ANTHROPOLOGY NEWS DIARY (AND) FOR UPSC CSE MAINS

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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. BIOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

1. Human Evolution into Athletes

Five ways Human Beings have evolved into Athletes:

● WE RUN

The ancestors of modern humans have walked upright since around 4 million years ago, when members of the genus *Australopithecus* first started spending more time on the ground than in treetop habitats. Evolving to bipedal changed a number of things about the human skeletal structure. Our pelvis is shorter and wider than that of other living primates. This is because we move by exerting force mostly through muscles in our butts and legs rather than along our backs and shoulders, as a knuckle-walking chimp would.

● WE SWEAT

When we compare ourselves to other living primates, one of the most noticeable differences is a lack of body hair—and the fact that we sweat. Thermoregulation, the body’s ability to maintain an ideal temperature, is critical for all mammals, but humans are unique in our capacity to sweat all over our bodies, creating evaporative cooling.

● WE THROW

While the bottom half of our body has evolved away from an arboreal lifestyle, our upper body still retains traits that we inherited from tree-dwellers. Our glenohumeral joint, the ball-and-socket connection between our upper arm and scapula, allows us to swing our arms around in a full rotation. This is a very different type of mobility from that of quadruped animals that don’t swing in trees—a dog or cat’s front legs, for example, primarily swing back and forth and couldn’t perform a butterfly swim stroke. We, on the other hand, can.

● WE ARE HANDY

Human hands are unique in their dexterity, which has evolutionary roots as early as 2 million years ago.

● WE PLAY WITH BALLS

Many species of animals play, but humans are the only species to play games involving organized rules and equipment. We not only play by throwing, kicking, or otherwise propelling balls of various materials, we sometimes do so with bats, sticks, or racquets.

*Reference:*

https://www.sapiens.org/column/field-trips/human-athletic-paleobiology/

2. Common Genes

● No more than 7% of the human genome is unique to Homo sapiens.

● We share the remaining chunks of our genetic material with other human ancestors, or hominins, including our Neanderthal cousins and the Denisovans first discovered in east Asia.

● The evolutionary family tree shows there are regions of our genome that make us uniquely human.
• Anthropologists already knew that our hominin ancestors all interacted and interbred - exchanging genes and stone technologies that altered the course of our species' evolution.

• But these new findings further underscore just how frequently that intermingling happened in the last 300,000 years or so, since the first known population of modern humans emerged.

• To construct a hominin family tree, Green's team sequenced and compared genomes from 279 modern humans - sampled from people all over the world - to ancient genomes from one Denisovan and two Neanderthals.

• Then, the researchers used a computer algorithm to determine how each of those individuals are related to each other.

• The analysis tool, which the researchers said took years to develop, helped them distinguish what parts of the human genome are devoid of admixture - meaning these sets of genes aren't seen in Neanderthals or Denisovans.

• The algorithm also highlighted what genes humans inherited from an even older ancestor, one that lived 500,000 years ago or so, that eventually gave rise to our species as well as Neanderthals and other hominins.

• The study results suggest mysterious populations of human ancestors that scientists haven't even discovered yet may have interbred with Neanderthals and Denisovans before these species mixed with modern humans.

**Reference:**


3. **Population & Ecology**

• Human species, Homo sapiens, is occupied with transforming the life on the living planet into human monocultures.

• While all other species prevailing on the Earth, numbering about 8 million, are governed by the law of endemism, human species has been expanding its reach and occupying all the natural space on the globe, breaking down the law of endemism.

• Ecological space is of critical significance for the prosperity of mankind.

• The concept of ecological space implies that the availability of natural resources in the required quantity and quality is essential for survival, holistic progress, sustainability and happiness of mankind.

• Population explosion in many countries, however, is not only destroying the ecological space of the present but also putting the future of mankind into an infinite darkness. It is the biggest cause of environmental pollution, desertification, poverty, global warming, climate change and extinction...of species..
Sustainability of human life and that of the whole life go hand in hand. If the sustainability of life breaks down, the sustainability of the human world cannot refrain from breaking down. Population control, therefore, is an imperative of our times.

