ANTHROPOLOGY NEWS DIARY

(AND)

06.05.2021

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. TRIBAL AFFAIRS

1. Oklahoma’s Shawnee Tribe

**Context:** Oklahoma's Shawnee Tribe helps lead to changes in COVID allotments for tribes

**Highlights:**
- The Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act set aside $8 billion for tribes.
- The Treasury Department distributed 60% of it, or $4.8 billion, based on population data from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.
- Three tribes sued over the methodology, alleging they were shortchanged by millions because tribal enrollment figures were higher than those reflected in federal data.
- The Shawnee Tribe in Oklahoma and the Miccosukee Tribe of Indians in Florida were among those given the minimum $100,000 because the HUD data showed they had a population of zero. The Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation in Kansas argued it should have received $7.65 million more than it got.
- In the case involving the Shawnee, Miccosukee and Prairie Band Potawatomi tribes, a federal court has said the tribes are likely to succeed in their challenges over the Treasury Department’s population-based disbursements and ordered $21 million from the remaining funds withheld.
- The Treasury Department said it will look at the difference between the federal data and the enrollment data provided by tribes and rank them, so the top 15% get an additional payment.
- The higher the ratio between the two data sets, the larger the percentage of funding a tribe will get, the department said.
- The Treasury Department has said it used HUD data because it would correlate with the amount of money tribal governments have spent responding to the coronavirus pandemic. Tribal enrollment figures don't distinguish between members or citizens who live on and off reservations.

**Reference:**

2. Konda reddy tribe

- It is one of the most backward tribal groups in the states of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.
- They inhabit both the banks of the Godavari River (East and West Godavari districts), in the hilly-forest region of Khammam (Telangana) and Srikakulam (Andhra Pradesh).
- They live in the interior forest areas largely cut-off from the mainstream. Traditionally, they were shifting cultivators and recently, some of them have adopted settled agriculture and horticulture.
- Collection of non-timber forest products and basket-making supplement the sources of their livelihood.
- Their mother tongue is Telugu with a unique accent.
Konda Reddis have also been recognized as Primitive Tribal Group (now PVTGs).

The Konda Reddis are known for their eco-friendly practices such as use of household articles made of bamboo, bottle gourd, and seed.

Reference:

B. BIOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

1. Dickinsonia Fossils

**Context:** Researchers have discovered fossils of one of the Earth’s earliest known multicellular animals — the 550-million-year-old Dickinsonia — on the roof of the Bhimbetka rock shelters in Madhya Pradesh.

**Highlights:**

- Dickinsonia is an extinct genus of basal animal that lived during the late Ediacaran period in a geographical area now divided into Australia, China, India, Russia and Ukraine.
- The individual Dickinsonia typically resembles a bilaterally symmetrical ribbed oval. Its fossils are known only in the form of imprints and casts in sandstone beds.
- The specimens found in Bhimbetka are around 17 inches long, where as the ones that have been found in other parts of the world exceeded four feet in length, the researchers from Geological Society of India (GSI), Nagpur, and Maharashtra noted.
- The finding, published in the journal Gondwana Research, confirms close proximity of Australia and India, according to the researchers.
- Dickinsonia fossil was first discovered in 1947 in Flinders Ranges of South Australia. Its fossils have also been discovered in Ukraine, Russia and China.
- Bhimbetka Rock Shelters, a UNESCO World Heritage Site for Paleolithic and Mesolithic cave art, near Bhopal, is once again highlighted worldwide due to the first discovery of oldest animal fossil, Dickinsonia from India.
- Paleontologists believe that these earliest living creatures were used to live in shallow warm seas, as early as 570 million years ago, and are representative of earliest complex life form in animal kingdom
As the fossil is out of reach, multiple digital images of the site were processed using three-dimensional (3D) modelling, the researchers said.

The geological condition and occurrences of Dickinsonia were compared with fossils reported from South Australia before arriving at the final conclusion, they said.

Reference:

2. Dinosaur Fossils

Context: In a rare discovery, researchers claimed to have identified fossil bone fragments of sauropod dinosaurs dating back to about 100 million years from an area around West Khasi Hills district in Meghalaya.

