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. ARCHAEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

1. Diet Differences

- Archaeologists examining the Herculaneum skeletal remains of the victims of Vesuvius say they have helped shed new light on the eating habits of ancient Romans -- with food differentiated along gender lines and revealing women ate more animal products and locally grown fruit and vegetables while the men dined on more expensive fish.

- By measuring the isotopes of carbon and nitrogen in the bone amino acids, the researchers were able to reconstruct the diets of people who lived contemporaneously in much more detail than was previously thought possible.

- Significant differences were found in the proportions of marine and terrestrial foods consumed between males and females, implying that access to food was differentiated according to gender.

- In total, 340 individuals have been excavated from the beach and from nine adjacent fornici (stone vaults) that run parallel to the seashore in Herculaneum, near Pompeii, where people sought shelter from the pyroclastic flow.

- Researchers said they were able to quantify the gender gap more accurately within the group, with males on average obtaining approximately 50 per cent more of their dietary protein from seafood compared with females.

- Males also obtained a slightly higher proportion of protein from cereals compared with their female contemporaries, whereas females obtained a greater proportion of protein from animal products and locally grown fruits and vegetables.

- Using their new approach, the researchers were able to more accurately quantify ancient diets so they could be compared with recent nutritional records.

- The team suggests that fish and seafood made a greater overall contribution to the diets at Herculaneum compared to the average modern Mediterranean diet; the latter increasingly dominated by animal products. Whereas a similar proportion of cereals were consumed between ancient and modern.

Reference:
https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2021/08/210825143108.htm

2. Bronze Age Cemetery

- Ancient urn graves contain a wealth of information about a high-ranking woman and her Bronze Age Vatya community, according to a new study.

- People of the Vatya culture that flourished during the Hungarian Early and Middle Bronze Ages (approximately 2200-1450 BCE) customarily cremated the deceased -- making the human remains difficult to analyze from a bioarchaeological perspective.

- In this study, the authors used new osteological sampling strategies to learn more about the people buried in the urnfield cemetery at Szigetszentmiklós-Ürgehegy, one of the largest Middle Bronze Age urn cemeteries in Central Hungary.

- For the majority of sampled graves, each contained the remains of a single individual and simple grave goods made of ceramic or bronze; however, gravesite 241 was of special interest: this grave contained an urn with the cremated remains of an adult woman and two fetuses, buried alongside prestigious grave goods including a golden hair-ring, a bronze neck-ring, and two bone hairpin ornaments.
● Of the 26 cremated individuals, seven appeared to be adult males, 11 adult females, and two appeared to be adults whose sex couldn’t be determined.

● The strontium analysis also revealed she was likely born elsewhere and moved to Szigetszentmiklós in early adolescence, between the ages of 8-13.

● The authors note their findings at the Szigetszentmiklós urnfield reinforce evidence that women, especially of high rank, commonly married outside their immediate group in Bronze Age Central Europe -- and confirm the informative potential of strontium isotope analyses even for cremated remains.

● Thanks to a wide spectrum of new bioarchaeological methods, techniques and sampling strategies, it is now possible to reconstruct the life-histories of cremated people of the Bronze Age. In this case, the authors investigate the movements and the tragic events of a high-status woman's life, settled along the Danube 4000 years ago, in the territory of modern-day Hungary.

Reference:
https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2021/07/210729121814.htm

3. Ancient Human Relations

● The oldest genome of a modern human from the Wallacea region -- the islands between western Indonesia and Papua New Guinea -- indicates a previously undescribed ancient human relationship.

● Researchers were able to isolate sufficient genetic material from the skull of an individual buried more than 7,000 years ago on the Indonesian island of Sulawesi.

● It belonged to a hunter-gatherer society and was interred at the site now called Leang Panninge ('Bat Cave'). A large part of the genetic code matched that of today's Papua New Guineans and Aboriginal Australians.

● Yet portions of the genome did not match these groups. This brings new surprises about the evolution of modern humans.

