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HISTORY, ART & CULTURE



**MAY 2024 TO FEBRUARY
2025**

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1. ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)

- It is the premier organization for the archaeological researches and protection of the cultural heritage of the nation.
- ASI functions under the Ministry of Culture.
- **Functions** – Maintenance of ancient monuments and archaeological sites and remains of national importance.
- Regulates all archaeological activities in the country as per the provisions of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958.
- Regulates Antiquities and Art Treasure Act, 1972.

1.1 Kanhirapoil Megalithic Site

Recently, the Archaeologist discovered prehistoric rock-cut footprints and a human figure at Kanhirapoil in Kerala's Kasaragod.

- A megalithic site is a location where large stone structures are found.
- **Megalith** - It means a large/big stone used to construct a monument or a structure.
- It has been constructed either alone or together with other stones.
- Megaliths were used as monuments and burial sites by ancient communities from the Late Neolithic to the Iron Age.
- Megaliths are often oriented to the solstices and equinoxes.
- **Period** – From 2500 BC to AD 200.

Recent Findings

- **Location** – Kanhirapoil in Madikkai panchayat, Kerala.
- The findings include 24 pairs of prehistoric footprints and a human figure carved into rock on private property.
- These carvings date back to the Megalithic period and are made with iron tools.
- Footprints vary from 6 to 10 inches.
- At the end of the footprints, a human figure has been intricately etched, accompanied by 4 circular pits around it.
- This represents both children and adults, and souls of dead people have been carved out to honor them.
- All the footprints are pointing towards the west. The local people believe these footmarks to be a goddesses.
- It is similar to prehistoric rock art found in Avalakki Pera in Udupi district in Karnataka.
- These carvings and artefacts indicating a shared cultural heritage in prehistoric north Kerala.

1.2 Ratnagiri Buddhist Site

Archaeological Survey of India have recently unearthed a colossal Buddha head, a massive palm, an ancient wall and inscribed Buddhist relics, all of which are estimated to date back 8th and 9th Century AD.

- **Location** - The Ratnagiri Buddhist site, located in the Ratnagiri district of Odisha.
- **Period** - It is an archaeological site that dates back to the 4th-6th centuries CE.
- It is part of the famous **Diamond Triangle** of Odisha along with Udaygiri and Lalitgiri, Ratnagiri, translated as the 'Hills of Jewels' was first documented as a historical site in 1905.
- **Rivers** - The site stands on a hill between Birupa and Brahmani rivers.
- **Features** - It features ancient rock-cut caves, stupas, and monastic complexes, showcasing the Buddhist monasticism and art.
- **Origin of sects** - Mahayana and Tantrayana (also known as Vajrayana that involves mystical practices and concepts) sects of Buddhism originated.
- **Associated Travelers** - Chinese Buddhist monk and traveller, **Hiuen Tsang**, who visited Odisha, during 638-639 AD, might have visited Ratnagiri.
- The new excavations would shed light about the lifestyle, culture, religion, art and architecture at different times.

The links of Buddhism in Ratnagiri and Southeast Asia

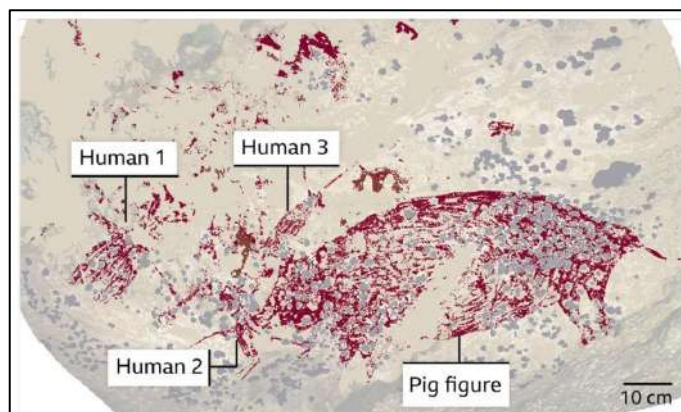
- Odisha has long enjoyed maritime and trade links with Southeast Asian countries.
- **Items of Trade** - Pepper, cinnamon, cardamom, silk, camphor, gold, and jewellery were popular items of trade between the ancient kingdom of Kalinga and Southeast Asia.
- **Baliyatra** - The state also annually holds Baliyatra, literally 'voyage to Bali'.
- It is a 7-day festival to commemorate the maritime and cultural links between Kalinga and Bali and Southeast Asian regions such as Java, Sumatra, Borneo, Burma (Myanmar) and Ceylon (Sri Lanka).
- Experts believe that **Tapassu and Bhallika**, the two merchant brothers who became the first disciples of Lord Buddha, having their origins from Utkala, another ancient name of Odisha.
- **Mauryan Emperor Ashoka** (304-232 BCE), whose invasion of the kingdom of Kalinga in 261, the ancient name for Odisha led to him embracing the religion.
- Buddhism is stated to have particularly flourished under the **Bhaumakara dynasty**, which ruled parts of the state in between the 8th and 10th Century.

1.3 Limestone cave, Leang Karampuang

A team of Indonesian and Australian researchers discovered the cave painting inside the Leang Karampuang cave.

Findings

- Location- South Sulawesi, Indonesia.
- These caves on Sulawesi have revealed the world's oldest hunting scene, now dated to at least 48,000 years.
- It is famous for its prehistoric rock art, specifically hand stencils and animal paintings, which are estimated to be around 35,000 to 40,000 years old.
- Evidence- Prehistoric people painted 3 human figures and a wild pig on a limestone cave ceiling using red pigment.
- Flickering torchlight in the dark cave would have brought this art work to life.
- This innovative method is poised to revolutionize rock art dating globally.



Limestone caves

- Limestone caves are formed when rainwater seeps through cracks in limestone rock and dissolves it.
- Limestone is generally formed in a warm shallow sea where plants and animals thrive.
- **Speleogenesis** - Limestone caves are primarily formed through the process of chemical weathering. The process of cave formation is known as speleogenesis.

1.4 Phanigiri

Hoard of lead coins belonging was found in Phanigiri village.

- Phanigiri is a Buddhist site in Suryapet district, Telangana.
- **Etymology** – It derives its name from the shape of a nearby hillock, which appears to be like a snake hood.
 - **In Sanskrit** – *Phani means snake* and *Giri means hillock*.
- **Location** – It lies on the left bank of the Bikkeru rivulet, a tributary of the river Musi in Telangana.
- **Discovery** – It was 1st discovered & protected during the period of Nizam, was excavated in 1940s by Sri Khaja Mahamad Ahmad.
- It was not a lone site in this zone as there are several Buddhist sites nearby.
- **Coins** – A globular pot was unearthed that was filled with **lead coins**, 3730 in number & the average weight of each coin is 2.3g.
- **Other findings** – Beads of stone and glass, shell bangle fragments, stucco motifs, broken limestone sculptures, a toy cart wheel, iron nails, and pottery were also found during excavations.
- **Observation** – The coins have an **elephant symbol** on the obverse and **ujjain symbol** on the reverse, concluded that these coins belong to the Ikshvaku period.

Phanigiri village was occupied by pre/proto-historic, early historic, early medieval and Asaf Jahi period. It had a vibrant life from 1000 BCE to late 18th century CE.



Earlier excavations at Phanigiri had a Mahastupa, apsidal Chaitya Grihas, Viharas, a 24 pillared mandapa and Brahmi label inscriptions.

1.5 Lothal dockyard of Harappan Civilisation

Recently a new study by the Indian Institute of Technology-Gandhinagar has found evidence for Lothal dockyard of Harappan Civilization.

- **Geographical location** – It is situated approximately 30 km inland from the Gulf of Khambhat on the western coast of India in Gujarat.
- **Economy** – It served as a bustling port during the Bronze Age Harappan period (2600 BCE to 1900 BCE)
- It was connected to a series of Harappan production and distribution centres along the Gulf of Kachchh and the Rann of Kachchh.
- **Significance** - It is renowned for its well-preserved **brick-walled dockyard and warehouse**.
- **Lothal dockyard theory** – It is reevaluated using multi-sensor data, cloud computing, and multiple platforms.
- **Path of Sabarmati River** – It used to flow by Lothal during IVC period but currently, it flows 20 km east of Lothal.
- The lower reaches of the River underwent significant migration during the late Holocene period which was discovered by the satellite images of the old channels of the River Sabarmati.

- **Travel Route** – There was also a travel route connecting Ahmedabad, through Lothal, the Nal Sarovar wetland, and the Little Rann, to Dholavira.



1.6 Mehrauli Archaeological Park

The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has told the Supreme Court that two structures inside the Mehrauli Archaeological Park bear religious significance.

- **Mehrauli Archaeological Park** – It is an archaeological area spread over 200 acre in the Mehrauli neighbourhood of the South Delhi district of Delhi.
- It is located adjacent to the Qutub Minar (a World Heritage Site) and the Qutb complex.
- It houses over 50 historically significant monuments built by different rulers of Delhi.
- **Uniqueness** – It's the only area in Delhi that has seen 1,000 years of continuous occupation.
- From the Tomar Rajputs to the Khaljis, Tughlaqs, Lodhis, Mughals, and even the British Raj.

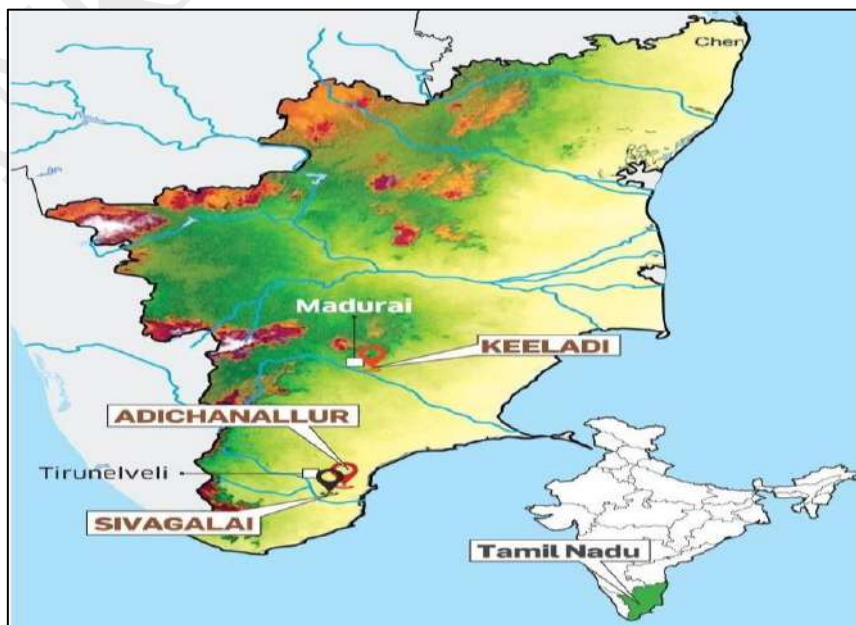
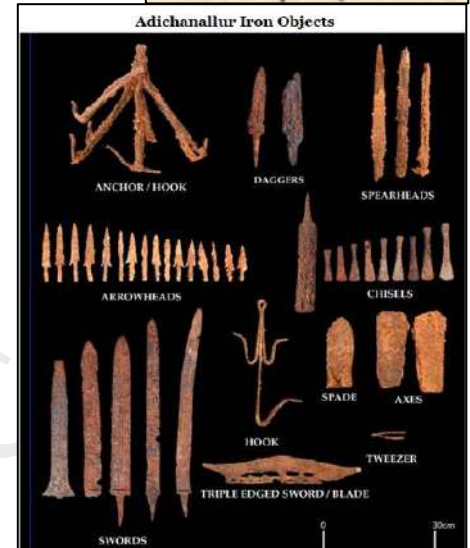
Architectural landmarks of Mehrauli Archaeological Park

Monuments	Significance/Uniqueness
• Lal Kot (1060 AD)	• Oldest surviving fort in Delhi.
• Tomb of Balban (1287 AD)	• Country's first true arch and dome.
• Jamali Kamali Mosque and Tomb (1526-1535 AD)	• Blend of Indo-Islamic architecture.
• Rajon Ki Baoli	• 16 th century stepwell of the Masons.
• Dargah of Qutab Sahib	• A serene white marble shrine.
• Hijron ka Khanqah	• A Sufi hospice, shelter and spiritual solace to the transgender community.
• Jahaz Mahal / Ship Palace	• Boat-like shape and arched openings.
• Ashiq Allah Dargah	• Tomb of Shaikh Shahibuddin.
• Chillagah of Baba Farid	• Baba Farid was the revered 13th century Sufi saint.

1.7 Tamilnadu Iron Age

A groundbreaking study reveals that Tamil Nadu's Iron Age began as early as **3,345 BCE**, predating the Hittite Empire's iron usage by a millennium.

- **Sivagalai** – It is an ***Iron Age habitation-cum-burial site*** in the *Thamirabarani river valley* in Thoothukudi district.
- **Sivagalai excavation** – A total of 24 trenches were excavated at these sites, which exposed around 160 urns, a majority of them being red ware.
- **Findings** – Skeletal remains, paddy grains, over 85 iron objects including knives, arrowheads, chisels, axes, rings, and swords, were found at the site.
- **Radiometric dating** – The samples from Sivagalai were analyzed by three prestigious research institutions:
 - Beta Analytics in the United States.
 - Physical Research Laboratory in Ahmedabad.
 - Birbal Sahni Institute of Palaeosciences in Lucknow.
- **Advanced dating techniques** – The samples from Sivagalai, however, were subjected to advanced dating techniques:
 - Accelerometer mass spectrometry radiocarbon (AMS14C) dating for charcoal.
 - Optically stimulated luminescence (OLS) dating for ceramics.
- **The Report** – Findings of the dating study were presented as 'Antiquity of Iron: Recent Radiometric Dates from Tamil Nadu', authored by K Rajan and R Sivanantham.
- **Findings** – Radiometric dating of burial urn samples from Sivagalai indicate a thriving Iron Age civilization in southern India in 4th millennium BCE, contemporaneous with copper civilization of Indus Valley.
- While the regions to the north of the Vindhyas were still in the Copper Age, southern India may have entered the Iron Age due to a lack of commercially exploitable copper ores.
- **Adichanallur charcoal** – Adichanallur in Thoothukudi district, of Tamilnadu produced a charcoal sample associated with iron objects that was dated to 2517 BCE.
- **First smelted iron** – For the first time in the world, smelted iron has been dated back to the middle of the third millennium BCE.
- **Hittite Empire (in modern-day Turkey)** – This was believed to be the first civilization to use iron, with evidence dating back to around 1,380 BCE.
- **Other Iron regions of India** – Brahmagiri in Karnataka and Gachibowli near Hyderabad, were dated to around 2140 BCE and 2200 BCE, respectively.



2. TRIBES & TRIBAL ARTS

2.1 Onge tribes

Andaman's Onge tribe king Totoko and Queen Priya welcomed a baby boy.

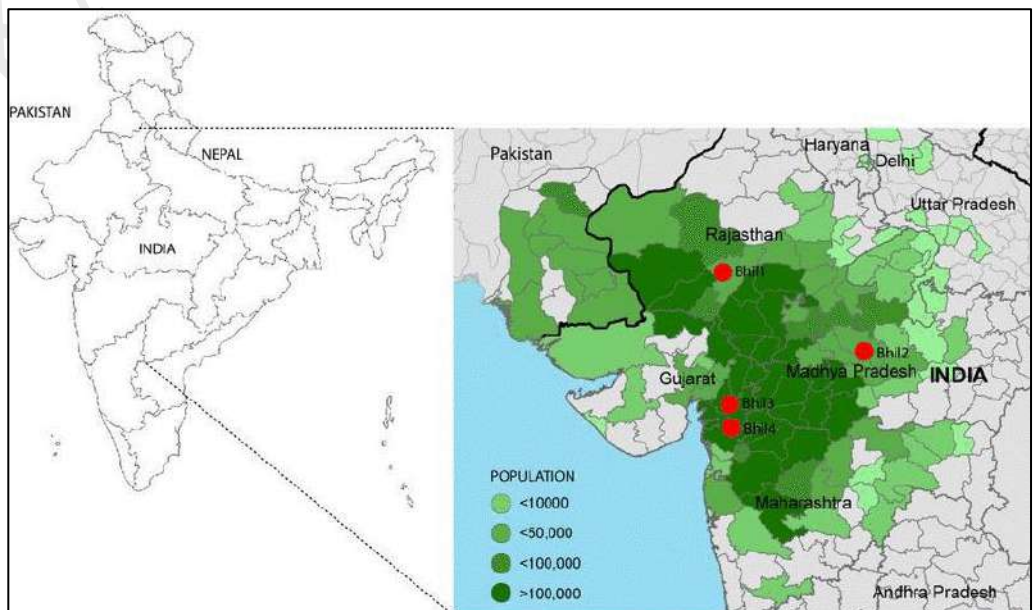
- **About** – Onges are one of the oldest tribes in Little Andaman Island.
- **Racial ancestry** – Negrito.
- **Occupation** – The Onge tribe is traditionally semi-nomadic and reliant on hunting and gathering.
- **Habitat** – Until 1940s, the Onge were the sole permanent inhabitants of Goubalambabey (the Onge name for Little Andaman).
- At present, they were confined to the **Dugong Creek and South Bay** of Little Andaman Island.
- **Appearance** – Due to their dark appearances, Onges are regarded as among the darkest people.
- **Religion** – They do not believe in or follow firm worshipping practices or sacrifices.
- **Ornamentation** – On special occasions, they place a greater emphasis on body ornamentation.
- **Belief** – They considered that white teeth is a symbol of death, so they continue to chew the bark to impart a red colour to their teeth.
- **Prolific nature** – The Onge tribe is also one of the world's least prolific and infertile communities.
- Infertility affects somewhat more than 40% of married couples.

Other tribes in Andaman were Jarawa, Shompen, Great Andamanese and Sentinelese.

2.2 Bhil tribe

The Rajasthan tribal community has reiterated their demand for a new state called 'Bhil Pradesh'.

- **Bhil tribe** – They are one of the largest indigenous tribal communities in India.
- **Historical origin** – They belong to the race of the **pre-Aryans**.
- The word "Bhil" is derived from the *Dravidian* word "*Billu*," meaning bow, reflecting their *traditional skills in archery*.
- **Geographic distribution** – They are predominantly found in the states of **Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Maharashtra**.
- Some population are also found in the north eastern parts of *Tripura*.
- **Classification** – They are classified as:
 - Central or pure bills
 - Eastern or Rajput Bhils
- **Language** – **Bhili**, a language that has many dialects and variations.
- Bhili is part of the Western Zone of the Indo-Aryan languages.



