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. Tea Tribes

- Hundreds of lush green tea plantations nestled in the foothills of Assam's Himalayas have not only added to the natural beauty of the states, but are also the backbone of its economy.

- At present, Assam's tea industry is its largest industry, providing livelihood, revenue, employment and development to the state. But unfortunately, those who play a key role in these industries, the thousands of workers of the tea gardens are still living penury.

- Most of the laborers working in tea plantations are native tribes of Jharkhand, Bihar, Odisha and Bengal, who were brought to work in tea plantations at Assam in the 19th century during the British period as bonded laborers.

- Their main demand has been to increase wages. Currently, these laborers get 167 rupees a day and they are given a place to stay in the labor lines of the tea estate.

- These laborers coming from tribal communities may have Scheduled Tribe status in their native state, but this is not the case in Assam. There they are given OBC status.

- These workers have been demanding ST status or separate quota for years together. The Tribes Autonomous Council Demand Committee has raised the demand for 30 percent reservation.

- In 2017, a report submitted to the Women and Child Development Ministry said that 89 percent of the workers do not have sanitation facilities.

- The report said that 84 percent of the women laborers said that they have to work even during menstruation and crèche facility for children are inadequate.

- In the recent budget, the Modi government announced to allocate Rs 1000 crores for the welfare of the laborers working in tea gardens in Assam and Bengal.

Reference:
2. Tribal Hunting Festival ‘Sendra’

Context:
Tribal hunting festivals ‘Sendra’ cancelled for second time

Sendra Hunting Festival:

- The festival is an old ritual where tribals from the state and bordering areas of Orissa, Bihar and Bengal, join to hunt in the forests of Dalma hills on the outskirts of Jamshedpur.
- The tribals offer wild animals and birds as sacrifices to the local deity, Dalma Guru.
- The tribals are usually armed with bows and arrows.
- Bishu Shikar is an annual event celebrated at the Dalma sanctuary.
- Dalma authorities keep a tight vigil at the sanctuary in the run-up to the hunt festival. Patrol teams tour the sanctuary and also siege traps and nets which are spread at strategic pockets by the tribals. Frisking is also done at the Makukalocha and Fadlugora entry points to prevent entry of firearms.

Reference:
https://www.telegraphindia.com/jharkhand/tribal-hunting-festival-sendra-cancelled-for-second-time/cid/1813952

B. ARCHAEOLOGY

1. Paleolithic History of Portugal

- Migrants of the homo heidelbergensis species first entered Western Europe around 400,000 years ago and some wisely chose to relocate to a land of plenty now known as the Tomar region of Central Portugal.
- When this labyrinth of passages and caverns was excavated in 2002 much evidence was found of the former occupation in the form of stone tools, detritus and broken animal bones but it was not until 2017 that a complete skull was discovered enabling an accurate composition of facial features such as a low brow, jutting jaw and deep set eyes.
- Just how these hominids survived and evolved over so many years is unknown but what is certain is that Neanderthals were present in another nearby warren when the first modern humans migrated from Africa some 40,000 years ago and decided that this cavern, known as the Lapa do Picareiro, would make an ideal new home.
- From evidence uncovered during archaeological excavations 1994 to 2018 it is surmised that the Neanderthals and Homo Sapiens first conflicted and then lived fairly harmoniously for 3,000 years even to the extent of cohabitation.
- But what seems more likely is that the occupation fluctuated between the two groups until finally homo sapiens dominated and the Neanderthals moved elsewhere to become later extinct; before this happened inter-breeding took place so that the genetic characteristics were carried forward to the humans of today.
● The amazing outdoor ensemble of five thousand Paleolithic rock art drawings in the valley of the river Coa in north-east Portugal bears witness to the economic, social and spiritual life of the tribes which occupied this territory for more than three millennia.

● Their creation probably started around 20,000 BCE and subjects are predominantly animalist featuring horses, deer, bison and some creatures such as the woolly rhinoceros now extinct.

● This first manifestation of human symbolic creation reflects a culture which was moving away from a nomadic hunter/gatherer existence towards the establishment of communities with permanent abodes where the first attempts at domestication of animals and agriculture were made.

