ANTHROPOLOGY NEWS DIARY

(AND)

19.04.2021

FOR UPSC CSE MAINS

This series provides compilation of daily CURRENT AFFAIRS of Anthropology.

It is aimed at addressing the requirement of aspirants to add contemporary aspects of the subject to the answers.

It also helps in understanding the trends of anthropology across India and the world.

**NOTE**: Please attempt the questions given at the end of the document and can upload on the **telegram channel: Sosin for Anthropology Q&A**, for peer review.
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Note - For convenience, the respective reference links have been dropped at the end of every topic.
A. TRIBES/ COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

1. Unrecognized Tribes Struggle Without Federal Aid During Pandemic

- The Chinook Indian Nation has about 3,000 members who mostly live near the mouth of the Columbia River in southwest Washington. But they’re not on the list of federally recognized tribes — so they get nothing from the Indian Health Service.
- Without recognition, they get no reservation, no housing allowance, no clinics.
- During the pandemic, no federal recognition has meant no testing supplies or vaccine allocations.
- People are traveling an hour or two or three to be able to access vaccinations, testing and other resources.
- The Indian Health Service has been lauded for the success of its vaccination campaign.
- But not every Native American got to be part of that. Tribes that aren't recognized by the U.S. government have received none of the resources directed to Indian Country to help them survive the pandemic.
- More than 200 tribes do not have federal recognition, affecting tens of thousands of tribal members. The U.S. government officially recognizes 574 tribes.
- As a result, though no local tribal members died of COVID-19, several died because of COVID-19 — some of addiction, and others of untreated chronic conditions like diabetes and heart disease.
- The most recent COVID-19 relief package included more than $31 billion for the tribes on the federal government’s list. It’s the largest financial aid to Indian Country ever. And that's in addition to funds earmarked for tribes in the prior two relief bills.
- Tony Johnson, chair of the Chinook Nation, says officially recognized tribes used those funds for unemployment relief, food programs, and infrastructure projects.

Reference:

2. Sarvajanik Bid Samiti

Context:
Forest fires have been raging across the country, destroying trees in thousands of acres of land and leaving several animals homeless or even dead. Starting with Odisha in March 2021, the news has been coming thick and fast from the states of Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh to name a few.

A Village manages its own Forests:
- Pathree in Balaghat district of Madhya Pradesh has an attached forest patch of 130 acres, which is governed by an independent forest rights committee (Sarvajanik Bid Samiti) set up by the gram panchayat and not by the state forest department.
- The elected members take decisions regarding use of forest produce – minor and major – with the sole objective of meeting every day requirements of the villagers (mainly firewood and fodder for animals) while maintaining the tree density.
• Villagers understand that saving our jungles – the green lungs required to combat climate change – is not possible without considering the needs of the community that depends on them for their survival.

• Pathree village has been meeting this dual goal efficiently for several years now without complaints or conflicts. The village leases out palash trees for lac cultivation, which generates revenue for the locals.

• The Lodhis, a dominant community here, use the trunk of ‘Savar’ (Red Silk Cotton tree) as pavilion poles during marriage ceremonies.

• Every Lodhi marriage needs four such poles, which means four Savar

• The forest committee prepared a permanent set of four logs and lent it to whoever needs it. This stopped the practice of cutting Savar trees for marriages in the village.

• India is uniquely placed in empowering communities to manage and restore forests, thanks to the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act of 2006, popularly known as the Forest Rights Act (FRA) of 2006.

• The Act empowers locals to reap benefits by ascertaining their right over minor forest produce, which also encourages them to protect the forest that is responsible for their survival. States like Gujarat, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Odisha and Jharkhand have made good use of the Forest Rights Act to empower tribals who have been traditionally living and surviving on these jungles.

Reference:
https://thefederal.com/earth-day/community-management-of-forests/

B. ARCHAEOLOGY

1. Space is the final frontier for archaeologists

Context:
With the prospect of tourists on the moon and more planned crewed and robotic missions this decade, space archaeologists worry that the footprints and other artifacts could easily be damaged or destroyed.

Highlights:

• The boot prints left by Apollo 11 astronaut Neil Armstrong are a tangible legacy of one of humanity's greatest achievements -- putting a man on the moon.

• Right now, the boot prints, rovers and hundreds of other artifacts from the Apollo missions are not protected like heritage sites are on Earth -- something a small but growing number of space archaeologists want to change.

• "These seminal imprints, they're not set in stone, they're set in dust. If they're not preserved -- either by having a cover put over them or by declaring a national park around them -- then they will go," said P.J. Capelotti, a professor of anthropology at Penn State Abington.

• These are critical sites for understanding human movement into space, and hence must be demarcated as space parks or have some kind of protective regime put around them.