- In different regions, Bhils may also speak the local state languages such as Marathi, Gujarati, or Rajasthani.
- **Economy** – Traditionally, the Bhils are *forest dwellers* and their livelihood is closely linked with the forest.
- They practice agriculture, hunting and gathering.
- Shifting cultivation is common among them.
- **Festivals** – **Baneshwar fair** is their main festival.
- **Kakad Bhairav** – Also known as Bhilat Baba, a stone deity worshipped by the Bhils in Madhya Pradesh's Bagh was recently proved to be a fossilized dinosaur egg.

Article 3 of the India constitutions states that the Parliament may by law form a new State by separation of a territory from any State or by uniting two or more States completely or in parts or by uniting any territory to a part of any State.

2.3 Shompen Tribes

Some members of the shompen tribes voted in the 2024 election amidst fears that their forests on the Great Nicobar Island will be destroyed by a proposed project.

- **Shompens** – They are particularly vulnerable tribal groups (PVTGs) in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and also one of the most isolated tribes on Earth and the group is heterogeneous.
- **Language** – They have their own language, called Shompenese, which is part of the Austroasiatic language family and it has many dialects.
- **Cultural practices** – They are primarily hunter-gatherers and also practise a horticulture and pig rearing.
- Hunting of wild pigs, monkeys, monitor lizards and sometimes pythons are common among the tribe.
- **Diet** – Pandanus (a tropical plant found in the islands), whose fruits resemble the woody pineapple, is the staple food of the Shompens.
- **Classification** – Geographically, the tribe can be classified into 4 different groups depending on their location in the Great Nicobar Island namely north-eastern, western, southern and central groups.
- **Economy** – Different groups of Shompens have developed different levels of symbiotic relationship particularly a barter system with the Great Nicobarese.
- **Distinction** – They are distinct from the 4 other PVTGs of Andaman and Nicobar Islands by Mongoloid features.
- **Religion** – Animism.
- **Social structure** – They have a patriarchal structure, with the eldest male member overseeing family affairs.
- **Population** – According to the 2011 Census, there are only around 229 members of the Shompen tribe.

2.4 Yanadi tribe

3 children of Yanadi tribe who went missing from their homes at Kalekhanpeta in Machilipatnam were traced recently.

- The Yanadi are a scheduled tribe in Andhra Pradesh.
- **Name** – The name may come from the Sanskrit word anadi, which means "of unknown origin".
- **Language** – Their mother tongue is Telugu.
- **Lifestyle** – They are nomadic and live in symbiosis with non-tribals.
- **Occupation** – They traditionally hunted, gathered, and farmed.
- **Health** – They have traditional knowledge of herbal remedies for a variety of ailments.
- **Religion** – They celebrate Hindu festivals and worship their household deities in houses called "Devuru Indlu".
- **Dance** – They perform the Dhimsa Dance during festivals and special occasions.

- **Groups** – There are 4 endogamous groups like:
 - Manchi Yanadis or Reddi Yanadis (Cultivators and servants)
 - Adivi Yanadis (those living in forests)
 - Paki Yanadis (Scavengers) and
 - Challa Yanadis (those who collect left out food from leaf plates in the dust bins).
- **Vulnerability** – They are among the most vulnerable tribal groups in India, living in extreme poverty and social exclusion.
- In 2001, an Integrated Tribal Development Agency (IITD) was established in Nellore to help with the socio-economic development of the Yanadi people.

2.5 Reang tribe

Recently, Tripura's Reang community has demanded the government to grant recognition to their language and declare a holiday on Hojagiri Day.

- **Reang** – They are the 2nd largest numerous sub-tribe of Tripuris after the old Tripuri clan.
- The Reangs are found in Tripura, Mizoram and Assam.
- **Origin** – They come first from the Shan State of upper Burma (now Myanmar) in different waves to the Chittagong Hill Tracts and then to the Southern part of Tripura.
- They belong to Indo-Mongoloid racial stock and are still a nomadic tribe.
- **2 Major Clans:**
 - **Meska** – It is divided into 7 subgroups or Dofa.
 - **Molsoi** – It is subdivided into 6 groups.
- **Language** – It has an affinity of Austro-Asiatic groups under the Tibeto-Burman family.
- It is known as "Kaubru" which has a tonal effect of the Kuki language though broadly it is the Kok-Borok dialect.
- **Cultivation** – They are primarily an agriculturist tribe and maintain their livelihood involving Hilltop Jhum Cultivation.
- Food gathering activities like collection of jungle fruits, leaf, plants, fishing in stagnant water in hill slopes, hunting of wild animals and birds.
- **Religious belief** – Hindus and most of their deities are akin to gods and goddesses of Hindu faith.
- They are also followers of Vaishnavism and believe in spirits and existence of soul.
- They have faith in different deities like Buraha, Bonirao, Songragma, Jampira, Lampra and female deities like Mwtaikotorma, Tuibuma, Mailoma, and Ganga.
- **Marriage system** – Traditionally are endogamous and do not marry outside their community.
- The village council chief is known as "RAI" permits Divorce and Widow Marriage.
- **Dance** – Hozagiri dance is performed during the Hojagiri Festival, which is celebrated to worship the goddess Lampra for a good harvest.
- It is performed exclusively by young women, with melodious tune of flute which is most attractive throughout the country and abroad.
- **Death** – They cremate their dead beside a river or chara.
- It is done in 2 stages - Broksakami and Kothainami.
- They are considered the only Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG) in the state of Tripura.

*Hojagiri Festival is celebrated
on 18-19 October.*

2.6 Jarawa Tribe

Recently, the Jarawa Tribe of 19 members in Andaman and Nicobar Islands was included in the electoral process for the first time, done under systematic Voters' Education & Electoral Participation program.

- The Jarawa are a Paleolithic tribe of hunter-gatherers who live in the **Andaman and Nicobar Islands** in the Indian Ocean.
- **Location** – They live in the western region and coastal belt of South Andaman and Middle Andaman Islands.
- The 1st friendly contact with the tribe was made in 1974.
- **Division** – It has 3 socially discernable territorial divisions viz.
 - **Northern Group** – Occupies Western part of Middle Andaman Island – known as Tanmad and 'Kadamtala Jarawa' among non-tribals.
 - **Southern Group** – Occupies Western part of South Andaman Island – known as Boiab among Jarawas and non-Jarawas call them as 'Tirur Jarawas'.
 - **Central Group** – Occupies Western part of South Andaman Island - Thidong among the Jarawa and among non-Jarawas it is known as 'R. K. Nallah Jarawas'.
- **Habitat** – They live in groups of chaddhas, which called as their homes.
- **Lifestyle** – They live a nomadic lifestyle, subsisting on hunting, fishing, and gathering.
- **Diet** – Their traditional food includes boar, turtles, crabs, wild pigs, fruits and honey.
- **Dress** – They do not use any apparel to cover their bodies, in recent times some of them use clothes occasionally.
- They rename their children **during or after the adolescent ceremony**.
- **Marriage System** – The girls generally get married by 15 years of age.
- Widowhood does not affect the childbearing of females in this society.
- Widows/Widowers are allowed to remarry.
- **Belief** – They consider the sun, moon, sky, star and cloud as the important phenomena for their living and survival.
- **Music** – The singing is related to their activities like making floral ornaments, baskets, wooden buckets, or fetching water.
- **Population** – The Jarawa population has been drastically reduced by interaction with foreigners and the introduction of diseases.
- Recent surveys estimate that only **250 to 450** Jarawa people still live in the Andaman Islands.

2.7 Cholanaikkan Tribes

Education department recently prepares exclusive talking texts for bed-ridden tribal girl in Kerala under the Samagra Shiksha Kerala' program.

- They are one of the most isolated tribes inhabits the forests in the **Nilambur Valley** of Malappuram district of **Kerala**.
- **Nomenclature** – They call themselves as Malanaikan or Sholanaikan.
- Cholanaikkans (coolanaaykkan) are called the **Cavemen of Kerala**.
- Shola or chola means deep thicket in the forest and naikan means king.
- They are the **only cave dwelling community** in India.
- **Population** – They are small tribe with a total population of less than 400 persons, they **are diminishing** recently.
- **Groups** – They are divided into smaller groups called **Jenmam**. They have no fixed dwellings but prefer to live close to water sources.
- They are found in groups consisting of **2 to 7** primary families. Each group is called a Chemmam.

- **Diet** – The community lives essentially by scavenging the forest. They do not cultivate due to the problem of elephants trampling over their produce.
- **Habitat** – A fraction of whom live in caves, the rest in temporary self-built structures.
- Their forest area is completely protected and outsiders are not even allowed to scavenge for forest produce or contact the tribal communities.
- They live in a protected forest with elephants and other wild animals including occasional sighting of tigers. Antelopes are very common.
- **Language** – They speak a language which is weakly called Dravidian but it is not directly related to any of the modern Dravidian languages.
- Their names also suggest local words and do not carry any names from Hindu mythologies or other more prevalent names suggesting long period of isolation.
- **Classification Status** - They are classified as **Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)**.

3. ART FORMS

3.1 Kalaripayattu

The Indian Kalaripayattu Federation (IKF) accuses the Indian Olympics Association (IOA) for placing Kalaripayattu in the demonstration section in the 38th National Games to be held in Uttarakhand.

- Kalaripayattu is considered one of the most ancient martial arts in the world and is popularly known as the **mother of martial arts**.
- **Purpose** – To develop the individual with an extraordinary level of awareness and super-sensitive body-mind co-ordination to keep them ever-prepared for attack & defense.
- **Origin** – The practice of Kalaripayattu is believed to be originated in the 3rd century BC in Kerala.
- **Founder** – The **Saint Parshurama**, the 6th incarnation of Vishnu is said to be the founder of Kalaripayattu.
- He established 42 Kalaris and taught 21 masters of these Kalaris to protect the land of Kerala.
- **Historical references** – It is mentioned in the **Vadakkan Pattukal** ballads written about the Chekavar from the Malabar region of Kerala.
- It is with a legacy of **more than 3000 years**.
- **Training** – It takes place in a **Kalari, an Arena in natural soil ground**.
 - It ensures **cooling of the body** as the students engage themselves in the grueling, heat-generating exercises.
 - It **lessens the threat of skin infection** from bites of insects that inhabit the top soil.
- The practice of Kalaripayattu is divided mainly into 4 stages:
 - **Maithari** – Body Control Exercises.
 - **Kolthari** – Practise of wooden weapons.
 - **Ankathari**- Practice of metal weapons.
 - **Verumkai** – Bare hand fighting techniques.
- **Children at 7 years**, are initiated into Kalaripayattu.
- **Styles of Kalaripayattu**
 - **Vadakkan or Nothern style** – The Vadakkan Kalarippayattu is predominantly practiced in the **Malabar region of Kerala**.
 - The Vadakkan style emphasizes more on graceful body movement and the weaponry.

Kalaripayattu is the oldest and most scientific of all martial arts in the world.



- **Thekken or Southern Style** – The Thekken Kalarippayattu or Adi Murai is practiced mainly in the **Travancore region**, involves more free armed techniques & powerful movements.
- **Poothara** – A small, upwardly tapering, 7-tiered structure stands at the south-western corner of the training.
- **Oral commands** – It is called as *Vaaythaari*, a set of technical words or phrases which don't convey much to the ordinary people.

Indian Kalarippayattu Federation (IKF)

- **Established in** – 1995.
- **Aim** – To promote Kalarippayattu, the Martial Arts of Kerala and propagates its values.
- **Motto** – Unity in Diversity.
- **Nodal Ministry** – Ministry and Youth Affairs and Sports.
- **Association in** – 25 states.
- **Recognized as** – National Federation in 2015.
- **Role** – It offers a disciplined and cultured youth for the welfare and progress of the Nation.

3.2 Jhumur dance

Prime Minister will witness the world's biggest jhumur dance in history in Guwahati's Sarusajai Stadium at the Jhumoir Binandini 2025 to mark the 200th anniversary of Assam's tea industry.

- Jhumur is the dance of Assam's traditional 'tea-tribes'.
- **Tea Tribes** – The term “tea tribe” refers to a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic community of tea garden workers and their descendants.
- These people came from **Central India** mostly from present-day Jharkhand, Odisha, Chhattisgarh and West Bengal and settled in Assam in the 19th century to work in the tea gardens.
- These tea gardens were setup by British.
- They currently have **Other Backward Classes (OBC) status** in the state, although they have long been fighting for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status.
- Tribes such as the Munda or the Santhal, a part of the larger tea garden community in Assam, have **ST status** in the states where they originally came from.
- Socio-economically, however, remain marginalised, and among the poorest in the state.
- **Jhumur dance** – The tea garden community brought a motley collection of cultural practices from their homelands to Assam including the jhumur tradition.
- Jhumur is the folk dance of the **Sadan ethnolinguistic group**, who trace their origins to the Chotanagpur region.
- Today it occupies a central place as “tea garden festivals” or festivals celebrated by tea garden workers in Assam.
- The most important ones are the **Tushu Puja and Karam Puja**, which celebrate the oncoming harvest.
 - Women are the main dancers and singers, while Men play traditional instruments such as madal, dhol, or dhak (drums), cymbals, flutes and shehnai.
- The attire worn varies from community to community, although red and white sarees are particularly popular among women.
- Dancers stand shoulder-to-shoulder and move in coordinated patterns with precise footwork while singing couplets in their native languages Nagpuri, Khortha and Kurmal, borrow from Assamese.
- These songs tell the history of migration and the exploitative labour relations mar their lives.









- It aided them in not only retaining aspects of their culture and identity but also in making sense of the world their ancestors found themselves in.

3.3 Textile prints of India

Today, India is home to some popular textiles of the world.

- Historical relevance** – India has been well known for its textiles since ancient times with their origin tracing back to the Indus Valley civilization since the 5th millennium BC.

Styles	Characteristics
Bagru 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Process – <u>Block printing</u>. Here, the wooden blocks are transformed into motifs with special features on a <u>light-coloured background</u> with different prints and styles.
Khadi 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Process – <u>Hand spun</u>, fibres are spun into a yarn on a spinning wheel called a Charkha. History – Known as Khaddar during the British era and aligns with the Swadeshi movement. Versatility – It has a warm end in winter and a cooling end in the summers.
Bagh 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Process – <u>Hand block print</u> using natural colours. Its name is derived from the village Bagh on the banks of the Bagh River in Madhya Pradesh. Features – A <u>geometric and floral motifs</u> using a vegetable colour over a white background.
Srikalahasti style -Kalamkari 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Process – A type of hand-painted or block-printed cotton textile. There are 2 types of distinctive styles. Srikalahasti style – It involves a <u>pen for freehand drawing</u> of patterns and filling in the colours which is pure hand worked. Machilipatnam style – It involves <u>vegetable-dyed block-painting</u> of a fabric.
Machilipatnam style -Kalamkari 	
Sambalpuri 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Process – <u>Handwoven</u>, where the threads are initially tie-dyed and later woven into a fabric. Features – The traditional motifs such as <u>shell, wheel, and flower</u>.

3.4 Evolution of the Tabla

Recently, the death of Ustad Zakir Hussain provided an occasion for the reopening of debates among the origins and evolution of the tabla.

- **Word 'tabla'** – It comes from the Arabic word 'tabl' which means Drum.
- **Origin** – While some trace its origin to Persian Naqarra, Hussain traced the origin story of the tabla through the evolution of the styles of dhrupad and khayal.
- The most common disagreement concerns whether or not the tabla originated in pre-Islamic India.
- **Evolution** – The classical tabla is a relatively recent tradition, most likely beginning sometime in the 1700s.
- It became the main accompaniment instrument for the vocal style known as khayal which helped to raise tabla's status and popularity.

Dhrupad, a form of Indian Classical music, its origin can be traced back to the chanting of vedic hymns and mantras. It is a form of the Gandharva Veda, the Vedic science of music, which is a branch of Sama Veda.

Persian Naqarra



Indian Pakhawaj



Khayal

- It is the most dominant North Indian classical vocal music offers the performer more freedom and a greater scope for improvisation than the older vocal genre 'Dhrupad'.
- **Origin** – Khyal emerged during the Mughal period, when Persian music influences blended with local Indian traditions.
- It came into being after the temple traditions of dhrupad & prabandh gayaki were fused with qalbana, the Sufi music (later called qawwali), by the 14th century Sufi saint & musician Amir Khusrau.

- **Major developments** – It took place during the reign of Emperor Muhammad Shah of Delhi (1719-1748), whose court host the launch of the sitar and maturation of khayal vocalism.
- **Tabla gharanas** – They are different from vocal and other instrumental gharanas and rest on 3 broad principles:

Amir Khusrau was patronised by Sultan Alauddin Khalji (1296-1316) of Delhi.

- The technique.
- The style of composition - Language/ construction/ phraseology of the tabla syllable in various compositions.
- The individual philosophy of the great masters of each school.

Muhammad Shah was an aesthete, and a great patron of music and the other arts, because of which he was referred to as "Rangeela", the Colourful.

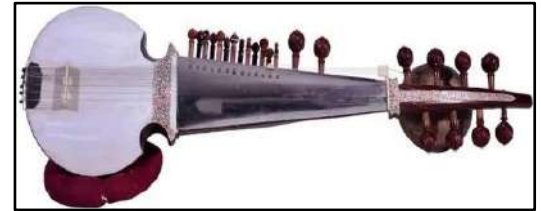
- **6 gharanas of tabla** – They are known by the places where they evolved.
 - Punjab, Purab (also known as the Banaras gharana), Delhi, Ajrara, Lucknow and Farrukhabad.
- **Baaj (playing style)** – It is more pakhawaj-based for the 1st 2 gharanas.
- Purab's crisp and clear sounds are very well suited to Kathak.
- **Punjab gharana** – A mathematical approach, with difficult divisions of beats, is preferred.
- It had offshoots or sub-gharanas such as Talwandi and Naiwala.



3.5 June Sarod

Renowned sarod maestro Pt. Rajeev Taranath recently passed away after a brief illness.