Reference:

2. Lajja Gauri

● Female fertility worship was a universally accepted practice in ancient cultures.

● Almost all such cultures have yielded a good number of female figurines identified as the Mother Goddess. With society and culture developing in prehistoric times, such practices came into existence as part of social and ritualistic beliefs.

● Fertility worship as Mother Goddess worship became one of the important practices in the Neolithic and post-Neolithic cultures in India.

● The Indus Valley cities have also contributed a good number of figurines that have been identified as Mother Goddess images. These have varied forms and types. The figurine appears with voluptuous or slender physique, wide pelvis and prominent breast portions.
● The head portions have decorative forms like flowery headgear along with dotted ear ornaments and necklaces, all done in coiled clay. These figurines are quite small in size and perhaps initiated the worship of Yoni in ancient periods.

● Karnataka has a very rich tradition of Lajja Gauri worship. A good number of such images dating from 2nd-3rd century CE to 10th-12th century CE are found here.

● The earliest figures, found at Sannati, are very simple in modulation and the features, and possibly impressed from mould. The very purposes of these figures goes beyond Buddhist beliefs. Fertility was a common issue then and now too. To get better offspring, people would pray to the goddess and also submit votive objects.

● In the post-Badami Chalukya period, the Lajja Gauri cult appears to have mixed with the mainstream religious practices.

Reference:

3. Paleo Art

● The discipline of paleoart, or paleo illustration has helped create the most realistic depictions of long-extinct animals.

● In the early 19th century, artists mingled science with fantasy to recreate dinosaurs for popular imagination, usually showing them in apocalyptic forests with an erupting volcano in the background.

● Prehistoric life was more than just dinosaurs. Even before plants and life on land evolved, creatures thrived in marine environments and now their fossils tell those stories.

● In 2019, while studying the fossils of a worm, *Facivermis*, that lived 500 million years ago, researcher Richard Howard noted that the creature didn’t have lower limbs, and that it may be a missing link in evolution. Now, this mere imprint on a rock needed flesh, skin, and colors.
Paleoart is a complex art form. The reconstruction of an extinct animal involves vast research, only the beginning of which is examining the fossil. Scientists cover much ground here, and their detailed research papers give most of the details needed for reconstruction.

It is also important to know the closest relatives of the creature in the evolutionary tree. Artists compare the fossil with modern animals that may have had similarities in anatomy and behavior.

More fossils are being discovered today than ever before, and paleontologists have realized that good art helps their work reach a wider audience.

Reference:
https://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/science/paleoart-that-makes-fossils-come-alive/article34555441.ece

C. BIOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY
1. Viruses in Genes

Context:
New research shows that activation of distinct human endogenous retroviruses, which are part of our genome, impair brain development dramatically. The finding could help to advance research into therapies for neurodegenerative diseases.

Highlights:
• Since our ancestors infected themselves with retroviruses millions of years ago, we have carried elements of these viruses in our genes -- known as human endogenous retroviruses, or HERVs for short. These viral elements have lost their ability to replicate and infect during evolution, but are an integral part of our genetic makeup.
• In fact, humans possess five times more HERVs in non-coding parts than coding genes. So far, strong focus has been devoted to the correlation of HERVs and the onset or progression of diseases. This is why HERV expression has been studied in samples of pathological origin.
• Using CRISPR technology, the researchers activated a specific group of human endogenous retroviruses in human embryonic stem cells and generated nerve cells (neurons).
• These viral elements in turn activated specific genes, including classical developmental factors, involved in brain development. As a result, cortical neurons, meaning the nerve cells in our cerebral cortex, lost their function entirely.
• They developed very differently from healthy neurons in this brain region -- with much a shorter axon (nerve cell extension) that was much less branched. Thus, activation of one specific HERV group impairs cortical neuron development and ultimately brain development.
• In addition, the research findings provide important indications that epigenetic mechanisms keep viral elements under control in healthy brain development.
Reference:
https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2021/05/210520133706.htm

UPSC Previous year questions based on today’s concept:
1. Paleolithic Culture (10 Marks - 2015)
2. Fossil Men (S.N. - 1999)

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. Palaeolithic Art (20 Marks)