cover in the immediate vicinity of Guwahati.

- **Significance:** It serves as a vital active elephant corridor. Furthermore, the forest's catchment area directly feeds into **Deepor Beel** (Assam's only Ramsar site), making its preservation critical to the local hydrology.

Asian Black Bear (*Ursus thibetanus*)

- **Common Name:** Often referred to as the **Moon Bear**, easily identified by the distinct white V-shaped or crescent patch on its chest.
- **Conservation Status:**
 - **IUCN Red List: Vulnerable (VU)**
 - **Wildlife Protection Act (1972): Schedule I** (Grants it the highest level of legal protection).
- **Habitat:** They are highly arboreal (excellent tree climbers) and typically prefer dense, hilly deciduous forests. While they are naturally found in the hill districts of Assam (like Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao), spotting one this close to the Guwahati urban periphery is a notable ecological event.



Climate Variability in Assam

Context

- Assam is witnessing a **severe rainfall deficit during the 2025–26 winter (rabi) season**, as per data from the India Meteorological Department.
- The state recorded:
 - **>70% below-normal rainfall since November**
 - **~99% deficit since January 1**
 - Upper Assam recorded **up to +7°C above normal (February)**
- This prolonged dry spell is adversely affecting:
 - Agriculture
 - Tea plantations
 - Groundwater levels
 - Overall climate stability



Maharaj Prithu Flyover

Context

- The **Maharaj Prithu Flyover** was inaugurated on **10 March 2026** in Guwahati by Himanta Biswa Sarma.
- It is currently the **longest flyover in Northeast India**, marking a major milestone in Assam's urban infrastructure development.



Key Features

- **Length:** 4.2 km
- **Configuration:** Four-lane flyover
- **Executing Agency:** Public Works Department (Roads), Assam
- **Completion Time:** 28 months (*ahead of schedule from 36 months*)

Route & Connectivity

- Starts near **FCI Godown** and ends at **Dighalipukhuri** in Guwahati
- Connects **Noonmati** with **central Guwahati**.
- Provides **additional 1.5-lane service roads on both sides**, forming a **four-lane corridor along GNB Road**

Planned Extensions & Additions

- Two additional arms proposed:
 - Over **Rajgarh railway line**
 - From **Gauhati Club to Uzanbazar**
- Development of **rotary points** (similar to Chandmari) at:
 - Gauhati Club
 - Ulubari flyover. Aimed at improving **traffic flow and reducing bottlenecks**

Associated Infrastructure Projects

- **Guwahati Metro Rail** project to begin after completion of the **Ring Road**
- New flyover planned: **Gauhati Club → Ulubari**
- Upcoming projects:
 - **Cycle Factory flyover:** Expected by April 2026
 - **Mission Chariali flyover:** Expected by July 2026

Major Flyovers in Assam

Flyover	Approx. Length
Maharaj Prithu Flyover	~4.5 km
Nilachal Flyover	~2.6 km
Dinesh Goswami Flyover	~1.8 km
Bhagadatta Flyover	~1.6 km
Ganeshguri Flyover	~0.65 km
Zoo Road Flyover	~0.60 km

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Science City Guwahati

Location & Scale

- **Location:** Tepesia, Sonapur (on the outskirts of Guwahati, Kamrup Metropolitan district).
- **Scale:** Spread across approximately **250 bighas (82 acres)**. It is officially the **first Science City in Assam** and the larger Northeast region.



Administrative & Funding Details

- **Implementing Agencies:** It is a joint venture between the **National Council of Science Museums (NCSM)** and the **Science and Technology Department, Government of Assam**.
- **Parent Scheme:** It was developed under the Central Government's **Scheme for Promotion of Culture of Science (SPoCS)**, which operates under the **Ministry of Culture**.
- **Funding:** The total project cost is estimated at around **₹300 crore**, with the Central Government contributing approximately **₹144 crore**.

Key Features & Galleries

The facility is designed as a massive interactive learning hub to promote scientific temper and STEM education. Its currently operational major attractions include:

- **Eureka Pavilion:** Features interactive exhibits demonstrating core scientific concepts.
- **Space Odyssey:** Dedicated to space exploration and astronomy.
- **Digital Planetarium:** A state-of-the-art facility offering immersive simulations of space travel, moon missions, and journeys to Mars.