- **About** - Sarod is a stringed musical instrument of the lute family that is common to the Hindustani music tradition of northern India.
- **Origin** - The sarod is an adaptation of the Afghan rabab, which arrived in India during the 16th century.
- The modern form of the instrument was designed in the 19th century.
- **Making materials** - It is made up of coconut shell, tun wood, drone, shikri, and ivory. Entire body carved out of a single block of 'tun' wood.
- **Strings** - There are 2 sets of strings.
 - Upper set contains 4 main playing strings, 4 drones and 2 chikari strings.
 - Lower set is of 15 sympathetic strings.
- All are attached to a metal string holder underneath the resonator, pass through the bridge and finally fixed to their respective pegs.
- **Resonator** - The resonator has a stretched membrane (usually goatskin) and a bridge made from horn where the strings rest.
- The bridge is very thin, like that of a violin. The melody strings are stretched across the bridge and the sympathetic strings run through holes drilled into the bridge.
- **Player** - One who plays the sarod is called a sarodiya and the word sarod is Persian for song or melody.
- **Playing Technique** - The player uses the fingernails of the left hand to press the strings against the fingerboard, producing the notes.
- **Indian Schools** - Two prominent Indian schools of sarod playing are Ghulam Ali Khan and Allauddin Khan.



Rajeev Taranath

- He was born on October 17, 1932, to his father, Pandit Taranath and his mother, Sumathi Bai, Rajeev Taranath.
- He was a distinguished disciple of the great sarod maestro Ustad Ali Akbar Khan.
- He had been honoured nationally by the Government of India with a Padma Shri in 2019 and the Sangeet Natak Akademi award in 2000.
- In Karnataka, he has been bestowed with the Rajyotsava award in 1996, Chowdaiah Memorial award in 1998, Sangeet Vidwan award in 2018 and Nadoja award in 2019.

3.6 Kurukop Echo Art

A recent study by the researchers in South Africa suggested a distinct echo attracted the ancient artists to one site, Kurukop.

- **Kurukop echo** – This place provides a distinctive echo that ensured the hunter gatherers to repeatedly visit this place.
- **Echo Art** – Evidence shows that those people created rock art combined with performances like clapping, singing, dancing, which in this case was enhanced by echoes.
 - **Echo** refers to the repetition of sound caused by the reflection of sound.
- It also provides a reference point for a mythological story from the region that speaks about the relationship between echo, wind, mountain and breath.
- **Cultural relevance** – Petroglyph distribution data and Echo pattern, shows 60% of the petroglyphs created directly in the echo zone.

Petroglyphs engraved on rocks, have an obvious visual attraction.



- This suggests that Kurukop people were most likely to create images in the area that echoed strongly.

Kurukop

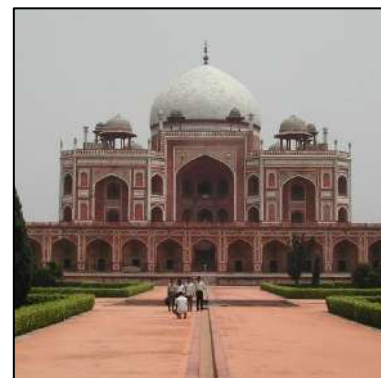
- It is an archaeological site.
- **Located in** - Nama Karoo region of South Africa.
- **Geological formation** – Began to accumulate from about 300 million years ago, before the breakup of super continent Gondwanaland.
- **Historical formation** – It is an eroded sandstone hill, transformed by volcanic activity.
- **Signs of human evidence** – It is marked by 112 petroglyphs and other signs of human presence, such as ostrich eggshell fragments and pottery, dating from c. 11 500 before present.
- **Petroglyphs** – It depicts images of Eland, elephants, zebra, ostriches, wildebeest, rhinoceros and animal-human hybrids.
- The depiction was made by hunter-gatherer San and Khoe herder people who visited Kurukop repeatedly.

4. ARCHITECTURE

4.1 Humayun's Tomb

The Union Minister of Culture and Tourism recently inaugurated the Humayun's Tomb World Heritage Site Museum in New Delhi.

- The tomb is an exemplary piece of Mughal architecture and it was the 1st garden tomb on the Indian subcontinent.
- **Construction** – Commissioned by Bega Begum in 1569-70 and completed in 1572.
- **Architect** – Designed by Mirak Mirza Ghiyas and his son, Sayyid Muhammad, Persian architects chosen by Bega Begum.
- **Design** – Represents the synthesis of Persian and Indian architectural styles, a hallmark of Mughal architecture.
- **Cultural Influence** – Humayun's Tomb inspired the construction of several later Mughal structures, including the Taj Mahal.
- **UNESCO World Heritage Site** – It was listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1993 for its cultural importance and exceptional Mughal architecture.
- **Humayun's Tomb World Heritage Site Museum** – The Museum is a facility of the Archaeological Survey of India designed and built in collaboration with the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC).



Humayun

- Humayun, born Nasir-ud-Din Muhammad Humayun was the second Mughal Emperor.
- He was the son of Babur, the founder of the Mughal Empire, and the father of Akbar the Great.
- **Born** – March 6, 1508
- **Place of Birth**- Kabul, Afghanistan.
- **Died**- January 1556, Delhi.
- Humayun played a key role in the development of Mughal painting by bringing Persian artists like Mir Sayyid Ali and Abdal Samad to India.

- **Architectural Achievements** – He founded Dinapanah, built the Jamali mosque and started Humayun's Tomb, completed later by his wife, Hamida Banu Begum.

4.2 Qutb Shahi tombs complex

After a decade-long restoration effort by the Telangana government and Aga Khan Trust for Culture the Qutb Shahi Heritage Park was opened to the public recently.

- **Built by** – The kings of the Qutb Shahi dynasty, who ruled the Golconda sultanate from 1518–1687.
- **Located in** – Ibrahim bagh in Hyderabad.
- It consists of 30 tombs, mosques and a mortuary bath.
- It belong to the rulers of the Qutb Shahi Dynasty, their queens and children and the nobles who faithfully served them.
- **Architecture** – They are of Indo-Muslim architecture, a style that combines Indian and Persian architectural influences.
- It features onion domes on top of cubes, surrounded by arcades with ornamental details and small minarets with floral motifs.
- The tombs are quadrangular in shape, with galleries in the smaller tombs that are single-story and larger galleries in the two-story tombs.
- In the center of each tomb is a sarcophagus that sits above a burial vault in a crypt below.
- The domes were originally covered in blue and green tiles. The most impressive tomb in the complex is that of Mohammed Quli Qutb Shah, which is 42 meters tall and covered by a large dome.
- It is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.



4.3 Akal Takht

Recently, the Akal Takht has imposed religious punishment to the former Deputy Chief Minister of Punjab, Sukhbir Singh Badal for mistakes done in his party rule from 2007 to 2017.

- Akal Takht is located in the Darbar Sahib, Golden Temple complex in Amritsar, Punjab.
- It means 'the throne of the immortal', which is the highest political institution of the Sikhs.
- **Established by** – The 6th Sikh master Guru Hargobind in 1606 following the execution of his father, Guru Arjan, by the Mughals.
- The 12-foot-high platform of the Akal Takht symbolised a challenge to the Mughal government.
- He used this platform for governance, and issued the first order (Hukamnama) which urged the Sikhs to contribute horses and weapons to the Panth.
- It was created to address both the spiritual and temporal concerns of the Sikh community.
- **Jathedar** – The Jathedar is the highest temporal seat for Sikhs community, resides at the Akal Takht.
- It means the "head" or "leader" of a jatha (group) or organization.
- Jathedar was appointed by the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC).
- Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC), a representative body formed in 1920 responsible for managing Sikh gurdwaras and promoting Sikh religious affairs.
- **Qualifications** – Possess deep knowledge of Sikh history & scriptures, should be free from moral shortcomings.
- His word is final on the affairs of the community.
- He orders tankhah (religious punishment) which is intended to remove ego and instill humility.
- **Punishments** – It include serving as a Sewadar (service volunteer) at the golden temples and other sacred sites, cleaning utensils and shoes, and attending religious hymns.

4.4 The Great Stupa of Sanchi

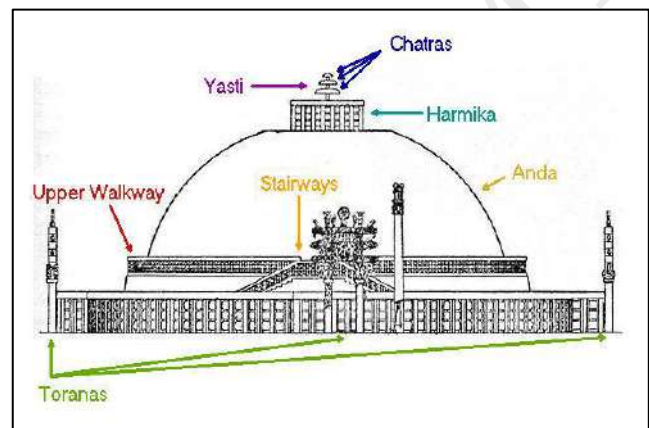
External Affairs Minister recently stopped by the replica of the East Gate of Sanchi's Great Stupa standing in front of Humboldt Forum museum in Berlin.

- It is the largest and oldest structure in a complex of Buddhist monuments comprising numerous other stupas, temples and monasteries.
- It is one of the oldest stone structures in India.
- Geographical location** – It is located in the village of Sanchi in Madhya Pradesh.

- Sanchi was an important religious center from the 3rd century BC to the 13th century AD.

- Built by** – The Mauryan emperor Ashoka in the 3rd century BCE.
- Enlargement** – It was enlarged by using local sandstone during the Sunga period, which began about 50 years after Ashoka's death.
- During the Gupta period, additional structures were built at Sanchi, including a Buddhist temple and a lion pillar.
- Features** – Originally, it is about half the size and built from large bricks and mud mortar.

Stupa is a hemispherical structure whose origins can be traced to pre-Buddhist burial mounds found in India. Now, it is a Buddhist commemorative monument usually containing sacred relics of the Buddha or other venerable saints.



- It had raised terraces at the base, was enclosed by a wooden railing, and was crowned by a stone umbrella.
- Vedika** – It is a stone railing surrounding a circumambulatory walkway.
- Circumambulation or pradakshina is an important part of ritual and devotional practices in Buddhism.
- Harmika** – The main body of the stupa symbolises the cosmic mountain which is topped by a 'harmika', a square structure to hold the triple umbrella, or 'chhatravali'.
 - It represents the 3 jewels of Buddhism – the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha.
- Gateways** – The gateways at the 4 cardinal points or Toranas are the highlights of the structure, with a series of detailed carvings showing Buddhist symbols and important historical and religious scenes.
- It were added later, in the 1st century BC.
- Toranas** – It comprise of two stone pillars surrounded by capitals.
- Chronological sequence of Gateways** – Southern, Northern, Eastern and Western.
- The sculpture of Buddha in dhyana-mudra at the eastern side of the stupa, added to the site in the 5th century AD by the Guptas.
- Significance** – An inscription celebrating the victory of Chandragupta II is found on the railing of the Great Stupa, which dates back to the fourth century A.D.
- Decline** – It began to decline as a major religious site around the same time that Buddhism itself was declining in the Indian subcontinent.
- Recognition** – It has been a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1989.

4.5 Fort William

Recently, Fort William was renamed Vijay Durg.

- Historical background** – It was built by the British in 1781 and named after King William III of England.
- Located in** – Eastern bank of the river Hoogly in Kolkata, West Bengal.
- Robert Clive started the new structure in 1758 CE and the 1st phase of construction was completed by 1781 CE.

- **Area coverage** – Present day structure consists More than 170 acres and houses many colonial and modern-day structures together.
- **Composition** – It comprises the largest urban park of the city and is popularly referred to as the **Lungs of Kolkata**.
- **Structure** – It was built in brick and mortar as an irregular octagon and designed as a **star-shaped fort**, including structures inspired by Georgian and Gothic styles.
- The walls and defences of the fort were structured to defend against cannon firing (as per the need of the times) rather than explosive shelling.
- **Gates** – Chowringhee, Plassey, Calcutta, Water Gate, St. George and Treasury gates.
- The Granary Barracks inside the fort complex were built by Governor-General Warren Hastings (1772–1785 CE).
- In 1856 CE the Dalhousie Barrack (named after Lord Dalhousie, 1848-1856), a 4-storey building, was built as an army garrison to accommodate soldiers.
- The Kitchener's House, initially built as a blockhouse for the Fortress Assault Company in 1771 CE and was converted into an official residence for the Commander-in-Chief of the British Indian Army in 1784 CE.
- Fort William soon emerged as the official governing base for British India.



Sir Charles Eyre was the 1st President and Governor-General of Fort William in Bengal.

- **Commanding center** – After Independence, it is the headquarters of the Eastern Command of the Indian Army.
- The Indian Army has gradually opened to allowing access to selected areas of the fort complex to the general public.
- **Vijay Durg** – It is derived from the oldest fort along the Sindhudurg coast in Maharashtra and served as a naval base for the Marathas under Chhatrapati Shivaji.
- **Gulami Ki Mansikta Se Mukti** – It is an initiative termed as freedom from the mentality of slavery.
- It aims at removing vestiges of the colonial era and “Indianising” military traditions and customs.
- Additionally, Kitchener House inside Fort William has been renamed Manekshaw House, and South gate, formerly known as St. George's Gate, is now Shivaji Gate.

4.6 Vishnupad Temple and Mahabodhi Temple

The Finance Minister announced during her Union Budget Speech recently that corridor projects will be built for the Vishnupad Temple and the Mahabodhi Temple.

Vishnupad Temple

- The temple is **dedicated to Lord Vishnu** located in Gaya, Bihar.
- It was built by **Queen Ahilyabai Holkar in 1787** on the banks of **the Phalgu River**.
- It is around 100 feet tall and has 44 pillars.
- Dharmasila, the footprint of Lord Vishnu etched into a slab of basalt, marks the location of this temple.
- The entire temple is carved by the large **grey granite stones** joint with iron clamps.



Mahabodhi Temple

- It is one of the 4 sacred sites associated with the life of Lord Buddha and is significant as the location where Buddha attained Enlightenment.
- It is located in Bodh Gaya in Bihar, on the banks of the **Niranjana River**.
- **Built by** – **Emperor Ashoka** in the 3rd century B.C.
- The temple is recognized as a **World Heritage site by UNESCO**.
- The temples is completely built in brick had significant influence on the development of brick architecture over the centuries.



4.7 Jagannath Temple

Odisha's law minister recently clarified that there was no secret chamber inside the treasury of the Jagannath Temple in Puri.

- The circular temple is situated in Puri, Odisha.
- It is the **only circular temple in India**.
- It is a revered temple where **Lord Krishna** is worshipped as Lord Jagannath.
- Lord Jagannath is present in this temple along with elder brother Lord Balabhadra and younger sister Goddess Subhadra.
- **Built by** – King **Anatavarman Chodaganga Deva** of the Kachchhapaghata Dynasty (Eastern Ganga Dynasty) in the 12th century.
- **Architecture** – The temple is known for its Kalinga style architecture, which features intricate carvings and curvilinear towers.
- **Features** – **Sandstone and laterite** construction, intricate carvings of Hindu mythology, main shrine built in the 10th century
- The circular structure of the temple is believed to have inspired the design of the Indian Parliament building.
- The temple is also known as the **"White Pagoda"** and is one of the 4 great **"Char Dham" pilgrimage** sites.
- It is famous for its Annual Rath yatra, or chariot festival.



Char Dham refers to the 4 holy sites or 4 abodes of God in the 4 directions of India likely Puri in the East, Rameshwaram in the South, Dwarka in the West, and Badrinath in the North.

4.8 Virupaksha temple

A portion of the Virupaksha temple in Karnataka collapsed following torrential rains.

- Located in – Hampi, Karnataka.
- Established in – 7th century, but gained prominence in the 14th century during the Vijayanagara Empire.
- It was constructed in Lakkana Dandesha's assistance who was a commander under King Deva Raya II.
- **Dravidian temple architecture** – 3 grand gopurams (towering gateways), the shikhara towering over the sanctum sanctorum, its intricate carvings and pillared halls.
- **Gopuram** – It depicts various deities, mythological scenes and animals as sculptures and carvings.
- **Sanctum sanctorum** – The Shiva lingam is the main deity.
- **Pavilions/ Saalu mantap** – Supported by stone pillars.
- **Significance** – It is the oldest and principle temple in Hampi.

The Vijayanagara Empire (1336 to 1646), founded by Harihara I of the **Sangama dynasty**, expanded from a strategic position on the banks of the **Tungabhadra River**.

The **ASI** is responsible for 57 out of the 95 monuments in Hampi that are nationally protected, while the rest are under the state government's control.

- A vital centre for the religious and cultural activities of its time.
- **Use of mathematical concepts** – The temple is triangular in shape & the repeated patterns depict the concept of fractals.
- **Destruction** – Hampi was ruined by the Bahmani sultanates during Vijanagara-Bahmani rivalry.
- The pillars' condition in the pavilion has deteriorated because rain over a long period.
- **Key challenges** – Lack of funding, logistics and human resources.
- **Recognition** – It belongs to the Group of Monuments at Hampi, declared as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Lord Virupaksha, also referred to as Pampapathi.

Few important sites in Hampi ruins

- The Krishna temple complex,
- The Vitthala temple complex
- Virupaksha Temple
- Stone chariot Garuda shrine
- Pattabhirama temple complex
- Lotus Mahal complex



5. LITERATURE

5.1 Pilippatti Merchant Guild Inscription

Recently, the epigraphy division of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) deciphered a Chola-period merchant guild inscription found at Pilippatti village in Pudukkottai district in Tamilnadu.

- The team copied the inscription on **maplitho paper** using the estampage method.
- **Time period** – It dates back to the 10th century.
- **Installation** – It was probably installed during the reign of either Parantaka Chola or Uttama Chola.
- **Features** – It has various symbols including Ankush (sharp pointed hook then used to control elephants), Trishul and lamps.
- **Trade groups** – It mentions trade groups of various territorial divisions, including
 - Ainurruvars of Mangala Nadu, Puramalai Nadu, Poongundra Nadu, Manalur Nadu.
 - Virapattinam of Kodumbalur.



Trade guilds

- **Guilds or Shreni**, in Ancient India, was an association of traders, merchants, and artisans. Generally, a separate

Estampage is used in order to get an exact copy of an inscription. It is typically derived by applying wet paper onto the rock face, over which any ink material is wiped.

shreni existed for a particular group of persons engaged in the same vocation or activity.

- Traders founded guilds and called themselves as sudesi, nanadesi, ainurruvar and others.
- Several trade guilds flourished during the Chola period.
- Members of the trade guilds convened their meetings to make decisions and engraved them as inscriptions and installed them in public places.