Reference:

B. TRIBAL AFFAIRS
1. Awa People
Context:
- Marginalized communities nationwide are facing the affects of climate change more than anyone else.
- One of the world's most endangered Indigenous tribes and one of the last few uncontacted peoples, Brazil’s Awa tribe, is heavily threatened by climate change, and the dangerous effects of human activity.

Highlights:
- The Awá tribe, also known as the Guajá or Awá-Guajá, lives deep within the Amazon rainforest.
- But in approximately 1800, around the same time as the arrival of the European colonizers, the tribe learned to adopt a nomadic lifestyle in order to avoid European incursions in the jungle.
- From a young age, children within the tribe learn to hunt with handmade bows and arrows.
- Members of the group live with their extended families, and embark on gathering trips, as well as hunting trips together — for several weeks they leave their group base and live in temporary shelters made from palm leaves.
- The tribe is also no stranger to handmade craftsmanship, as they make their own tools from branches and rocks, torches from tree resin, and hammocks from palm tree fibers.
- The Awá live in extended family groups that embark upon gathering trips together to collect nuts and berries. Meanwhile, the Awá also go on extended family hunts that can last several weeks.
- During these extended trips away from their group base, they sleep in makeshift shelters made from palm leaves and build their own torches out of tree resin.
2. Van Dhan Promotions

Context:
New Delhi: Improving the livelihoods of the tribal population and bettering the lives of the underprivileged and beleaguered tribals has been the mission of TRIFED, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs. With this in mind, TRIFED has implemented several initiatives, keeping in mind the Hon ‘ble PM’s clarion call of building an Atma Nirbhar Bharat.

Highlights:
- Among the various initiatives, which have helped in alleviating the economic distress of the tribals, are the Van Dhan tribal start-ups and the Mechanism for Marketing of Minor Forest Produce (MFP) Through Minimum Support Price (MSP) & Development of Value Chain for MFP’ Scheme that provides MSP to gatherers of forest produces and introduce value addition and marketing through tribal groups and clusters. These programmes have gained widespread acceptance across the country. In particular, the Van Dhan tribal start-ups, especially, have been very successful.
- In less than 18 months, 37259 Van Dhan Vikas Kendras (VDVKs), subsumed into 2224 Van Dhan Vikas Kendra Clusters (VDVKCs) of 300 forest dwellers each, have been sanctioned by TRIFED as of date.
- A typical Van Dhan Vikas Kendra includes 20 tribal members. 15 such Van Dhan Vikas Kendras form 1 Van Dhan Vikas Kendra cluster.
- The Van Dhan Vikas Kendra Clusters will provide the Van Dhan Vikas Kendras economies of scale, livelihood and market-linkages, as well as entrepreneurship opportunities to nearly 6.67 lakh Tribal forest gatherers in 23 states and 2 UTs.
- 50 lakh tribals have been impacted by the Van Dhan start-ups programme up until now.
- The products that are being processed and value-added by the tribals in this VDK cluster are herbal hair oil, Malabar tamarind, and honey.

Reference:
https://www.greenmatters.com/p/awa-tribe-brazil
Under the leadership of Smt Neema Srinivas, their champion entrepreneur, the tribals handed over packaged bottles of herbal hair oil to TRIFED officials. This product will soon be sold via TRIFED’s extensive network of Tribes India retail outlets and TribesIndia.com.

Tribals at the newly operational Vanasiri Pradhan Mantri Van Dhan Vikas Kendra Cluster at Kote, Mysore have been processing and packaging wild honey in Glass Bottles which will soon be sold by TRIFED. Other processed products include tamarind at this VDVKC.

It is hoped that in the coming days more and more success stories arising from the Van Dhan Yojana initiative which fosters Vocal For Local and an Atmanirbhar Bharat will come to the fore and also lead to optimising the income and livelihoods of tribal people and finally a transformation of their lives.

Reference:

UPSC Previous year questions based on today’s concept:
1. Distinguish between adaptation, adaptability and acclimatization with examples (20 Marks - 2018)
2. Tribe as a colonial construct (10 Marks - 2016)

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. Culture contact as a mechanism of Culture Change. (20 Marks)