• With the prospect of tourists on the moon and more planned crewed and robotic missions this decade, space archaeologists worry that the footprints and other artifacts could easily be damaged or
destroyed. There's also the risk that natural space phenomena such as radiation and extreme temperatures could have already damaged them.

- The thing about archaeology is, it's not that it has to be old, and it doesn't have to be something one can excavate. The primary aim of archaeology is to look at how humans interact with material objects and environments.
- Many of the objects and traces left on the moon aren't just of scientific and technological value -- they are cultural artifacts. They include family photos left by astronauts and the patch from the Apollo 1 mission, brought by the Apollo 11 astronauts to commemorate the three astronauts who died in a cabin fire during a rehearsal launch in 1967.

Reference:

2. Prehistoric Nigerians’ Diet

Context:
Prehistoric Nigerians Were Eating Honey, Molecular Archaeology Proves.

Highlights:

- Honey appreciation goes back to before humans even existed, it seems, but evidence of the habit in sub-Saharan Africa had been missing until now.
- In the beginning was the wasp, predatory insects of whom many laid their eggs inside other insects.
- At some point around 130 million years ago, they apparently shifted to feeding its young on nutritious pollen rather than nutritious fellow insects – and the result was bees.
- Absent water, honey doesn’t spoil and has also served people as a preservative or even an ointment in antiquity.
- The researchers from Goethe University in Frankfurt and the University of Bristol report honey consumption in Nigeria 3,500 years ago, among the people associated with the Nok culture, based on an analysis of the residue in clay pots.
- Though evidence of beekeeping and honey consumption goes back further elsewhere in the Old World – and nearly 5,000 years in Egypt – the discovery of the pots and their residue is the earliest known evidence of honey utilization in sub-Saharan Africa.
Reference:
https://www.haaretz.com/archaeology/.premium-prehistoric-nigerians-were-eating-honey-molecular-archaeology-proves-1.9722510

C. BIOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

1. Evolutionary Capabilities of Corona Virus

- The evolutionary capabilities and unpredictability of coronavirus should not be underestimated, scientists have warned, adding that it remains “unknown” how much further the virus will continue to mutate in the months and years to come.
- As the global infection count surges for a seventh consecutive week, after initial optimism that the pandemic had peaked, leading virologists have emphasized that the world is caught in an “arms race” between the evolution of the virus and the human response.
- Whenever the Covid-19 virus infects someone, it hijacks the biological machinery of their cells to create copies of itself.
- Every so often the genetic material the virus carries is copied incorrectly, producing what is known as a mutation.
- Most of the viruses with mutations die out, but some go onto infect other cells in the body and eventually other people.
- Occasionally, one of these genetic errors can lead to a change that is advantageous to the virus, such as enabling it to get into cells more easily, producing more copies of itself or allowing it to evade the immune response of people it infects.
- Currently, the variants that are causing most concern around the world are still essentially the same virus and cause the same disease, but as SARS-CoV-2 evolves it could eventually change so much compared to the original virus it may come to be regarded as a new strain.

Reference:
2. The quest to rewrite DNA
   ● The Nobel Prize for Chemistry in 2020 was shared by Jennifer Doudna and Emmanuelle Charpentier.
   ● Turning a bacterial defense mechanism into one of the most powerful tools in genetics has earned Jennifer Doudna and Emmanuelle Charpentier the Nobel Prize in chemistry.
   ● The ability to cut the DNA where you want has revolutionized the life sciences.
   ● These genetic scissors are called CRISPR/Cas 9.
   ● The genetic scissors were discovered just eight years ago, but have already benefited humankind greatly
   ● CRISPR stands for Clustered Regularly Interspaced Short Palindromic Repeats. In essence, these short, repeating bits of DNA sandwich bacteria’s version of the invading viruses. Every time bacteria encounter a virus, they take a DNA mug shot of it and file it in between the repeats.
   ● The next time the bacteria encounters that virus, they make RNA copies of the mug shots. Those RNA photocopies then team up with another bit of RNA known as a trans-activating CRISPR RNA, or tracr RNA, to form an all-points bulletin known as a guide RNA. Guide RNAs shepherd the DNA-cutting enzyme Cas9 to the virus, where the enzyme chops and eliminates the threat.

Reference:
https://www.thehindu.com/books/books-reviews/the-code-breaker-review-the-quest-to-rewrite-dna/article34333389.ece

UPSC Previous year questions based on today’s concept:

1. Give a comparative account of the different types of family in the tribes of India. Illustrate your answer with suitable examples. (L.Q - 1987)
2. Describe Mendel’s laws of inheritance. Describe the recent advances in the field of human genetics. (L.Q - 1992)

DAILY PRACTICE QUESTION/S FOR MAINS 2021.

Pl do not forget to upload your answer sheet for a peer review on the telegram channel: Sosin for Anthropology Q&A

1. Comment on the scope of Nutritional Anthropology (20 Marks)