ASI team has also copied nearly 10 inscriptions from the walls of **Pilavaneswarar temple in Virachilai in Tirumayam taluk**. These 11th century inscriptions of Sundarapandiyan and Veerapandiyan mention donations given to the temple.

Regional Trade Guilds in Tamil Landscape

- **Regional Trade guilds** – There are some stray occurrences like Vellarai Nigamaththor in the Tamil-Brahmi inscriptions.
- **Autonomous functioning** – From 9th century onwards, such trade guilds started functioning in a distinct manner.
 - Ayyapozhil Ainnurruvar (The 500 of Aihole).
 - Tisaiaiyirathu Ainnurruvar (The 500 of the 1000 directions).
 - Nanadesi (those of various countries).
 - Valanjiyar (Baliyas or Banajigas).
 - Pathinenvishayaththar.
 - Manigramathar.

5.2 Challenges in Deciphering Harappan Script

Recently, the scholars have struggled to solve many subproblems to decipher the Harappan writing system.

- **Challenges** – Deciding if set of symbols actually represent a writing system.
- Reducing the set of signs to the minimal set by forming (its alphabet, syllabary, or inventory of signs) by identifying all allographs.
- Assigning to each symbol their specified value, whether phonetic or otherwise.
- Trying to match these values to a specific language.
- **No multilingual inscriptions** – IVC had robust trade links with the contemporaneous Mesopotamian Civilisation whose cuneiform script was deciphered but there aren't any multilingual inscriptions found.
- **Unknown Script and/or Language** – The Indus script is under the category of 'an unknown script writing an unknown language'.
- **Insufficient material evidences** – Although some 3,500 seals have been identified till date, given that each seal has on average only 5 characters inscribed, it isn't sufficient to decipher the script.
- This general paucity of information has made it difficult to decipher its script.

The Tamil Nadu Chief Minister has announced a **\$1 million prize** for deciphering the script of the Indus Valley Civilisation.

The most famous multilingual inscription is the **Rosetta stone**, which contains a decree passed during the reign of Ptolemy V in 196 BCE in 3 scripts: Greek, demotic (a later ancient Egyptian script), and hieroglyphics.

3 basic categories of undeciphered scripts/languages

- An unknown script writing a known language.
- A known script writing an unknown language.
- An unknown script writing an unknown language.

Allograph is the different representations of the same character in different typefaces. It is the same sign written in a variant form, for example a printed 'a' and cursive 'a'

5.3 Classical Language Status

The Union Cabinet recently approved classical language status to Marathi, Bengali, Assamese, Pali, and Prakrit.

- Classical languages are ancient languages with independent traditions and a rich literary history that continue to influence various literary styles and philosophical texts.
- **Introduction** – In October 2004, this status was conferred to Tamil followed by Sanskrit (2005), Kannada (2008), Telugu (2008), Malayalam (2013) and Odia (2014).
- **Criteria** – The current framework, as revised in 2024 by the Linguistic Experts Committee (LEC) under Sahitya Akademi, emphasises 4 key factors.
- **Key Factors:**
 - High antiquity of the language's early texts/recorded history over a period of 1500-2000 years.
 - A body of ancient literature/texts, which is considered a heritage by generations of speakers.
 - The language must have a distinct and original literary tradition, not derived from another speech community.
 - Knowledge texts, especially prose texts, in addition to poetry, epigraphical and inscriptional evidence.
- The classical languages and literature could be distinct from their current form or could be discontinuous with later forms of their offshoots.
- **Benefits** – The Education Ministry provides certain benefits to promote it.
- These include 3 Central Universities established in 2020 through an Act of Parliament to promote Sanskrit.
- The **Central Institute of Classical Tamil** was set up to facilitate the translation of ancient Tamil texts, promote research, and offer courses for university students and language scholars of Tamil.
- The Centres for Excellence for studies in classical Kannada, Telugu, Malayalam and Odia were also established under the Central Institute of Indian Languages in Mysuru.
- **Significance** – It will promote these languages, their cultural preservation, academic research, and the overall recognition of linguistic heritage.
- It will enhance awareness of the language and strengthen the linguistic identity of speakers, fostering pride in their language's contribution to national and global culture.
- It will ensure that ancient literary texts, manuscripts, and works are conserved.
- Digitization of ancient manuscripts will make them accessible for future generations of scholars.

5.4 Bodoland Mohotsav

Recently 1st Bodoland Mohotsav has been celebrated in New Delhi.

- **Bodoland Mahotsav** - The 2-day Mahotsav is a mega event on language, literature and culture to sustain peace and build a Vibrant Bodo Society.
- **Aim** – To integrate the indigenous Bodo people residing in Bodoland and other parts of Assam, West Bengal, Nepal and international border areas of the Northeast.
- Capitalize on the richness of cultural and linguistic heritage, ecological biodiversity, and touristic potential of Bodoland.
- **Theme** – Peace and Harmony for Prosperous Bharat
- **Bodos** – The Boro, also called Bodo, are an ethnolinguistic group native to the state of Assam in India.
- **Bodo Kachari** – They are a part of the greater Bodo-Kachari family of ethnolinguistic groups and are spread across northeastern India.
- They are concentrated mainly in the Bodoland Territorial Region of Assam, though Boros inhabit all other districts of Assam and Meghalaya.



- **Scheduled Tribes** – Boros were listed under both "Boro" and "Borokachari" in The Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950.
- **Bodoland** – It is officially the Bodoland Territorial Region, is an autonomous region in Assam, Northeast India.
- Bodoland is named after Bodo, an alternative spelling of the Boro people who live primarily in the Dooars regions of Goalpara and Kamrup districts.
- It is predominantly inhabited by the Bodo people and other indigenous communities of Assam.
- **Bodo Movement** – All Bodo Students' Union launched the Bodo Movement in 1987 with the demand for a separate state to be called Bodoland, ending with the Bodo Accord of 1993 with the formation of Bodoland Autonomous Council.
- **Bodo Peace Accord in 2020** – It was signed between the Government of India and the Government of Assam on one side and the National Democratic Front of Bodoland, (NDFB) the All Bodo Students' Union and United Bodo People's Organisation on the other.
- Under the terms of this agreement, a Bodoland Territorial Region was formed with enhanced executive and legislative powers.
- **Districts** – It is made up of four districts on the north bank of the Brahmaputra River below the foothills of Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh.
- **Bodoland Territorial Council** – Bodoland is administered by an elected body known as the Bodoland Territorial Council which came into existence under the terms of a peace agreement signed in February 2003.
- **Bodo Culture**
 - **Religion** – Bathouism.
 - **Dance** – Bagurumba, Kherai Group Dance.
 - **Jou Gishi** - Rice beer is produced by the Boros from different kinds of rice varieties.
- **Festival** – Bwisagu.

6. HERITAGE

6.1 UNESCO City of Literature

Recently, Kozhikode is officially declared as India's first UNESCO 'City of Literature'.

- **Agency** – UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN).
- **Reason for selection** – Kozhikode combines a rich historic past with modern developments and is home to numerous artists and boasts over **500 functioning libraries**.
- Every year, the city of Kozhikode hosts the **Kerala Literature Festival**, one of the largest in Asia.
- The city is home to some of India's renowned writers, including Vaikom Muhammed Bashir, MT vasudevan Nair, S. K. Pottekkatt, Thikkodiyar and P. Valsala Sanjayan, contributed to the diversity of Malayalam literature and culture.
- **State government's recognition** – The state government of Kerala announced to celebrate **June 23 as 'City of Literature' Day** from next year onwards.

City	Creative fields
Bukhara, Uzbekistan	Crafts and Folk Art
Casablanca, Morocco	Media Arts
Chongqing, China	Design
Kathmandu, Nepal	Film
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil	Literature
Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia	Crafts and Folk Art

World Cities Day is a United Nations observance day, observed on October 31st every year.

UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN)

- It is to promote cooperation among cities which recognized creativity as a major factor in their urban development.
- **Launch** – Year 2004.
- **Eligibility** – UNESCO's member states and associate members.
- **Updation** – Time Once every 2 years
- **Total Cities (2023)** – 350 in more than 100 countries.
- **UCCN creative fields** – Crafts and Folk Art, Design, Film, Gastronomy, Literature, Media Arts and Music.

6.2 Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH)

Recently, the Supreme Court added the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) and UNESCO's Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) for the restoration of two heritage buildings in Mysore.

- Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) is an autonomous non-profit organization that seeks to preserve Indian culture and heritage.
- **Aim** – To conserve the heritage based on belief that living in harmony with heritage enhances quality of life.
- **Vision** – To spearhead heritage awareness and conservation in India.
- **Established on** – January 27 1984, under the Societies Registration Act, 1860.
- **Ministry** – Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA).
- **FCRA** – It is authorized to receive contributions from abroad under Section 6 (1) of the **Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 1976**.
- **Chapters** – Are forums formed with the authority and directions granted by INTACH and are constituted with about 25 members.
- It is recognized as one of the world's largest heritage organizations, with over 228 Chapters across the Country.
- **Membership** – Voluntary in Nature.
- **Unprotected architectural heritage** – It institutionalizes the conservation of the unprotected architectural heritage.
- It recognizes the need for identifying and documenting the cultural heritage throughout the country.
- **Listing** – They undertake the listing of Natural Heritage, Built Heritage, Art (Material) Heritage and Intangible (Living) Heritage.
- **Criteria for Listing** – It includes 3 key concepts to determine whether a property is worthy of listing include:
 1. Historic significance
 2. Historic integrity
 3. Historic context
- This information effectively used for creating awareness about the local heritage.
- It can also facilitate action for providing legal protection to heritage assets.

About **54,000** heritage resources in 150 cities/towns have been listed by INTACH till now.

6.3 International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS)

The Moidams of Assam have been recommended for UNESCO World Heritage status by ICOMOS.

- **About** – ICOMOS is a global **non-governmental organization** dedicated to the conservation and protection of cultural heritage places.

- **Establishment** – In 1965, Warsaw, Poland.
- **Headquarters** – Paris.
- **Objective** – To promote the application of theory, methodology, and scientific techniques in the conservation of architectural and archaeological heritage.
- **Role** – It has a wide range of activities related to heritage conservation, including
 - Advising UNESCO on World Heritage **nominations and management**.
 - Developing international standards, guidelines, and charters for conservation practice.
 - Conducting research, training, and capacity building in heritage conservation.
 - Advocating for the protection of cultural heritage at global, regional and national levels.

Moidams of Assam

- Moidams are significant cultural heritage sites found primarily in **Assam**.
- **Period**- Between **13th CE to 17th CE**.
- **History**- The Moidams situated in Charaideo are the burial grounds of **Ahom kings and queens**.
- These are comparable to the pyramids of Egypt and substances of wonder seen through the brilliant architecture and expertise of the artisans and masons of Assam of the medieval era.
- It is famously called as the **Pyramids of Assam**.
- **Distribution**- Moidams are primarily associated with Assam and neighbouring regions influenced by the Ahom kingdom, such as parts of Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland.
- **Construction** – Moidams are typically made of **earth and stone**, sometimes reinforced with bricks or terracotta.
- **Management** – The site is jointly managed by 2 separate entities namely, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) and the Assam Government's Directorate of Archaeology (DoA).
- It is the only applicant from India which is set to be evaluated at the 46th ordinary session of the World Heritage Committee.



6.4 Raigad Fort

The fort of Raigad is part of the 12 forts recently nominated for UNESCO World Heritage under the title “Maratha Military Landscapes of India”.

- **Raigad Fort**– A hill fort in the Raigad district, **Maharashtra**, an example **of Maratha architecture**.
- **History** – In 1653 CE, Raigad (then known as Rairi) was captured by the Maratha forces from the Mughals.
- **Construction** – Shivaji Maharaj assigned the work of reconstruction of the fort to **Hiroji Indulkar**.
- On 1674 CE a grand coronation ceremony of Shivaji Maharaj was held on Raigad post, during which he attained the title of “Chhatrapati”.
- The fort served as the **2nd capital of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj** and played an important role in the administration and expansion of the Maratha Kingdom.
- It is identified as Durgaraj (king of forts).
- **Chitta Darwaja** – The Chitta Darwaja or Jit Darwaja was used to access the fort from the foothills below.
- **Khoob Ladha Burj** – It is a strategically placed tower from which assailants on all sides could be spotted.
- **Maha Darwaja** – The Maha Darwaja, or the main gateway, was built almost 350 years ago. It consists of 2 massive bastions, each measuring about 20 metres in height.

Grant Duff, a British historian of the Maratha period has drawn parallels between Raigad and the Rock of Gibraltar.

- **Palkhi Darwaja** – Apart from the main gate, a special entrance called the Palkhi Darwaja was created for the royal ladies and queens.
- The fort also overlooks an artificial lake known as the 'Ganga Sagar Lake'.
- Besides the lake, an important feature nestled within the fort complex is a Shiva temple called Jagadishwar Mandir.
- Raigad, surrounded by valleys shaped by the Kal and Gandhari rivers, stands as an isolated massif without connections to neighbouring hills.
- **Samadhi of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj** – Adjacent to the Temple, the Samadhi of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj is located almost opposite to the eastern entrance of Jagadishwar Mandir.

6.5 Good Maharaja Memorial

Recently, Indian Prime Minister paid tribute at the memorials of Jam Saheb of Nawanagar, also known as the Good Maharaja.

- **Good Maharaja Memorial** – It honours **Jam Saheb Digvijaysinhji Ranjitsinhji Jadeja**.
- **Location** – Warsaw, Poland.
- **Memorial Details** - It is a small brick pillar with inscriptions, was unveiled in October 2014 at the Square of the Good Maharaja, in the Ochota district of **Warsaw**.
- **Significance** – They highlight India's humanitarian contributions during World War II, with Jam Saheb and the Kolhapur Royal Family playing key roles in providing refuge to polish citizens displaced by the war.

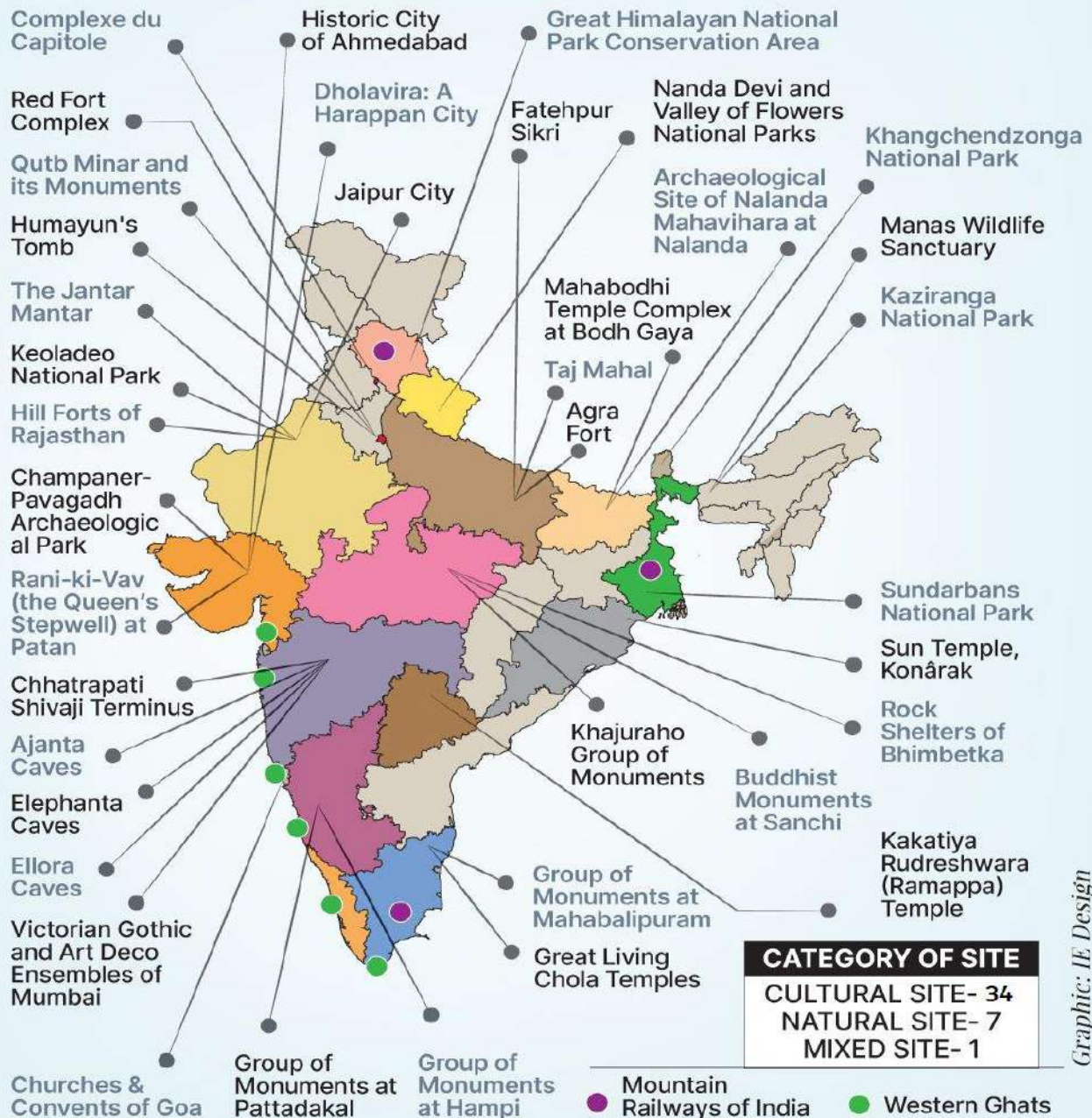
Jam Saheb Digvijaysinhji Ranjitsinhji Jadeja

- He was the Maharaja of Nawanagar, a princely state in present-day Gujarat, India.
- Born- September, 1895
- **Historical Significance** – During World War II, he sheltered over 1,000 Polish children fleeing Nazi-occupied Poland and Soviet camps.
- **Polish Schools Named After Jamsaheb**- Eight Polish primary and secondary schools are named after Jamsaheb, acknowledging his generosity and kindness.
- **Association of Surviving Polish Children** – The Polish children sheltered by the Jamsaheb formed an Association of Poles, meeting annually in a major Polish city.
- **Role in India independence**- He was a strong supporter of India's independence and played a key role in the Constituent Assembly, representing the princely states.