● A comparison with genomic data of hunter-gatherers who lived west of Wallacea at about the same time as the Leang Panninge individual provided further clues -- that data showed no traces of Denisovan DNA.

● The geographic distribution of Denisovans and modern humans may have overlapped in the Wallacea region. It may well be the key place where Denisova people and the ancestors of indigenous Australians and Papuans interbred.

● However, the Leang Panninge individual also carries a large proportion of its genome from an ancient Asian population.

Reference:
https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2021/08/210825113624.htm

4. Ancient Forerunner

● Researchers describe a new species that represents the most primitive member of lepidosaurs, Taytalura alcober, found in the Late Triassic deposits of Argentina.

● Taytalura is the first three-dimensionally preserved early lepidosaur fossil that allowed scientists to infer with great confidence its placement in the evolutionary tree of reptiles and aids in closing the gap of our knowledge of the origin and early evolution of lepidosaurs.

● The researchers were able to apply a Bayesian evolutionary analysis to determine the proper placement of the fossil in the reptile dataset. Simões had recently applied the Bayesian
method -- which was adapted from methods originally developed in epidemiology to study how viruses like COVID-19 evolve -- to precisely estimate the time and rates of anatomical evolution during the rise of tetrapods. The statistical analysis confirmed their suspicions that *Taytalura* was in fact the most primitive member of the lineage that eventually originated all lizards and snakes.

- It’s not even a lizard in the evolutionary tree but it’s the very next thing there, between true lizards and tuataras, and all other reptiles.
- This beautifully 3D preserved fossil is really an important finding. It is the most complete fossil representing the early stages of lepidosaur evolution that we have so far. All other known fossils are too incomplete, which makes it difficult to classify them for sure, but the complete and articulated nature of *Taytalura* makes its relationships much more certain.

Reference:  
https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2021/08/210825113616.htm

B. Demography

1. Population & Violence

- A continuous rise in global population has led to fears that conflicts and war will become more frequent as resources dwindle.
- But this widespread belief has not been quantified based on actual Japanese archaeological data, until now.
- Researchers have now examined the skeletal remains of people living in the Middle Yayoi period of Japan to set the record straight on the relationship between population pressure and the frequency of violence.
- Among these, the population pressure hypothesis has become more prominent recently as people globally experience climatic changes and environmental breakdown.
- The hypothesis states that population increase can result in resource scarcity, leading to competition and conflict over resources. While there is wide acceptance of this claim, there are very few studies that have quantitatively backed up the origin of inter-group violence due to population pressure based on actual archaeological data.
- The researchers uncovered 47 skeletal remains with trauma, in addition to 51 sites containing burial jars in the Itoshima Plain, 46 in the Sawara Plain, 72 in the Fukuoka Plain, 42 in the Mikuni Hills, 37 in the east Tsukushi Plain, and 50 in the central Tsukushi Plain, encompassing all six study sites.
- They found that the highest number of injured individuals and the highest frequency-of-violence levels occurred in the Mikuni Hills, the east Tsukushi Plain, and the Sawara Plain.
- Interestingly, the Mikuni Hills and the central Tsukushi Plain also showed the highest overall values for population pressure. Overall, statistical analyses supported that population pressure affected the frequency of violence.
- However, the peak population did not correlate with the frequency of violence. High levels of population pressure in the Mikuni Hills and the central Tsukushi Plain showed low frequency-of-violence values, while the relatively low population pressures of the east Tsukushi Plain and Sawara Plain were linked to higher frequency-of-violence levels.
- The evidence collected by Professor Matsumoto and her team undeniably confirms a positive correlation between population pressure and higher levels of violence and may help devise mechanisms to avoid seemingly never-ending conflicts in motion today. Further research
based on these insights could identify other variables at play in determining the root causes of inter-group violence and actively prevent them.

Reference:
https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2021/08/210818130517.htm

UPSC Previous year questions based on today's concept:
1. Ethno - Archaeology (S.N. - 2000)
2. Social - Cultural Anthropology (S.N. – 1987)

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. Megalithic cultures of India. (15 Marks)