ANTHROPOLOGY NEWS DIARY

(AND)

13.08.2021

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. BIOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

1. Reasons Why Birds Are Not Living Dinosaurs

1. Information-generating DNA “macromutations,” and mutations by random changes in the codes besides the genetic code (epigenetic, RNA splicing code, sugar code, membrane code, bioelectric code) generating substantial new information — altogether leading to macroevolutionary alterations bridging the gaps between genera, families, orders, etc., have never been observed. They are so utterly improbable that an evolutionist’s postulation of such positive macromutations is tantamount to the acceptance of miracles (“a miracle is an event that should appear impossible to a Darwinian in view of its ultra-cosmological improbability within the framework of his own theory” — Schützenberger).

2. Gradualism with its “innumerable slight variations,” “extremely slight variations,” and “infinitesimally small inherited variations,” etc., by mutations, which “have only slight or even invisible effects on the phenotype” (Mayr) has also been found to be totally invalid/impotent/baseless in order to explain the origin of synorganized new structures and primary species.

3. Natural selection can explain “the survival of the fittest but not the arrival of the fittest. It can and must eradicate, hence kill. But it can’t create anything. Just as a sieve cannot create new grains, but can only sift the existing ones.

4. Cladistics - Cladistics is an approach to biological classification in which organisms are categorized in groups based on hypotheses of most recent common ancestry.

5. Dollo’s law: “[A]n organism cannot return, even partially, to a former state already realized in the series of its ancestors.

6. Bird and dinosaur hand: “There lies a significant difference. There is no obvious selective advantage for the homeotic frame-shift hypothesis.

7. Topsy-turvy phylogeny: The phylogenetic sequence of the dinosaur to bird hypothesis starting with Sinosauropteryx (which should thus be the oldest but is from the Lower Cretaceous) is to an astonishing degree in discord with the dates usually given for the paleontological record.

8. Topsy-turvy phylogeny: As shown in detail above, the phylogenetic sequence of the dinosaur to bird hypothesis starting with Sinosauropteryx (which should thus be the oldest but is from the Lower Cretaceous) is to an astonishing degree in discord with the dates usually given for the paleontological record.

9. The abrupt appearance of all modern bird families and orders being even richer and more comprehensive in Eocene strata than they are today speaks for intelligent/ingenious design.

Reference:
https://evolutionnews.org/2021/04/ten-reasons-why-birds-are-not-living-dinosaurs/
2. T cells Revisit

- In a latest study, the team aimed to deliver the gene coding for IL-24, which is called MDA-7, to solid tumors using T cells.
- This isn’t the first time T cells have been engineered for cancer immunotherapy. FDA-approved chimeric antigen receptor T (CAR-T) cell therapy -- which is designed to destroy cancer cells expressing specific surface molecules -- has shown tremendous success for treating advanced cancers of the blood and lymphatic systems.
- But CAR-T has made limited progress on solid tumors, such as prostate cancer or melanoma, because the cells that make up those tumors aren’t all the same, which blocks the engineered T cells from recognizing and attacking.
- Engineering T cells to produce MDA-7/IL-24 allows killing of cancer cells regardless of their expression of target molecules. This will help prevent cancer cells from escaping immune attack.
- The researchers also discovered that arming T cells with MDA-7/IL-24 allowed them to survive better and multiply in the tumor microenvironment -- the space right around the cancerous mass.

Reference:
https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2021/04/210430120426.htm

3. Crohn’s Disease

- Crohn’s disease is a type of bowel disease that causes inflammation in the intestines.
- Experts believe that a combination of genetic factors and environmental triggers leads to Crohn’s disease.
- The National Human Genome Research Institute notes that if one parent has Crohn’s disease, a child has a 7–9% risk of developing the disease. However, if both parents have IBD, that risk increases to about 35%.
- Researchers are still investigating how genetics influences the development of Crohn’s disease. Various genes may increase a person’s likelihood of developing IBD. Studies have identified more than 200 genes that may have links to this condition.
- The immune system may mistake gut bacteria, which are harmless, as invaders and launch a response to destroy them. This response leads to inflammation and symptoms of Crohn’s disease.
- Genetic testing identifies whether a person carries a mutation in a gene that could cause Crohn’s disease.
- However, if someone does have an inherited gene mutation, it does not necessarily mean that they will develop Crohn’s disease. The gene just increases their risk.