Other memorial visits by PM

Memorial	Description
Valivade-Kolhapur Camp Memorial	It is dedicated to the generosity of the princely state of Kolhapur, which provided shelter to around 5,000 Polish refugees during World War II.
Monument to the Battle of Monte Cassino	It commemorates the sacrifice of soldiers from Poland, India, and other countries who fought together during the Battle of Monte Cassino in Italy during World War II.

List of UNESCO world heritage sites in India



7. FAIRS & FESTIVALS

7.1 Karma Festival or Karma Naach

Festival Karma starts with great pomp in Jharkhand recently.

- **Karma Naach** – It is also known Karma dance, a traditional tribal performance that is conducted to commemorate the harvest festival and to honor the revered Karam tree.

- **Spread** – *Eastern India*, especially in *Chota Nagpur plateau*, covering states of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha and West Bengal celebrated this tribal festival.
- **Central deity** – Karam tree, regarded as a symbol of Karam Devta or Karamsani, the deity representing strength, vigor and vitality.
- **Dance** – ***Both males and females*** actively gather to form a circle, intertwining their arms around each other's waists & dances in a circle around a sacred tree, honored as Karma.
- **Instrument** – Thumki, Chhalla, Payri and Jhumki instruments.
- **Celebrated by** – Munda, Ho, Oraon, Baiga, Kharia, and Santhal tribes.
- **Celebrated on** – The Ekadashi tithi (the eleventh day) of the lunar fortnight in the month of Bhado/Bhadra, which corresponds to August-September in the Gregorian calendar.
- **Nature of Celebration** – A week prior to the festival, young women gather clear sand from the river to sow 7 varieties of grains.
- On the festival day, a branch from the Karam tree is planted in a courtyard or 'akhra'.
- In addition they also planted the stems of Chirchitti (chaff flower) and Sindwar (chaste tree) in their rice fields, which, according to Tirkey, served as natural pest deterrents.
- Devotee's present jawa (hibiscus) flowers, and the pahan (priest) performs rituals for Karam Raja.
- The festival concludes with the immersion of the Karam branch in a river or pond, where devotees share the jawa among themselves.
- Towards the conclusion of Karam, branches from sal or bhelua trees are often placed in fields, symbolizing the hope that Karam Raja/Devta will safeguard their crops.

7.2 Harvest festivals of India

Harvest festivals are being celebrated across India.

- **Harvest festivals** – It is a yearly celebration that occurs around the time of the main harvest of a given region.
- **Different festivals** – Due to different climates and cropping patterns, India celebrates these Harvest festivals at different times of the year.
- **Significance**
 - To express gratitude for a bountiful harvest, and to recognize the hard work and labor involved in growing crops.
 - People come together as a community to celebrate the end of the growing season.
 - Some harvest festivals have a religious or spiritual origin, often linked to ancient agricultural rituals or celebrations.
 - Commemorate the cycle of life and death and also indicate the end of the agricultural cycle and the beginning of the end of the year.

Harvest Festivals Name	States in which it is Celebrated	Day	Significance
Lohri	Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir.	13th January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marks the end of the winter season. • Folk form
Makar Sankranti	Maharashtra, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Himachal, West Bengal, Punjab.	Usually on 14th of January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marks the rotation of the sun from Sagittarius to Capricorn

Pongal	Tamil Nadu	January 14 (First day of Tamil month "Thai")	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pogi, Surya Pongal, Mattu Pongal, Kannum Pongal.
Magh Bihu	Assam	January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The end of the harvesting season and the beginning of the Assamese new year Rongali' or 'Bohag Bihu' observed in April, 'Kongali' or 'Kati Bihu' observed in October or November.
Onam	Kerala	Malayalam month of Chingam (August-September)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marks the homecoming of King Mahabali.
Baisakhi	Punjab, parts of Haryana & Delhi	13th or 14th of April every year.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marks the beginning of the new agricultural season.
Nuakhai	Odisha	Panchami Tithi of the lunar month of Bhadraba (August-September).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beginning of the new crop season
Vaisakha	Bihar	Sixth day of the Hindu month of Kartik (October-November)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People offer arghya (water) to the sun god, take a holy dip in rivers
Hemis	Ladakh	June-July every year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is celebrated in the Hemis Monastery Marks the birth anniversary of Guru Padmasambhava, the founder of Tibetan Buddhism.
Dree	Arunachal Pradesh	July 5th in the Ziro area of Arunachal Pradesh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Important time of year for the Apatani tribe.
Hornbill	Nagaland	First week of December.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dedicated to the Hornbill bird, which is sacred to the Nagas. Hornbill International Rock Festival.
Nabanna	West Bengal	On the day of Vishwakarma Puja in the Hindu month of Bhadra (August-September)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The deity is offered the first crop of the season and a feast consisting of rice, fish curry, and sweets.

8. RELIGIOUS SECT

8.1 Namdhari Sect

8 persons were recently injured after 2 factions of the Namdhari sect opened fire at each other over a land dispute near the dera in Sirsa's Jiwan Nagar in Haryana.

- **A Sikh sect** – It *differs from mainstream Sikhs* chiefly in that it believes that the lineage of Sikh Gurus did not end with Guru Gobind Singh (10th human Sikh Guru).
- They were also **known as “Kukas”** for their trademark style of reciting the “Gurbani” (Teachings of the Guru).
- This style was in a high-pitched voice called “*Kook*” in *Punjabi*.
- **Kuka Movement** – It marked the *1st major reaction of the people in Punjab* to the new political order initiated by the British after 1849.
- The Namdhari Movement of which the Kuka Movement was the most important phase, aimed at overthrowing the British rule.
- **Founded by** – Satguru Ram Singh on Baisakhi in 1857.
- **Satguru Ram Singh:**
 - He challenged the status quo, advocated social reform, and resisted the Raj in various ways.
 - He asked his followers to **boycott everything** which bore the stamp of the British Government.
 - He appointed Governors and Deputy Governors to organize Kukas in different districts of Punjab.
 - He also inspired young men by giving military training.
- The British inflicted terrible punishments on the Namdharis and deported Ram Singh to Rangoon, from where he never returned.
- People believe Ram Singh is still alive, will return and until then, they mourn his absence by wearing white.
- Kukas supported *civil disobedience and the Non-Cooperation movement* for Indian independence.
- **Supreme Gurbani** – Namdhari Sikhs consider the *Guru Granth Sahib as the Supreme Gurbani*, but they also believe in a living human Guru.
- **Belief** – They consider the cow to be sacred, they are teetotalers, and *avoid even tea and coffee*.
- **Headquarters** – Its headquarters is located in Ludhiana’s Bhaini Sahib near village Raiyaan, where Ram Singh was born.
- **Spread** – It has its *deras across Punjab and Haryana*, and has a presence in a few *other countries*, too.

8.2 International Abhidhamma Divas

Ministry of Culture in collaboration with the International Buddhist Confederation (IBC) celebrated the International Abhidhamma Divas (October 17) recently in New Delhi.

- **Abhidhamma Divas** – It commemorates Lord Buddha’s descent from the celestial realm after delivering his teachings on the Abhidhamma, a core component of Buddhist philosophy.
- Lord Buddha descended from the celestial realm, *Tavatimsa-devaloka*, to *Sankassiya* (now Sankisa Basantapur) in Uttar Pradesh.
- The Asokan Elephant Pillar, a historical marker at the site, marks this significant event.
- According to ***Theravada Buddhist texts***, Lord Buddha spent 3 months teaching the Abhidhamma to the deities in Tavatimsa, including his mother.
- **Abhidhamma Pinaka** – Later, he conveyed these teachings to his *disciple Sariputta*, who expanded upon them in the *6 core books of the Abhidhamma Pinaka*.
- It covers various topics, such as moral and mental states, aggregates, causal relationships, and the path to emancipation, understanding the mind and achieving spiritual growth.
- The 7 treatises of the Abhidhamma Pinaka, notably the Pannhana, delve into causal relations with unparalleled depth, showcasing the Buddha’s profound insight.
- The celebration of Abhidhamma Divas coincides with the end of the first Rainy Retreat (Vassa) and the Pavaraṇa festival, a time when monks and nuns conclude their retreat period with a ceremony.
- **Abhidhamma or Higher Teaching** – It provides a profound and systematic analysis of mind and matter.

The Ashokan Elephant Pillar is a 3rd century BCE artifact in Sankissa, Uttar Pradesh built by Emperor Ashoka the Great. It has a unique capital with 4 elephants standing back-to-back, supporting a circular abacus.

- It offers a detailed framework for understanding the nature of existence, addressing the processes of birth, death and mental phenomena in a precise and abstract manner.
 - Unlike the more conventional teachings in the Sutta Piṭaka, which use everyday language, the Abhidhamma adopts a specialized and analytical approach to explore reality.
- It developed a specialized **vocabulary in Pali**, forming the basis of Buddhist philosophy and psychology.
- **Key terms** – "citta" (consciousness), "cetasika" (mental factors), "rupa" (materiality), and "nibbana" (final liberation).
- The meticulous analysis provided by these texts has made the Abhidhamma an essential tool for practitioners seeking to develop insight and grasp the essence of Buddha's teachings.

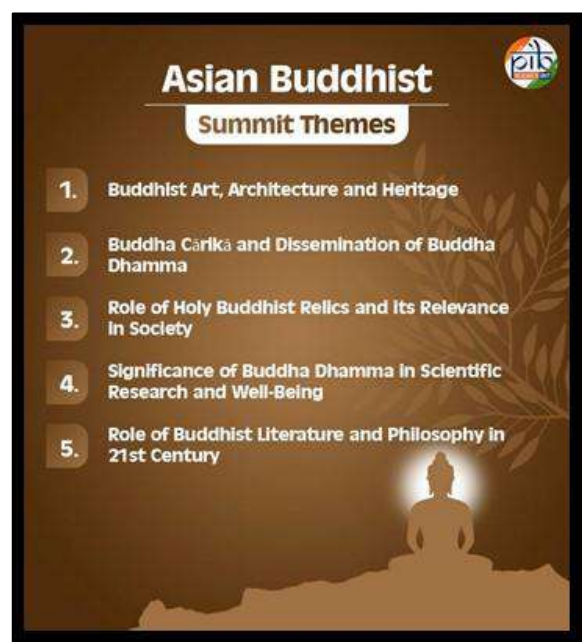
Significance of Pali

- Pali was recently recognized as having a **classical language status**.
- The entire body of Buddhist canonical literature is written in Pali, with the Tipitaka or "Threefold Basket" being its most notable collection.
- This includes the:
 - **Vinaya Pitaka** – It outlines ethical monastic rules,
 - **Sutta Pitaka** – It is a rich compilation of the Buddha's discourses and
 - **Abhidhamma Pitaka** – It delves into ethics, psychology, and the intricate analysis of mind and reality.
- A rich commentarial tradition has developed around these texts, with works such as the **Atthasalini and Sammohavinodani** being crucial for understanding the nuanced teachings of the Abhidhamma.
- Moreover, Pali literature encompasses the **Jataka Kathas**, which recount the stories of the Buddha's previous lives, reflecting shared moral values prevalent among the Indian populace.

8.3 First Asian Buddhist Summit, 2024

Recently, the Ministry of Culture and the International Buddhist Confederation (IBC), organized the First Asian Buddhist Summit.

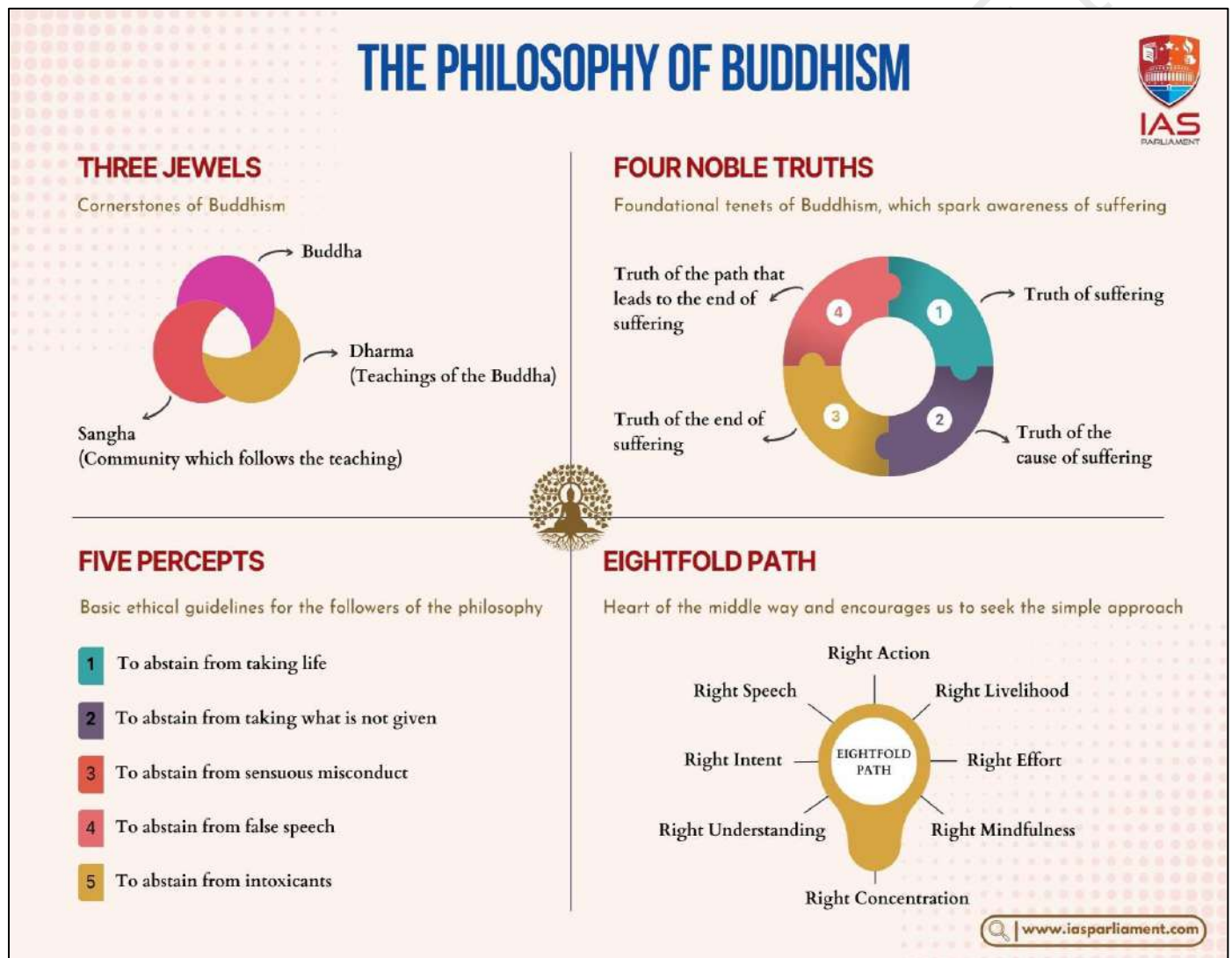
- **Theme** – '*Role of Buddha Dhamma in Strengthening Asia*'.
- **Participants** – 32 countries with over 160 international participants of 'Sangha' leaders, scholars, experts and practitioners from various traditions across Asia.
- **The Delhi Declaration** – The summit adopted the declaration at the conclusion of the event.
 - Strengthening bonds between Asian countries based on the principles of Buddha Dhamma.
 - Working upon Buddhist literature, especially Pali.
 - Fostering and sharing the historical journey of Buddhist art and heritage (including architecture).
 - Connect Asian Buddhist Circuit through Buddhist Pilgrimage and Living Heritage.
 - Recognize the relevance of scientific and medical aspects of Buddha Dhamma (religion).
- **Significance of Buddhist Summit** – Focuses on the foundational teachings of the Buddha and their modern-day applications.
- Explores the ways in which Buddhist principles can contribute to sustainable development, social harmony, and international cooperation.



- Mainly concerned with the religious aspects and its associated discourse.
- Threw up many innovative ideas emanating from the ancient philosophy and science of Dhamma.
- Dhamma as a guiding framework for ethical governance compassionate action, and sustainable development.
- Aligns with India's Act East Policy and Neighborhood First Policy, focusing on collective, inclusive, and spiritual development in Asia.

International Buddhist Confederation

- It is a Buddhist umbrella body with its base in New Delhi.
- It serves as a common platform for Buddhists worldwide.
- It was established under the patronage of the supreme Buddhist religious hierarchy.
- **Membership** – More than 320 organizations, both monastic and lay, in 39 countries.



9. GI TAGS

Geographical Indication Tag

- Geographic Indication (GI) is defined under Article-23 and 24 of the ***Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) Agreement*** of the World Trade Organization (WTO).

- India is a member of the WTO and thus enacted the Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration & Protection) Act, 1999 which came into force from 2003.
- A geographical indication (**GI Tag**) is a sign used on products that have a specific geographical origin and possess qualities or a reputation that are due to that origin.
- The qualities, characteristics or reputation of the product should be essentially due to the place of origin.
- The registration of a geographical indication is valid for a period of **10 years**.
- **Darjeeling tea** became the first GI tagged product in India.
- As of January 2024, **Tamil Nadu** has the highest number of GI tagged products (61).



9.1 Sample of 2024 GI tags in U.P.

Seven products from Uttar Pradesh recently got Geographical Indication tag.

Recently GI Tags from UP	Significance
Amroha Dholak	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is a musical instrument made of natural wood.
Mahoba Gaura Patthar Hastashlip	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is a stone craft, a very unique and soft stone with scientific name, the '<u>Pyro Flight Stone</u>'.
Baghpat Home Furnishings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only cotton yarn is used in the handloom weaving process. • It is famous for weaving on the <u>frame loom</u> instead of the pit loom since generations.
Barabanki Handloom Product	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This handloom product mainly consists of cotton. • It is manufactured using traditional techniques.
Kalpi Handmade Paper	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kalpi has historically been a centre of handmade paper manufacturing.
Sambhal Horn Craft	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sambhal city is associated with a unique kind of horn and bone craft items.
Mainpuri Tarkash	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tarkashi is a technique of inlaying brass, copper, and silver wires in wood. • It is a unique and artistic product of the Manipuri district. • It is used for decorating jewellery boxes, name plaques and other similar items.

10. AWARDS & RECOGNITION

10.1 Indira Gandhi Peace Prize

Recently, the Indira Gandhi Memorial Trust announced that Former Chilean president Veronica Michelle Bachelet Jeria to be awarded Indira Gandhi Peace Prize 2024 with Rs.25 lakh.