Highlights:

- The “yet-to-be-published” findings were made during a recent field trip by researchers from the Geological Survey of India’s Palaeontology division in Northeast.
- The GSI researchers noted that this is the first record of sauropods of probable Titanosaurian origin discovered in the Northeast region.
- Sauropods had very long necks, long tails, small heads relative to the rest of their body, and four thick, pillar-like legs. They are notable for the enormous sizes attained by some species, and the group includes the largest animals to have ever lived on land.
- Meghalaya is the fifth state in India, after Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Tamil Nadu, to report Sauropod bones having titanosaurian affinity.
- Titanosaurs were a diverse group of sauropod dinosaurs, including genera from Africa, Asia, South America, North America, Europe, Australia and Antarctica.
Dinosaur bones from Meghalaya were reported by GSI in 2001 but they were too fragmentary and ill-preserved to understand its taxonomic identification.

The present find of bones is during fieldwork in 2019-2020 and 2020-21. The last visit of the team was in February 2021. The fossils are presumably of Late Cretaceous, about 100 million years ago.

Reference:

C. ARCHAEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

1. Oldest Human Burial

Context:
- Oldest deliberate burial of a human in Africa discovered
- The tiny grave held the remains of a 3-year-old child.

Highlights:
- About 78,000 years ago, deep inside a cave near the coast of what is now Kenya, the body of a small child was carefully laid to rest in a tiny grave.
- Currently, an international group of researchers has used advanced scientific techniques to peer into the past, revealing for the first time details of the ancient interment — finding that it is the oldest deliberate burial of a Homo sapiens individual in Africa.
- The child was only about 3 years old when they died. Their body was curled up on their side, as if to sleep or to keep warm, and the child's head seems to have been delicately placed on a rest or cushion.
- The scientists have named the remains "Mtoto," which is Swahili for "child."
• The scientists knew the sediment block contained ancient bones of some sort, although it was very small. Months of intricate investigations by the CENIAH team, which included using micro-computed tomography (Micro-CT) to examine it with X-rays and create a detailed 3D model of its contents, revealed the skull and bones of a small Homo sapiens child.

Reference:

2. 7000 Years old Stone Structures
Context: Mysterious 7,000-year-old stone structures may be part of prehistoric cattle cult.

Highlights:
• Sprawling rectangular structures scattered across northwest Arabia and dating back more than 7,000 years may have been part of a prehistoric cattle cult, researchers have found.
• More than 1,000 of the mysterious structures, referred to as mustatils (an Arabic word meaning "rectangle"), have been documented in Saudi Arabia. While their appearance varies, they are usually rectangular in shape and often consisting of two platforms connected by two walls.
• Archaeological work indicates that some of the mustatils had a chamber in the center made of stone walls surrounding an open area with a standing stone in the center.
• The mustatils of northwest Arabia represents the first large-scale, monumental ritual landscape anywhere in the world, predating Stonehenge by more than 2,500 years.
• These structures can now be interpreted as ritual installations dating back to the late sixth millennium B.C., with recent excavations revealing the earliest evidence for [a] cattle cult in the Arabian Peninsula.
The archaeologists also found rock art in the area and from the same time period that supports the idea that the mustatils were used as part of a cattle cult. The rock art shows "scenes of both cattle herding and hunting," the team wrote.

The structures are so large and prominent in the landscape that a ritual function seems likely, the researchers said.

The discovery of cattle bones and horns inside the mustatils adds to evidence that the environment in the region was wetter around 7,000 years ago than it is today.

The environment was certainly much more humid during this period, we know this from palaeo climatological data gathered from across the Arabian Peninsula.

Reference:

UPSC Previous year questions based on today's concept:
1. Biological Anthropology
(20 Marks - 2011)
2. Tribe and Scheduled Tribe
(10 Marks - 2018)

DAILY PRACTICE QUESTION/S FOR MAINS 2021.

PI do not forget to upload your answer sheet for a peer review on the telegram channel: Sosin for Anthropology Q&A
1. What are megalithic burials? Explain the significance of studying them in the understanding of culture.
(20 Marks)
2. What are PVTGs? Bring about the initiatives by the Govt to address their problems.
(20 Marks)