Reference:
https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/is-crohns-disease-genetic#summary
B. TRIBAL AFFAIRS

1. Tribal Arts

- The heritage of tribal arts and crafts is not a free flowing expression of an individual creativity but an intellectually processed expression accepted by collective beliefs.
- Tangkhul tribe is one of the largest tribes of Manipur and they have been known for distinct traditions and culture of their own. Tangkhul tribe are living in the Indo-Burma border area occupying the Ukhrul district of Manipur and Somra Tangkhul hills in Upper Burma (Myanmar). It is believed that they came to Manipur from China through Myanmar.
- According to a Greek astronomer and geographer, the Tangkhuls were believed to be settled in Samshok (Thuangdut) in Myanmar and they began to disperse from Samshok in different directions.
- According to the elders of the community, the word ‘Tangkhul’ was derived from the Meitei dialect (largest ethnic group of Manipur). Tangkhul is a combination of the words “Tada” and “Khul”. Tada means elder brother and Khul means village. Therefore, Tangkhul means the village of the elder brother.
- Tangkhul tribe has a legendary textiles heritage in terms of traditional costumes, colours, specific design and motifs with significance and symbolism.
- The traditional textiles of the tribe are not only derived from the environmental physiology, but also marked socio-cultural meanings that reveal the societal norms. They reflect age, sex, social status and sacred or profane activities which appear in various contexts.
- Both unmarried and married women were engaged in the art of weaving. They made the requirement of their family for everyday use and for ceremonial wear.
- Traditionally, it was considered to be one of the basic skills to be learnt by a woman before getting married.
- Cotton was the most preferred yarn to weave their fabrics. In earlier times, most of the Tangkhul villages not only wove cotton cloth but also cultivated cotton and spun it into yarn.

Reference:

2. Tribes & Land

Context:
Uncontacted tribes thrive when their lands are protected. They frequently indicate – by pointing arrows up at passing planes, leaving crossed spears in the forest, and more – that they do not want contact.

Highlights:
- Experts claimed that uncontacted people should be contacted for their own benefit, ignoring centuries of experience of the devastation forced contact inflicts.
Disease and violence have wiped out whole tribes soon after first contact, and reduced others to just a few survivors. The academics state that “a well-designed contact can be quite safe,” but the examples of contact they choose to illustrate their point were in fact catastrophic, and left many of the tribespeople dead.

Forced contact missions were official policy in Brazil for decades but led to the decimation of countless tribes.

It was this devastation that led Brazil’s indigenous affairs department FUNAI to adopt, in the late 1980s, its policy of protecting uncontacted tribes’ land rather than forcing contact upon them. Professors Hill and Walker also argue that the existence of isolated peoples is “not viable in the long term.”

But, in fact, there are more than one hundred uncontacted tribes around the world, and where their lands are protected, they are thriving.

Indigenous peoples, organizations and experts around the world, including Brazil’s indigenous affairs department, FUNAI, have attacked the academics’ ideas as being “arrogant,” “dangerous,” and “genocidal.”

The key to stopping the annihilation of tribal peoples is protecting their land rights – which are enshrined in national and international law. All uncontacted tribal peoples face catastrophe unless their lands are protected. Survival is doing everything we can to secure their land for them, and to give them the chance to determine their own futures.

Reference:
https://www.survivalinternational.org/about/forcedcontact

UPSC Previous year questions based on today’s concept:

1. Tribal Displacement  
   15 Marks - 2010

2. Genetic Engineering  
   S.N. - 2005

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. Explain the problem of Land Alienation faced by Indian tribes.  
   20 Marks