- Indira Gandhi Peace Prize is awarded **annually** to individuals and organizations promoting **international peace and development**.
- It was named after former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, to commemorate her outstanding contribution to national and global well-being and to promote the causes which she espoused, in 1985.
- It is known as Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace, Disarmament and Development.

- **Established in** – 1986.
- **Awarded by** – Indira Gandhi Memorial Trust.
- **Code of Procedure** – It is awarded to a person or organization without any distinction of nationality, race or religion, in recognition of creative efforts towards.
 - Promoting international peace and disarmament, racial equality, goodwill and harmony among nations,
 - Securing economic co-operation and promoting a new international economic order,
 - Accelerating the all-round advancement of developing nations.
 - Ensuring that the discoveries of science and modern knowledge are used for the larger good of the human race and enlarging the scope of freedom and enriching the human spirit.
 - It includes a cash prize and a trophy with a citation.
- **Cash Prize** – Rs.10 million or its equivalent in a foreign exchange.
- **Trophy** – It is a square piece of banded Haematite Jasper, the same stone which is used at the samadhi of Indira Gandhi.
- **Selected by** – A Jury of eminent persons, shall consist of not fewer than 5 and not more than 9 members', one of them being designated as a **Chairman of the trust**.
- **Recommendations** – Each year, the trust recommend for the award in respect of the preceding year.
 - The last date for recommendations shall be 30 September.
 - The Prize shall be announced on or before 31 December.

Veronica Michelle Bachelet Jeria's contributions

- Bachelet served as **Chile's president** from 2006 to 2010 and again from 2014 to 2018.
- She implemented education and tax reforms during her tenure, and a free trade agreement was signed between India and Chile.
- She led UN women from 2010 to 2013 and later served as UN High Commissioner for Human Rights from 2018 to 2022.
- The prize honors her work to improve gender equality, human rights, democracy and development in difficult circumstances and her contributions to fostering India's relations with Chile.
- The trust stressed her global advocacy for women, LGBTQ rights, and human rights.
- It was later rediscovered in 1980 at Silent Valley National Park in Kerala.
- **Conservation Status**
 - **IUCN** – Endangered.
 - **Wild of Protection Act, 1972** – Schedule II.
 - **CITES** – Not listed.
- **Threat** – Habitat fragmentation, pollution, disease and morphological deformities with climate change has led to the decline of amphibian populations in the past 40 years.
- Annual precipitation influences species populations and distribution.
- Drought situation experienced by toads and frogs of Karnataka in 2023 impacted their breeding and nesting habitats.

Haematite Jasper is one of the hardest varieties of stone found in India and is estimated to be 2000 million years old.

11. HISTORY

11.1 Ikshvaku Kingdom

The lead coins excavated at Phanigiri village was found to be from Ikshvaku period.

- This dynasty is also known as Suryavamsa (the solar dynasty).
- **Founded by** – A chieftain called Chamtamula, a feudatory of the Satavahanas.
- **Location** – Andhra Pradesh & Telangana region.
- **Time period** – 220-320 CE.
- **Capital city** – Vijayapuri.
- **Discovered in** – 1920.
- **Religion** – It patronised Buddhism (mainly Mahayana), Brahmanism, as well as older folk religions.
- **Gender bias in religious faiths** – The kings mostly patronized Brahmanism and imagined themselves as descendants of Rama.
- But queens and other wealthy women mostly patronized Buddhism.
- **Society** – The royal family lived in a citadel on a hill while the less well-off lived in homes made of bamboo and thatch.
- Relief carvings of the goddess Sati indicate what may be the earliest instances of sati in south India.
- **Economy** – It traded with Rome, evident from the roman coins.
- **Architecture** – They built the only amphitheatre found in ancient India.
- **Decline** – Over a decade or two, the Krishna River rose & began flooding the capital city that made the people to move out.
- There is also evidence of plunder, destruction, and the breaking of statues by an invading army of the Pallavas from the south, which were expanding military power in the early 4th century.
- Vijayapuri's fate was sealed and was mostly abandoned by around 320 CE.

Chamtamula claimed legitimacy as a sovereign king by performing an **Ashwamedh yagya**—the royal Brahminical ritual that ended with a horse sacrifice.



Vijayapuri the capital of Ikshvakus hosted Nagarjuna, also known as 'the 2nd Buddha', and founder of Madhyamaka, or the Middle Path school of Mahayana Buddhism.

11.2 Santhal Hul (Santhal Rebellion), 1855-56

In Jharkhand, June 30 marks the 169th anniversary of the Santhal Hul, one of the earliest peasant uprisings against the British.

- Santhal Hul of 1855 is an **organized revolt** against imperialism of British in **Jharkhand**.
- **Leaders** – The revolt is led by:

- **4 brothers** – Sidho, Kanho, Chand, and Bhairav Murmu, along with
- **Sisters** – Phulo and Jhano.

- **Revolted against** – The Santhals also fought against the upper castes, zamindars, darogas, and moneylenders, described by the umbrella term 'diku', to safeguard the economic, cultural and religious aspects of their lives.

Chotanagpur Tenancy Act, (CNT Act)

- It is enacted by the British in **1908** a result of the Birsa Movement, allows land transfers within the same caste and certain geographical areas with the approval of the District Collector.
- This Act also restricts the sale of Adivasi and Dalit land, while allowing land transfers between Adivasi individuals from the same police station and Dalits in the same district.

- **Reason for the uprising** – Certain areas were delimited as 'Santhal Pargana' or 'Damin-i-Koh' in 1832.
- It comprises present-day Sahibganj, Godda, Dumka, Deoghar, Pakur, and regions of Jamtara, in present-day Jharkhand.

- The area is allocated to the Santhals displaced from Birbhum, Murshidabad, Bhagalpur, Barabhum, Manbhum, Palamau, and Chhotanagpur, all areas of the Bengal Presidency.
- While the Santhals were promised settlement and agriculture in Damin-i-Koh, what followed is the repressive practice of Land-grabbing and Begari (bonded labour) of 2 types - kamioti and harwahi.
- The Murmu brothers led around 60,000 Santhals against the East India Company and engaged in **guerrilla warfare**.
- More than 15,000 Santhals were killed, and 10,000 villages were laid to waste.
- The British hanged Sidhu to death on August 9, 1855, followed by Kanhu in February 1856.
- The insurrection ended, but the impact it left is everlasting.
- **Santhal Pargana Tenancy Act, 1876** – In result of this uprising the Santhal Pargana Tenancy Act of 1876 (SPT Act) is enacted by the British.
- The act prohibits the transfer of **Adivasi lands (urban or rural land) to non-Adivasis**.
- The land can only be inherited as per the Act, thus retaining the rights of Santhals to self-govern their land.

11.3 Qutb Shahi Dynasty (1518-1687)

- **Founded by** – Quli Qutb Shah.
 - Quli Qutb shah is a Turkish governor of the Bahmani eastern region, who declared independence in 1518 and moved his capital to Golconda.
- The kingdom stretched from the Godavari River in the north, sharing a border with Tamil Nadu to the south, Bijapur to the west and the Bay of Bengal to the east.
- **Ethnicity** – The Qutb Shahis were Shia Muslims who belonged to the Turkmen tribe from the Turkmenistan-Armenia region.
- **Trade** – The Qutb Shahis are known for their contributions to trade, developing links with the Middle East, Europe and East Asia. The port city of Masulipatnam flourished under their rule.
- **Architecture** – The dynasty is also known for its distinct style of Indo-Islamic architecture, seen in the city of Hyderabad and its surroundings.
- The dynasty ended in 1687 when the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb's army conquered Golkonda.

11.4 Kakori Train Action

The historic Kakori train action, a significant event in Indian freedom will be celebrated throughout Uttar Pradesh.

- **Kakori Train Action** – It was a train robbery event that took place at Kakori, a village near Lucknow, **on 9 August 1925**.
- **Organizers** – It was organized by the Indian revolutionaries of Hindustan Republican Association (HRA).
- **Leaders** – Ram Prasad Bismil and Ashfaqullah Khan.
- **Other member of the plan** – Rajendra Lahiri, Chandra Shekhar Azad, Sachindra Bakshi, Keshab Chakravarty, Manmathnath Gupta, Mukundi Lal, Murari Lal Gupta and Banwari Lal.
- **The 100th anniversary** of this incident will be celebrated in 2025.
- **Event:**
 - On 9 August 1925, the Number 8 down Train was travelling from Shahjahanpur to Lucknow.
 - It carried treasury bags meant to be deposited in the British treasury in Lucknow.
 - When it passed Kakori village, Rajendra Lahiri pulled the emergency chain to stop the train.
 - Subsequently Ram Prasad Bismil, Ashfaqullah Khan and others entered the train and looted the money.

Hindustan Republican Association (H.R.A.) was formed in 1924, as a radical revolutionary organization. Their manifesto Krantikari (Revolutionary) was released on January 1, 1925.

- Due to a misfiring, one passenger (a lawyer named Ahmad Ali) was killed during the robbery.
- **Reaction by the British** – They launched violent crackdown and arrested several members of the HRA.
- Rajendranath Lahiri, Ashfaqullah Khan, Ram Prasad Bismil & Thakur Roshan Singh were hanged for it in 1927.
- The only major leader of HRA at this time who evaded arrest was Chandrashekhar Azad.
- **Transform into HSRA** – In 1928, after the execution of the Kakori Conspiracy accused, the HRA merged with various other revolutionary groups in Punjab, Bihar and Bengal and became the **Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA)**.

12. PERSONALITIES IN NEWS

12.1 Periyar

Periyar's 146th birth anniversary celebrated recently in chennai.

- Erode Venkatappa Ramasamy, also known as "Periyar," is an Indian social activist and politician born on September 17, 1879.
 - **Parents** – Venkatappa Nayakar and Chinnathayee.
- He is known as the '**Father of the Dravidian movement**' as well as Pagutharivu Pagalavan.
- **INC** – He joined the Indian National Congress (INC) in 1919, but resigned in 1925 when he felt that the party was only serving the interests of Brahmins.
- He was arrested during the **non-cooperation movement** in 1920.
- **Social Justice** – He promoted the principles of rationalism, self-respect, women's rights and eradication of caste and thus started **Self Respect Movement**.
- In 1921, he courted imprisonment for picketing toddy shops in Erode and during the anti-liquor campaign, he cut down 100 trees in his own farm.
- He opposed discrimination against non-Brahmins by Brahmins in cultural and religious matters.
- **Vaikom Satyagraha** – He led the famous Vaikom Sathya Graha in 1924, where the people of down trodden community were prohibited to enter into the temple.
- Finally the Travancore government allowed the people to enter into the temple, hence he was given the title of 'Vaikom Hero'.
- **Foreign tours** – From 1929 to 1932, he toured of British Malaya, Europe, and USSR which influenced him.
- **Political movements** – In 1939, he became the head of the Justice Party and in 1944, he changed its name to Dravidar Kazhagam.
- **Newspapers & Journals**
 - **Tamil magazine** – Kudi Arasu, Puratchi, Pagutharivu, Viduthalai
 - **English magazine** – Revolt.

*Tamil Nadu celebrates Periyar's birth anniversary as '**Social Justice Day**' since 2021 whereas the World Day of Social Justice is 20th Feb.*

12.2 Savitribai Phule

Every year on January 3, people celebrate Savitribai Phule Jayanti.

- **Background** – A Dalit woman from the Mali community from Naigaon village in Maharashtra.
- **Education** – She is the **1st Indian woman teacher**.
- She and her husband Jyotirao Phule opened a school for girls in Pune, in 1848 and this became the **country's 1st girls' school**.
- During her tenure, she established 17 schools across the nation.

- **Social reforms** – She advocated inter-caste marriages, widow remarriage, and eradication of child marriage, sati and dowry systems, among other social issues.
- **Balhatya Pratibandhak Griha** – A childcare centre for the protection of pregnant widows and rape victims.
- **Satyashodhak Samaj** (*‘Truth-seekers’ society’*) – It was setup in 1873 by both of them.
- It is a platform open to all, irrespective of their caste, religion or class hierarchies, with the sole aim of bringing social equity.
- **Literary works** – She published her 1st collection of poems, called Kavya Phule (*‘Poetry’s Blossoms’*), at the age of 23 in 1854.
- She published Bavan Kashi Subodh Ratnakar (*‘The Ocean of Pure Gems’*), in 1892.
- Matushri Savitribai Phlenchi Bhashane va Gaani (S’avitribai Phule’s speeches and songs’), and her letters to her husband have also been published.
- Her Marathi poetry promoted ideals such as equality, liberty, humanism and the significance of education.
- **Recognition** – In honour of her great work towards women's education, January 3 is observed as Women’s Education Day.

12.3 Ranenglao Bob Khathing

Defence Minister recently inaugurated the Major Ralengnao ‘Bob’ Khathing Museum of Valour at Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh.

- Ranenglao ‘Bob’ Khathing was born on February 28, 1912, in Manipur’s Ukhrul district.
- He was a Tangkhul Naga.
- He joined Ukhrul High School as its Head Master. He also founded a school at Harasingha in Assam’s Darrang district.
- **Awards** – Bob Khathing was given:
 - The coveted award of Member of British Empire (MBE) for his role in galvanising Naga support against the Japanese in Burma and India and
 - Military Cross (MC) for his acts of bravery above and beyond the call of duty.
- In 1939, after the Second World War broke out, Khathing joined the Indian Army and got an Emergency Commission as an officer.
- During the Second World War, he was part of a guerrilla outfit called Victor Force, raised by the British to combat the Japanese on the Burma-India road.
- Later, another force known as SANCOL was formed in June 1944 under command of Major John Saunders, and Bob Khathing was appointed Advisor to this force.
- At the end of the Second World War, he joined the interim government of Maharaja Kumar Priyabrata Singh of Manipur as minister in charge of the hill areas.
- In 1949, when Manipur merged with India, the interim government was dissolved and he joined the Assam Rifles.
- In 1951, he joined the Indian Frontier Administrative Service as an assistant political officer.
- In 1951, he was tasked by the Governor of Assam, Jairamdas Daulatram, to occupy Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh.
- Bob Khathing started the expedition for Tawang in 1951, from the Lokhra Camp near Assam’s Charduar with troops of Assam Rifles.
- Once they arrived in Tawang, Khathing held parleys with the locals, winning over their trust.
- He officially took Tawang under Indian administration by hoisting the Indian flag on February 14, **1951**.
- Thereafter, Khathing started the process of establishing an administrative set-up in the area around Tawang.

- He appointed **Gaon Buras (village elders)** in each village for that purpose, in keeping with the traditional practice of one Gaon Bura for groups of three to ten villages.
- Then he went on to serve as Deputy Commissioner of Mokokchung (in Nagaland), Development Commissioner in Sikkim, and Chief Secretary of Nagaland.
- His career ended as ambassador to Burma in 1975 making him possibly the **first person of tribal origin to be appointed ambassador** in independent India.
- He died in Imphal on January 12, 1990.

12.4 Moinuddin Chishti

Recently, an Ajmer court has admitted a petition that a Shiva temple lie under the Sharif dargah shrine of Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti in Rajasthan.

- Moinuddin Chishti is the **Persian-origin** Sunni Muslim philosopher and religious scholar.
- **Born** – 1st February 1141 CE, in Sistan, a province in Persia (Iran).
- He is said to have been a **descendent of Prophet Muhammad**.
- He is known as Muinuddin, Muiniiddin, and Mu'in al-din.
- He is also known as '**Gharib Nawaaz**' and 'Benefactor of the poor'.
- In his spiritual journey Harooni became a mentor to Moinuddin and he led him to rigorous spiritual discipline.
- He was initiated into the **Chishti silsila (chain of spiritual descent)**.
- He came to the Indian subcontinent in the 13th century and settled in Ajmer, Rajasthan.
- He founded and spread the **Chishti Order of Sunni Islam** in the Indian subcontinent.
- The Chishti Order emphasised the doctrine of the unity of being with God and members of the order were also pacifists.
- His famous dictum was "**Sulh-i-Kul**" (Peace with all).
- His disciples spread the Chishti order in the Indian Subcontinent.
- **Died on** – 15th March 1236 in Ajmer.
- The shrine was built by **Mughal King Humayun** in honour of this saint.

The **Chishti order** was founded in the 10th century by Abu Ishaq Shami in the town of Chisht near Herat.

The **Urs festival** is an annual festival held at Ajmer in Rajasthan which commemorates the death anniversary of Sufi saint Moinuddin Chishti.

Disciples	Year	Contributions
Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki	1173-1235	Established the Chishti order base in Delhi.
Baba Fariduddin	1173-1265	Spread the Chishti order's teachings in Punjab.
Hamiduddin Nagauri	1192-1274	Served as a spiritual leader in Nagaur.
Nizamuddin Auliya	1238-1325	His teachings and shrine in Delhi.
Chirag Dehalvi	1274-1356	He spread Moinuddin teachings after his death.

12.5 Sewa Singh Thikriwala

Recently, January 20 marked the death anniversary of Sewa Singh Thikriwala.

- **Early life** – He was born in late 19th century in Thikriwala village, **part of princely state Patiala, Punjab**.
- His father Dewa Singh was a high-ranking official in the court of Maharaja Rajinder Singh.

- **Revolutionary phase** – He spearheaded the self-rule movement against the rulers of Punjab's erstwhile princely states.
- His direct criticism of the Patiala Maharaja's rule led the authorities to imprison him.
- His fellow Akali leader Kharak Singh launched a campaign against the state for demanding his release.
- **Meeting with Gandhi** – After his release in 1928, he met Mahatma Gandhi in 1931, to discuss the problems faced by the people of Punjab.
- **Negotiation** – Patiala Maharaja initiated negotiation with him but it failed over the demand for an elected assembly.
- **Last phase of his life** – He died in 1935, while he was on a hunger strike in jail over his mistreatment by jail authorities.
- **Memorial** – After his death, a memorial has been held annually in the Thikriwala Village from January 18 to January 20 with a statue of him in his native village.
- Government has announced that Sewa Singh's house would also be turned into a memorial.

Praja Mandal Movement

- **Objectives**
 - To protect the civil liberties of the masses.
 - To protest against oppressive taxes.
 - To seek reforms in the peasants' conditions.
 - To open educational institutions.
 - To have a responsible government.
- **Coverage** – It spread over 600 princely states of British India.
- **Important leaders** - Kharak Singh and Master Tara Singh.
- **Significance** – Now part of the Malwa region, with some parts in Haryana, these areas are politically active even today and were hotbeds of the recent farmers' agitations.
- **Punjab Riyasat Praja Mandal** – Was presided by the Sewa Singh Thikriwala.
- It was largely run by Akali leaders.