Concurrent Launches

- Alongside the Science City, the Assam government concurrently launched five new district-level Science Centres across the state to decentralize science education.
- These are located in **Bongaigaon, Dadara (Amingaon), Kaliabor, Majuli, and Silchar**.

KaushalCONNECT App

Administrative Details

- **Nodal Department:** Panchayat & Rural Development Department (P&RD), Government of Assam.
- **Implementing Agency:** Assam State Rural Livelihoods Mission Society (ASRLMS).

Core Objective

- KaushalCONNECT is an innovative digital platform (operating as a mobile app) that directly connects the citizens of Assam with **skilled, government-trained local service providers** (like plumbers, electricians, beauticians, etc.) for everyday rural and urban service needs.



Who are the Service Providers?

The workers listed on this app are not random freelancers. A key distinction for exams is that the platform exclusively features youth trained under recognized Central/State government skill development initiatives, primarily:

- **DDU-GKY:** Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana
- **RSETI:** Rural Self Employment Training Institutes

Key Features & Working Mechanism

- **Dual-App System:** It operates via two interfaces—"KaushalCONNECT" (for citizens to book services) and "KaushalCONNECT Partner" (for the skilled gig workers to receive and manage requests).
- **Zero Commission:** Unlike commercial apps (like Urban Company), KaushalCONNECT charges **zero platform fees** or commissions from either the citizen or the worker. It acts purely as a facilitation bridge.
- **Location-Based Matching:** Citizens can search for certified workers specifically within their own district or immediate locality.
- **Verification:** It utilizes a secure OTP-based login and a "service completion code" system to ensure the work was actually delivered before the job is marked complete.

Bholaguri Tea Estate

- Established in **1919** by Gopal Chandra Agarwala
- First **Assamese-owned tea garden on the North Bank of the Brahmaputra**
- The tea estate served as the base for **Chitrobon Studio**, one of the earliest Assamese film studios.
- Taken over by **Assam Tea Corporation in 1974**.
- Assam government is establishing **Swahid Kanaklata Baruah State University** at the Bholaguri Tea Estate site.



Mukhya Mantri Thaluwa Udyog Bikash Achoni (MMTUBA)

About

- The **Mukhya Mantri Thaluwa Udyog Bikash Achoni (MMTUBA)** is an Assam government scheme designed to support and revive traditional local industries and handicraft clusters. It focuses on providing financial and infrastructural assistance to grassroots artisans and small community-based enterprises.

Target Beneficiaries & Sectors

This scheme does *not* apply to modern startups or heavy manufacturing. It is strictly aimed at traditional artisans. Key sectors covered include:

- **Japi Making** (Traditional bamboo/leaf headgear)
- **Sarna Silpa** (Traditional Assamese jewelry)
- **Bell-metal and Brass-metal works** (Sarthebari/Hajo artisans)
- **Bamboo & Cane crafts**
- **Traditional Handloom & Pottery**

Implementation Mechanism

- **Nodal Execution:** While it falls under the broader umbrella of Industries & Commerce, the scheme heavily utilizes the **Cooperation Department** of Assam.
- **Cooperative Societies:** Assistance is frequently disbursed to registered Cooperative Societies of artisans rather than just isolated individuals. This helps build collective bargaining power and bulk purchasing of raw materials.

Core Objectives

- **Support Local Artisans:** Direct financial aid to buy new tools, raw materials, and equipment.
- **Heritage Preservation:** Focused on preserving traditional crafts such as bell metal work, weaving, pottery, bamboo crafts, and japi making.

- **Infrastructure Development:** Providing funds to develop the infrastructure of identified industrial clusters.
- **Employment Generation:** Aims to help small businesses revive and create employment for 3 to 5 people per unit.

Key Benefits

- **Grant for Tools:** Individual artisans can receive grants of up to ₹20,000 for purchasing looms, furnaces, or other essential tools.
- **Infrastructure Support:** Financial assistance of up to ₹15 lakh is provided for the development of local industry infrastructure.
- **Bypassing Middlemen:** The direct transfer of support aims to protect artisans from exploitation by middlemen.

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