12.6 Libia Lobo Sardesai, Goan freedom fighter

Goan freedom fighter Libia Lobo Sardesai was honored with the Padma Shri recently for her pivotal role in the state's liberation struggle.

- Libia, a Goan nationalist activist, was born in 1924 in Portuguese-ruled Goa and grew up in Bombay.
- In 1954, after the Portuguese assaulted and arrested satyagrahis who had entered Goa to demand an end to colonial rule, India closed its borders and imposed an economic blockade.
- The Portuguese had imposed "total censorship" in Goa, instilling fear and feeding people Portuguese propaganda.
- To counter these lies, the nationalists set up an underground radio station, initially called 'Q'.
- On November 25, 1955, the station began broadcasting hour-long programs in the morning and evening.
- Libia and fellow Goan nationalists Vaman Sardesai and Nicolau Menezes worked nearly 18 hours a day, listening to various bulletins and news from India and abroad.
- They also studying reports, collating information, and scanning Indian and foreign newspapers and newsletters to select information about anti-colonial struggles.

- After 6 years in the jungles, just days before **Operation Vijay** was launched to liberate Goa, the Indian border police bundled Libia and Vaman in a jeep and took them to a rest-house in Belgaum.
- On December 17, 1961, the station relayed a direct message from V K Krishna Menon addressed to the Portuguese Governor General, asking him to surrender to prevent unnecessary casualties.
- The Portuguese Governor General asked Libia to go into the skies and announce that Goa is free.
- On December 19, 1961, Libia and Vaman flew in an Indian Air Force plane with a radio transmitter aboard and a loudspeaker announcing in Portuguese and Konkani that the Portuguese had surrendered.

12.7 Devi Ahilyabai Holkar

The Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) organized a special lecture recently on the life and legacy of Devi Ahilyabai Holkar, titled *Commemorating the 300th birth anniversary of her*.

- Ahilyabai Holkar was a Holkar Queen who ruled the **Malwa kingdom in the 18th century**.
- She was born in Chondi, present-day Ahmednagar District, **Maharashtra**, India, on May 31, 1725.
- **Father** – Mankoji Rao Shinde.
- She was married to Khanderao Holkar, son of Malhar Rao Holkar (Founder of Holkar Dynasty).
- After 12 years, her husband Khanderao was killed during the siege of the **Kumher Fort**.
- Her son, Male Rao, died in 1767.
- In 1767, the Peshwa permitted Ahilyabai to take over Malwa.
- She ascended the throne and became the ruler of Indore on December 11, 1767.
- Maharani Ahilyabai ruled over Malwa with its capital, Maheswar, for 28 years.
- Ahilyabai also established a textile industry in Maheshwar.
- She was instrumental in spreading the message of dharma and propagating industrialization.
- She welcomed Marathi poet Moropant, Shahir Ananta Gandhi, and Sanskrit scholar Khushali Ram into her capital.
- Ahilyabai Holkar tried to protect her kingdom from plundering invaders by appointing **Tukojirao Holkar** as the Chief of Army.
- She renovated and repaired the famous **Kashi Vishwanath Temple** in 1780.
- She reconstructed the **Somnath Temple and Mahakaleshwar Temple** in Ujjain.
- During her reign, she made significant decisions, such as abolishing traditional laws that confiscated property from childless widows.
- She was famously known as the **'Philosopher Queen'**.
- She died in **Rajwada**, Indore, present-day Madhya Pradesh, on August 13, 1795, at the age of 70.

Maheswari Sarees got a
Geographical Indication
Tag in 2012.

12.8 Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj

- Chhatrapati Shivaji was the **founder of the Maratha Empire**.
- **Born on** – February 19, 1630, in Pune, Maharashtra.
- **Parents** – Shahaji Bhonsle and Jijabai.
- **Teachers** – Dadoji Kondadev and Jijabai.
- He is a great military administrator and tactician, fought and won several wars against the Mughals.
- He was crowned as the **"Chhatrapati (Emperor)" in 1674** at Raigad Fort.
- He established Hindavi Swarajya, declaring independence from Mughal and Deccan Sultanates.
- He developed **Guerrilla Warfare tactics**.

- He established a robust naval force, recognizing the importance of naval supremacy in safeguarding the coastlines.
- His administrative reforms included the creation of a disciplined military structure, the introduction of revenue reforms, and the promotion of trade.
- He also emphasized religious tolerance and supported a diverse society, ensuring justice for all his subjects.
- He introduced **Ashta Pradhan Mandal**, a Council of 8 Ministers for governance.
- Established revenue policies such as **Kathi & Chauth system** to ensure stable economy.
- Shivaji was in constant conflict with the Mughal Empire and other neighboring states.
- His escape from Agra in 1666 after being imprisoned by Aurangzeb showcased his ingenuity and determination. This daring escape solidified his reputation as a cunning and resilient leader.
- Shivaji Maharaj passed away on April 3, 1680, at Raigad Fort.

Katas Raj Temple

- **Located in** – Chakwal in Potohar Plateau, Pakistan.
- Dates back to Hindu shahis King from 615 to 915 AD.
- **Composition** – It comprises of 7 temples (old and new ones) called the **Satgraha**.
- Also known for its Buddhist site.
- 300 Indian Hindus travelled to Pakistan to be a part of the celebration.

12.9 Ajit Singh & Pagri Sambhal Jatta movement

Farmers protesting at the Punjab and Haryana borders are observing February 23 as Pagri Sambhal Diwas, in honour of Ajit Singh, paternal uncle of freedom fighter Bhagat Singh.

Ajit Singh

- Ajit Singh was a prominent freedom fighter, revolutionary, and nationalist leader.
- **Born on** – February 23, 1881 at Khatkar Kalan village in **Punjab**.
- He played a significant role in inspiring his nephew Bhagat Singh.
- Ajit was the elder brother of Kishan Singh, Bhagat Singh's father.
- Singh attended the DAV College in Lahore after graduating from the Anglo-Sanskrit High School in Jalandhar in 1894.
- He later enrolled at Bareilly College to study law, but he dropped out.
- In 1905, Ajit Singh and his brother Kishan Singh worked among the people in famine-stricken areas like Barar (Madhya Pradesh) and Ahmedabad, as well as flood and earthquake-affected areas like Srinagar and Kangra.

Pagri Sambhal Jatta movement

- Ajit Singh started the Pagri Sambhal Jatta movement in 1907 in protest against 3 agricultural laws imposed by the British.
- 'Pagri Sambhal Jatta' literally translates to **'take care of your turban, farmer'**, and invokes self-respect and honour.
- **The 3 laws**
 - The Punjab Land Alienation Act, 1900
 - The Punjab Land Colonisation Act, 1906
 - The Doab Bari Act, 1907.

The Punjab Land Alienation Act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It restricted the rights of farmers to sell or mortgage their land freely. It favored moneylenders and landlords, making it difficult for peasants to escape debt.
Punjab Land Colonization Act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It gave the British control over land ownership in the newly developed Chenab Colony (now in Pakistan). Farmers had to transfer their land to the British government upon death instead of passing it to their heirs.
Doab Bari Act, 1907	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It took away farmers' ownership rights over their lands, effectively reducing them to contract workers.

- Along with this, the British raised taxes on agricultural land and water for irrigation, increasing the financial burden on farmers.
- Many small farmers and peasants were forced into debt and land loss.
- Soon, farmers started protests against these laws, demanding their repeal.
- Ajit Singh and Kishan Singh (Bhagat Singh's father) formed the **Bharat Mata Society**, a revolutionary group for farmers.
- Lala Lajpat Rai** and other leaders also supported the movement.
- The slogan "Pagri Sambhal Jatta" was coined by **Banke Dayal**, a nationalist poet, and became a symbol of resistance.
- The movement inspired future protests, including the **Ghadar Movement and Bhagat Singh's revolutionary activities**.
- Both Ajit Singh and Lala Lajpat Rai were arrested in May 1907 and exiled to Burma (now Myanmar), but due to public pressure, were released in November 1907.
- Ajit Singh, however, escaped to Persia, then Turkey, Brazil, Germany, and later settled in Italy.
- He worked closely with revolutionaries in Europe and was associated with Lala Hardayal and Madame Cama.
- He came to India in March 1947 but died in Dalhousie due to ill health on August 15, 1947, the day **India got independence**.
- From 2021 onwards, **February 23** has been observed as Pagri Sambhal Diwas.
- In 2021, farmers were protesting at the Delhi borders seeking repeal of the now-scrapped 3 farm laws, and hence had observed Ajit Singh's birth anniversary as Pagri Sambhal Diwas.

12.10 Contribution of Nanaji Deshmukh

Prime Minister pays tribute to Bharat Ratna Nanaji Deshmukh on his birth anniversary.

- Social movement** – He played a key role in the Jaya Prakash (JP) movement against Emergency in 1974.
- Rural development** – He set up **alternative rural development models** based on traditional knowledge in Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh.
- Reformist** – He actively participated in the **Bhoodan Movement** started by Vinoba Bhave.
- He played a vital role in carrying out a **social restructuring programme** in over 500 villages of UP and MP.
- He also carried out reformation of agriculture and cottage industry, rural health and rural education.
- Educationist** – He started the country's **1st Saraswati Shishu Mandir (SSM)** at Gorakhpur in 1950.
- He founded Deendayal Research Institute (DRI) in Chitrakoot.
- He was also responsible for starting **India's 1st rural university**, Chitarkoot Gramodya Vishwavidyalaya.

Recognition by Indian Government

- **Nanaji Deshmukh Scheme of construction of hostels** – It is a centrally sponsored scheme was launched in 2014-15.
- It aims to provide hostel facilities to those De-Notified Tribes (DNT) students who are not covered under SC, ST or OBC to enable them to pursue higher education.
- The income ceiling for eligibility is Rs 2 lakh per annum.
- Centre provides a maximum of 500 seats per annum throughout the country.
- **Bharat Ratna** – He was awarded posthumously with Bharat Ratna in 2019.

12.11 Contributions of Birsa Munda

A tribute was recently paid to revolutionary tribal leader Birsa Munda on his 124th death anniversary.

- He belongs to Munda tribe, a tribe of nomadic-hunters-turned-farmers who lived in the Chotanagpur region of Jharkhand.
- He is also known as 'Dharti ka Abba and 'Bhagwaan Birsa', as he achieved a God-like status among his followers.
- **Social reformer** – He fought against superstition, animal sacrifice and alcoholism.
- **Unified the tribal community** – He started the faith of "Birsait" to challenge the British conversion activities through missionaries.
- It attracted the members of Munda and Oraon tribal communities and thereby unified the tribal community under a single umbrella.
- **Mobilized the masses** – He had put examples of their ancestors and their burning patriotism to motivate the mass people.
- **Fought for Tribal land rights** – His organisational skill, motivating the masses to regain freedom from the power grabbers like the Thikadars, Zamindars and money-lenders and restoration of full ownership rights as tillers of the soil.
- He demanded tribal farmers to boycott 'beth begari system' (forced labour).
- **Spearheaded tribal movement** – He led the movement called 'Ulgulan', organising the Adivasis against the land settlement system imposed by the British.

The Ulgulan Movement or The Great Tumult

- **Background** – Munda tribes follows Khuntkatti system, a joint ownership of land by tribal lineage.
- They clear forests to make the land cultivable, and the entire clan, rather than an individual, owns the land.
- **Causes of revolt** – The Permanent Settlement Act (1793) introduced the zamindari system and created land-owning zamindars who were seen as outsiders or dikus by indigenous residents.
- It allowed the dikus to claim ownership rights of tribal lands which displaced the indigenous dwellers.
- **Aim of the revolt** – To resist British oppression, exploitation by landlords, and the imposition of alien laws and taxes on tribal people.
- **Impact** – Though it was eventually suppressed by the British, it inspired later movements for tribal rights and land reforms.
- The government repealed of the begar system, and led to the Tenancy Act (1903) which recognised the khuntkatti system.
- The Chotanagpur Tenancy Act (1908) later banned the passage of tribal land to non-tribal folks.

Sardari Ladai (1858-90)

- An agrarian discontent against the imposition of beggars (forced labor) and illegal enhancement of rent by the intermediaries.

- **Led by** – The “Sardars” of the Munda and Oraon tribes.
- **Approaches** – Peaceful means like petition, prayers and protest to demand justice from the colonial regime.
- **Significance** – It prepared the ground for Birsa Munda’s rebellion.

13. OTHERS

13.1 Cannibalism

Papua New Guinea Prime Minister James Marape, last week, criticised United States President Joe Biden for implying that his uncle was eaten by cannibals in New Guinea during World War II.

- An act of consuming another individual of the same species as food.
- **Existence** – In Darwinian terms, all species have a fundamental imperative towards survival and propagation.
- There are evidences of cannibalism across the natural world, from single-celled organisms, to dinosaurs, to polar bears, to humans.
- **In humans** – It is followed among some tribes based on their local environmental conditions.
- **Types** – Paleoanthropologist Carole A Travis-Henikoff explained in her book Dinner with a Cannibal (2008) regarding various types.
 - Survival cannibalism – It is due to starvation.
 - Endocannibalism – It is ingestion of dead relatives, also known as funerary cannibalism.
 - Exocannibalism – It refers to the eating of one’s enemies like the Korowai tribes, also known to address skewed sex ratios.
 - Religious’ cannibalism – It relates to the actual or simulated partaking of human flesh as part of a religious rite.

The disease **‘kuru’** later identified as a form of transmissible spongiform encephalopathy was annually killing as many as 200 Fore in the mid-20th century.

Spongiform encephalopathies (TSEs) – A group of neurodegenerative diseases that affect humans and animals. They are always fatal, are caused by prion, which are abnormal forms of proteins.

Cannibalism in Papua New Guinea

- **The Korowai tribe** – They live in the Indonesian province of Papua who practice cannibalism.
- **The Fore people** – They live in the highlands of Papua New Guinea, who consume human flesh as a part of mortuary rituals till 1960s by believing that it was an act of love and grief.
- **Fore** – It is an act of mourning.

13.2 Memory of the World Asia-Pacific Regional Register

Memory of the World (MOW) Regional Register inscribes 20 new items in recognition of human innovation and imagination in Asia-Pacific.

Memory of the World (MOW)

- **Launched by** - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (**UNESCO**), in **1995**.
- **Objectives** – Facilitate preservation of the world's documentary heritage, particularly in areas affected by conflict and/or natural disaster and enable universal access.
- Enhance public awareness about the significance of documentary heritage.

- **Total inclusion** – 496.

- **MOWCAP** – The Memory of the World Asia-Pacific Committee.
- **MOWCAP Regional Register** – A listing of those “documentary heritage of influence” in the Asia/Pacific region approved for inclusion by MOWCAP.

- Successful nominations to MOWCAP are entered on the Asia/Pacific Regional Register.

- **Call for nominations and inscriptions** – It is made every 2 years unless unexpected circumstances make this impractical.

- Nominations will normally be called for in the even-number years (to alternate with the International Register).

- **Approval** – After recommendations from the Register Subcommittee (RSC), and voting by member state representatives.

Memory of the World (MOW) – UN SDG

11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS



17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS



Ulaanbaatar convention

- **Convention** – It is the ‘General meeting of MOWCAP’ held in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia in 2024.
- **Aim** – To celebrate Asia-Pacific achievements in genealogy, literature, and science, among others.
- It saw the inclusions from Australia & Tuvalu – Funafuti, Indonesia, India, China, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Mongolia, Philippines, Vietnam and Uzbekistan.
- **India’s 3 recommendations** – They are advocated by ‘The Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA)’
 - The Illustrated Manuscripts of Rāmacaritamānasa of Tulasīdāsa
 - The Manuscript of the Sahridayāloka-Locana: Seminal Text of Indian Poetics, authored by Acharya Anandvardhan.
 - The 15th Century Manuscript of the Pañcatantra Fables - authored by Acharya Anandvardhan, Pt. Vishnu Sharma.
- **Significance to India** – It is the 1st time IGNCA has submitted nominations to the Regional Register since its inception in 2008.

13.3 Vivekananda Rock

Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that he will visit and meditate at the Vivekananda Rock Memorial in Kanyakumari.

- It is a tiny rocky islet.
- **Located** near – Kanyakumari’s Vavathurai beach, the southern tip of mainland India.
- **Confluence of** – The rock is surrounded by the Laccadive sea where the Bay of Bengal, the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea form a confluence.
- **In honour of** – The memorial was erected in honour of the great monk, Swamy Vivekananda.
- **Inaugurated by** – The memorial on the rock was formally inaugurated by the President V V Giri in 1970.



- **Mandapam** – The Sripada Mandapam and Vivekananda Mandapam are two structures in the memorial.
- There is a life-sized bronze statue of Swami Vivekananda in the premises.

Swamy Vivekananda

- His birth name was Narendranath Datta, was an Indian philosopher, a Hindu monk and a spiritual leader.
- **Birth date** - January 12 in 1863, is celebrated as National Youth Day.
- **Chief disciple of** - Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa.
- **Contribution** - He introduced the Indian philosophies of Vedanta and Yoga to the Western world mainly through his speech at the Parliament of World's Religions held in Chicago in 1893.
- He founded the Ramakrishna Math and the Ramakrishna Mission.
- In 1892, Swami Vivekananda swam from the shores of Kanyakumari to the rocky islet to meditate and attained enlightenment.
- He is regarded as a patriotic saint, and his birthday Vivekananda attained mahasamadhi on 4 July, 1902.

Islands are typically larger land masses that can vary greatly in size, ranging from a few square meters to thousands of square kilometers.

Islets, on the other hand, are smaller land masses and are usually much smaller in size, often measuring only a few meters to a few hectares.

13.4 Juneteenth

Recently, Juneteenth was observed on June 19, in the United States of America.

- **About** – Juneteenth, derived from "June" and "nineteenth," commemorates the abolition of slavery in the United States.
- **History** – The day was first commemorated in 1865 after the Confederate state surrendered to end the Civil War.
- The enslaved African Americans informed of their freedom under President Abraham Lincoln's 1863 Emancipation Proclamation.
- The day is celebrated with community events such as parades, cookouts, prayer gatherings, and musical performances.
- **Symbol of Freedom** – It symbolizes freedom and the end of slavery in the United States.
- It signifies the triumph of the human spirit over slavery's brutal legacy and the ongoing struggle for civil rights and equality.
- It is also known as Freedom Day or Emancipation Day, is an American holiday celebrated annually.
- However, not all state governments recognise the holiday, which means state employees in those states will report to work.
- The legislature would have to pass bills to make it a permanent holiday.
- **Recognition** – Over the years, Juneteenth celebrations have grown in prominence across the United States.

13.5 Indian Newspaper Society

Recently, the Prime Minister inaugurated INS Towers at the Indian Newspaper Society Secretariat in Bandra Kurla Complex, Mumbai.

- The Indian Newspaper Society is an independent body authenticating circulation figures of newspapers and periodicals in India.
- It is the central organization of the Press of India.
- **Founded in** – 1939.
- **Headquarters** – New Delhi.

- **Objectives** – To promote **Freedom of the Press** by advocating for the rights and freedoms of newspapers.
- To provide **accreditation** to advertising agencies and ensure they adhere to set standards.
- **Functions** – It advocates lobbying with the government and other regulatory bodies on behalf of the print media industry.
- To collect information on all topics having a practical business interest for its members and to communicate the same to them.
- To promote cooperation in all matters affecting the common business interests of members.
- It recognizes excellence in journalism and other aspects of the newspaper industry through various awards.
- It organizes training, workshops, seminars, and training programs for journalists and media professionals.
- It conducts studies and surveys on various aspects of the newspaper industry, including readership patterns and advertising trends.

13.6 Har Ghar Tiranga

The Prime Minister paid tribute to Pingali Venkayya on his birth anniversary, honoring his role in creating Tricolour to the nation.

- ‘Har Ghar Tiranga’ is a campaign under the aegis of **Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav** to encourage people to bring the Tiranga home and to hoist it to mark the **75th year of India’s independence**.
- **Objective-** The idea behind the initiative is to invoke the feeling of patriotism in the hearts of the people and to promote awareness about the Indian National Flag.
- The National Flag of India is **horizontally rectangular** in a shape.
- **Date of Adoption-** July, 1947.
- **Designer-** Pingali Venkayya
- **Proportions-** **3:2 (Length to Height ratio)**
- **Dimension-** The ratio of the width to length of the Flag is 2:3.
- **Colors**
 - **Saffron (Top band)** - It signifies courage, sacrifice, valour, wisdom and action.
 - **White (Middle band)** - It stands for purity, peace and tranquility.
 - **Green (Bottom band)** - It symbolises growth of the country, the vegetation, agriculture and plant life.
- **Ashoka Chakra-** It is **on the white band** which has **24 equally spaced spokes**.
- The Navy blue in the Chakra refers to the boundless sky and fathomless sea and the inner energy.
- The wheel/chakra is the **Law of Dharma**.
- It also means 24 hours a day which indicates movement of time i.e., the progressiveness of the country.

Pingali Venkayya was an Indian freedom fighter and the designer of the Indian national flag.

Flag Code of India 2002

- It is a set of laws & conventions that governs the use, display, and hoisting of the Indian National Flag in the country.
- It came into effect on January 26, 2002.
- Before that the activities concerning the national flag were governed by the provisions of The Emblems and Names (Prevention of Improper Use) Act, 1950, and The Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971.
- The Union government amended the flag code to support the 'Har Ghar Tiranga' campaign from August 13-15, celebrating 75 years of Independence as part of 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav'.

13.7 Homo floresiensis

New clues emerge on the evolutionary origins of extinct hobbits that once lived on Indonesia's Flores Island.

- **Homo floresiensis** – It is an **extinct species** of small archaic human that inhabited the Island of Flores, Indonesia.
- They are also called **Flores men or the 'hobbits' of Indonesia's** Flores Island.
- Homo floresiensis fossils were first discovered in 2003.
- **Characteristics** - They were about 100 centimetres tall and 30 Kg weight.
- **Body Size** - Body size had reduced from large-bodied Asian Homo erectus sometime between 1 and 0.7 million years ago due to island dwarfism.
- **Appearance** - Tiny brains, large teeth for their small size, shrugged-forward shoulders, no chins, receding foreheads, and relatively large feet due to their short legs.
- **Tools** - Made and used stone tools and may have used fire.
- **Hunting** - Hunted small elephants and large rodents, and coped with predators such as giant Komodo dragons.
- **Recent findings** - Discovery of 3 hominin fossils dating to 700,000 years from Mata Menge in central Flores.
- Most of the Homo floresiensis fossils are found at Liang Bua cave in Indonesia.
- **Theories of their origin**
 - **Theory 1** - Homo floresiensis was a dwarfed descendant of early Asian Homo erectus.
 - Homo erectus, extinct species may have lived between 100,000 and 1.6 million years ago.
 - **Theory 2** - Homo floresiensis is a descendant of a more ancient hominin from Africa like Homo habilis or the famous 'Lucy' (Australopithecus afarensis).



Island dwarfism is an evolutionary process that results from long-term isolation on a small island with limited food resources and a lack of predators.

13.8 Maori Haka

Hana-Rawhiti Maipi-Clarke, the young New Zealand parliamentarian performed the famous 'Ka Mate' haka in Parliament amid a discussion on the bill.

- **Maori** – Maori are a **Polynesian people** and are the first peoples of their homeland, New Zealand.
- They called New Zealand as 'Aotearoa' or 'land of the long white cloud'.
- **Maori haka** – It is a ceremonial war dance and a sign of cultural pride, strength, and unity for the Maori people of New Zealand.
- It is a group performance that involves chanting, hand movements, facial gestures, and stamping.
- The haka is usually performed in a uniform manner and **requires strict discipline**.
- The haka varies by tribal region, and many haka tell the story of significant events in a tribe's history.
- **Purpose** – The Haka is performed for a variety of reasons, including Welcoming guests, Acknowledging achievements, occasions, or funerals, Expressing solidarity or support for a person or group, Symbolizing dedication to people and their values.
- The most famous haka is "Ka Mate," which was composed around 1820 by the Māori chief Te Rauparaha.
- It became well known when it was incorporated into the pregame ritual of the All Blacks, New Zealand's national rugby union team.
- Haka may be performed by both men and women, and several varieties of the dance fulfill social functions within Maori culture.
- Now, haka is used as a sign of respect and is performed on important occasions, such as sporting events, weddings, funerals, and Pōwhiri (a traditional welcome).
- The traditional Maori performance of haka is a source of pride for all New Zealanders.

13.9 Commemorative stamp

The Union government will release commemorative postage stamps to celebrate the Paris 2024 Olympics.

- Commemorative stamps are issued, as the name suggests, commemorating important events.
 - Prominent personalities in various fields
 - Aspects of nature
 - Beautiful or rare flora and fauna
 - Environmental issues
 - Agricultural activities
 - National/international issues
 - Games etc.
- **Released by** – Department of Posts, Ministry of Communications.
- They are only available at Philatelic Bureaux and counters or under the Philatelic Deposit Account Scheme.
- They are printed in limited quantities.
- An event which is not nationally important enough to be commemorated by issue of a Commemorative/Special stamp may be commemorated by the Department by issue of Special Covers.
- It can be cancelled with a special cancellation at the post office selected for the purpose.
- Such covers can also be issued at the instance of private parties on payment of requisite charges.
- They should bear minimum postage stamps of any kind equivalent to the minimum inland letter mail rate.

Paris 2024 Olympics

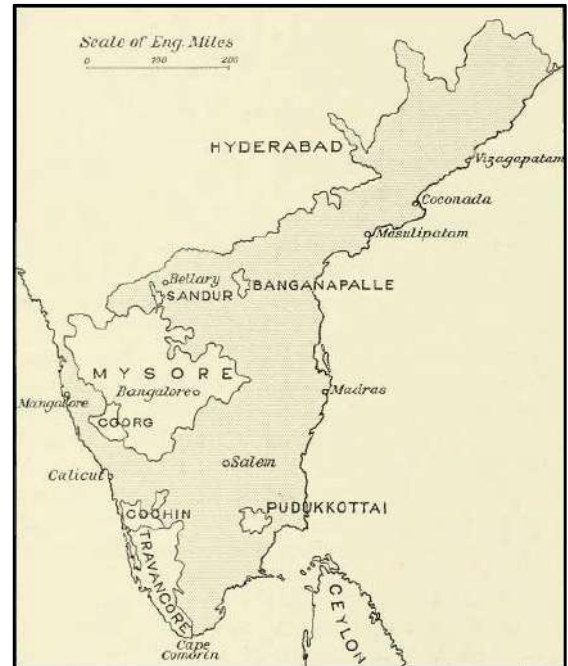
- The 2024 Summer Olympics is the Games of the XXXIII Olympiad also known as Paris 2024 Olympics.
- Paris will serve as the main host city, with 16 other cities across European France joining in the celebration of sport.
- **Motto-** It is "Games wide open." reflecting the inclusive and welcoming nature of the event.
- **Events date-** 26 July to 11 August 2024
- **Total events-** 329 events
- **Total sports-** 32 sports (including the 4 additional sports)
- These sports are breaking (making its Olympic debut), sport climbing, skateboarding, and surfing.

13.10 Sakthan Thampuran

Recently, Minister of State for Tourism pledged to renew the statue of Sakthan Thampuran.

- **Sakthan Thampuran** – It is the other name of Raja Rama Varma Kunjipillai or Rama Varma IX.
 - **Parents** - Ambika Thampuran and Chendose Aniyam Namboodiri.
 - He was raised by an aunt who called him Sakthan, meaning 'powerful'.
- **Ruler** – He ruled the Kingdom of Cochin.
- **Ruling Period** - 1790 to 1805.
- **Cochin kingdom** - It was part of the Late Chera Empire, covered the regions between Ponnani in Malappuram and Thottappally in Alappuzha.
- **Heir apparent** - He became heir apparent in 1769 as an 18-year-old.
- **Strategist** - He advised his king to maintain friendly relations with both the Dutch and the English.
- **Travancore Invasion** – He is said to have orchestrated Mysore's attempt to invade the Travancore kingdom.

- **Powney treaty** – It freed the Cochin kingdom from its allegiance to Mysore, and helped formalise its relations with the British.
- **Ending Yogiatiirippads** – He entrusted temple management to the government from Yogiatiirippads.
- Yogiatiirippads are erstwhile spiritual heads of the Vadakkumnathan and Perumanam temples.
- **Capital Transfer** – He transferred the seat from Thrippunithura to modern-day Thrissur.
- **Trade Encouragement** - He encouraged merchants of all religions and British officials to relocate to the city.
- **Revenue Management** - He also overhauled and firmed up the kingdom's finances, personally overseeing revenue management.
- **Thrissur Pooram** – He started the Thrissur Pooram in 1797 as an alternative to the Arattupuzha Pooram.
- The Thrissur Pooram was conceived as an opportunity for the major temples in Thrissur to come to pay their respects to Lord Shiva, the presiding deity at the Vadakkumnathan Temple.



13.11 Port Blair renamed as Sri Vijaya Puram

Union Minister recently that Port Blair will now be known as 'Sri Vijaya Puram'.

- **Name change** – It is to pay homage to the ancient **Sri Vijaya Empire**, which held influence over the region.
- **Port Blair** – It is the **capital of the Union Territory of Andaman and Nicobar Islands** and the entry point of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.
 - It was named after **Archibald Blair**, a naval surveyor and lieutenant in the Bombay Marine.
 - He was the 1st officer to carry out a thorough survey of the Andaman Islands.
- Once he reached the natural harbor, he initially named it as **Port Cornwallis** but later the island was renamed after him.
- **British Colony** – EEIC colonized it mainly to establish it as a safe harbour from which it could check the activities of the Malay pirates.
- **Penal Colony** – It is called so as several convicts were transported to the islands to serve unpaid labour.
- On account of severe disease and death there, EEIC stopped operating it in 1796.
- **Revival of the colony after 1857 revolt** – 1857 revolt resulted in a large number of prisoners for the British, prompting the immediate renovation and resettlement of Port Blair as a penal colony.
- Most of the convicts received life imprisonment at Port Blair.
- Several of them were hanged, while many died due to disease and the degrading conditions in the region.
- **Kaala pani** – With the strengthening of the Indian Independence Movement in the late 19th century, a huge cellular jail was established here by 1906.
- Popularly known as Kaala Paani, it housed several freedom fighters, including **Veer Damodar Savarkar**.

Archibald Blair's survey missions includes those in the Chagos archipelago, Diamond Harbour located in the south of Calcutta, and along the Hooghly River in late 1780s.

Andaman and Nicobar Islands

- **Connection with the Cholas**- Historical records suggest that the Islands were used as a strategic **naval base** by the 11th century **Chola emperor, Rajendra I** to carry out an attack on **Srivijaya, which is in present day Indonesia**.

- As per an inscription found at Thanjavur dated to 1050 CE, the Cholas referred to the island as Ma-Nakkavaram land (great open/ naked land), possibly led to the modern name of Nicobar under the British.
- **Historical significance** – It hold a prominent place in India's fight for independence.
- It is also the place that hosted the first unfurling of our Tiranga by Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose ji.

13.12 Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR)

The ICCR recently held a conference of Buddhist monks and scholars in Colombo on bequeathing Pali the status of a classical language by the Indian government.

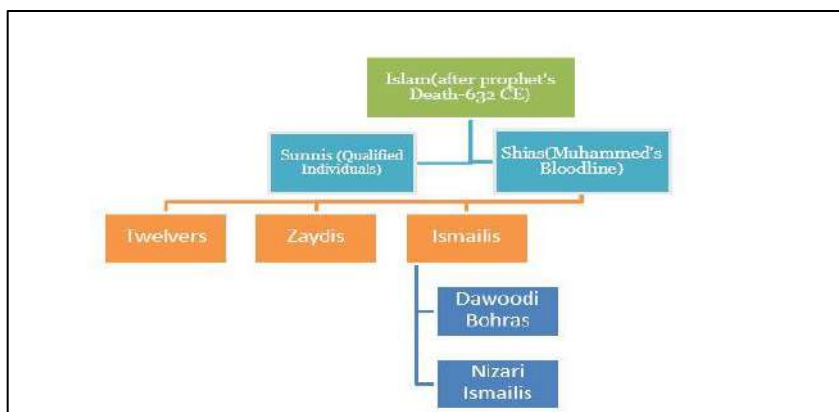
- It is an **autonomous organization** under the Ministry of External Affairs.
- **Aim** - It is responsible to promote cultural exchanges with other countries and people.
- **Founded in** - 1950.
- **Head Quarters** - New Delhi.
- **Objectives** – To actively participate in the formulation and implementation of policies and programs pertaining to India's external cultural relations.
- To foster and strengthen cultural relations and mutual understanding between India and other countries.
- To promote cultural exchanges with other countries and people, and to develop relations with nations.
- **Programs** - It administers various scholarship programs annually and awards about 3000+ scholarships under 21 different schemes to foreign students from about 180 countries.
- Amongst these 21 schemes, 6 are funded by ICCR from its grant and others are administered on behalf of MEA and Ministry of Ayush.
- The courses offered for studies are for Under-graduation, Post-graduation and Ph.D. levels.
- Each academic year, ICCR has about 6000+ of its foreign scholars who are studying at various Central/State Universities, Institutes, NITs, and Agricultural Institutions etc.
- It administers various programmes under which it hosts eminent personalities from abroad for a certain period.
- ICCR developed the "Admissions to Alumni (A2A) Portal" to streamline the enrolment process.
- **Significance** – These programmes promote India's cultural relations with other countries through various instruments that involve people to people contact.

13.13 Lineage of Islam

Prince Karim al-Husseini, who was the Aga Khan IV, died in Lisbon recently at his 88.

Lineage of Islam

- All 3 trace the descent of Muhammad through a chain of Imams or religious teachers, but they differ in the specifics of what the line of descent comprises.
- Twelver Shias, the largest, comprising 90% of the total Shia population, follow a line of 12 divinely-ordained Imams, with the 12th Imam, Muhammad al-Mahdi, believed to be alive and in occultation.
- The Ismailis or Sevener Shias concur with the Twelvers till the 6th Imam, after which the two lines split.
- The Zaydis or Fiver Shias split from the other lines after the first 4 Imams.



- Nizaris trace the Prophet's hereditary descent all the way to the Aga Khans.
- The Dawoodi Bohras recognise direct descent only till the 18th Imam, and follow today a line of Dais who are representatives of the concealed Imam.
- Prince Karim was the eldest son of Prince Aly Khan and the grandson of Sir Sultan Mahomed Shah, or the Aga Khan III.
- **Aga Khan IV** – The Aga Khan is the Imam of the Nizari Ismaili Shias, and holds near-divine status among the community.
- The title of Aga Khan was bestowed on Hasan Ali Shah, the 46th Imam of Nizari Ismailis by the Iranian king Fath-Ali Shah Qajar in the 19th century.
- Following a deal with the Portuguese government in 2015, the Aga Khan IV declared Lisbon as the global seat of the Nizari Imamate.
- Today, the Nizari Ismailis are spread out across more than 30 countries, although most trace their origin to Persia or the Indian subcontinent.
- They are not a majority community in any location.

13.14 Tea Horse Road

China's Ambassador to India Xu Feihong recently posted on X about the historic Tea Horse Road.

- It spanned more than 2,000 km, and connected **China to India** via Tibet.
- It witnesses the exchanges and interaction between China and India.
- **Origin** – It can be traced to the rule of the Tang dynasty in China (618-907 CE).
- The Tea Horse Road does not refer to a single road but a network of branching paths that **began in southwest China** and ended in the Indian subcontinent.
- **Pathways** - The 2 main pathways passed through cities like Dali and Lijiang in Yunnan province, and reached Lhasa in Tibet, before entering the Indian subcontinent.
- They branched into present-day India, Nepal, and Bangladesh.
- These routes were perilous to travel on, passed through difficult terrain, and reached an elevation of up to 10,000 feet.
- Buddhist monk **Yijing (635-713 CE)** mention.
 - Products like sugar, textiles, and rice noodles being transported from southwestern China to Tibet and India while
 - Horses, leather, Tibetan gold, saffron and other medicine herbs went to China.
- Over time, the trade focused on teas and horses during **Song dynasty** (960-1279 CE).
- The main driver for the road is believed to be the **demand for tea** among Tibetan nomads.
- In 1912, as the time of the Qing dynasty came to an end, the Horse Tea Road would continue to remain significant.
- Cultural and technological exchanges over 800 years have created unique local architecture, art, landscape, culture and social life.
- These incorporate the quintessence of **Han, Bai, Tibetan** and other ethnic groups.
- **Declination** - With the establishment of the People's Republic in 1949, the Tea Horse Road witnessed a gradual decline.

