ANTHROPOLOGY NEWS DIARY (AND)

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/COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

1. Practices & Origins

- Toko Teki, the president of the Arunachal Christian Forum, said the first church in the State was established in Rayang village in present-day East Siang district in 1957. But people from indigenous tribes had already begun converting as early as 1920.
- From humble beginnings, the number of Christians of various denominations in Arunachal Pradesh increased to 30.26%, according to the 2011 Census. This was followed by 29.04% Hindus, and 26.2% ‘Other Religions’.
- A sizable population (11.77%) of the 13.84 lakh people said they were Buddhist. These figures are, however, data points, and do not always represent actual numbers and certainly do not carry with them the perceived fears among the tribal population of the State.
- Christian organisations have claimed that the administration in Tawang district was obstructing the construction of a building only because it was a church and not a Buddhist monastery.
- In Tawang and the adjacent West Kameng district, a majority of the indigenous Monpa people are adherents of various sects of Tibetan Buddhism.
- While the State has witnessed a sizable population of indigenous communities converting to Christianity, the region, referred to as ‘Mon’, remains a Buddhist bastion. The issue came to light when the administration issued an order to stop the construction of a church in the district headquarters.
- Various State units of the Janajati Suraksha Manch (or Tribal Protection Forum) began coaxing administrative heads to write letters to the Centre to remove the Scheduled Tribe (ST) status of people who had become Christians.
- An oft-repeated argument against Christian conversion in the State is that some of the religion’s core beliefs go against traditional tribal cultural rituals, such as animal sacrifice carried out to please the various animist spirits that many tribes believe inhabit the world around them. In the Christian worldview, Jesus died on the cross to suffer for all of humanity’s sins and no further sacrifices are required.
- Cultures and cultural practices often change with time. So indigenous religious beliefs have transformed. A great culture is always dynamic.

Reference:

2. Grazing Land, Gujjar Bakarwals

- Members of Gujjar -Bakarwal groups have urged the Jammu Kashmir Government to bring the law into force to ban the conversion of all types of grazing land for any other purposes.
- They also demanded that the grazing land converted to benefit a person or a party in the past must be retrieved back immediately.
- They said this during a virtual meeting organized by the Tribal Research and Cultural Foundation.
- Gujjars and Bakerwals were the main animal-rearing communities and lakhs of nomads were solely dependent upon the grazing land to feed their animals.
● Noted tribal research Dr. Javaid Rahi while speaking on the occasion, said “Grazing areas, pastoral land and other community resources belonging to a tribe, village, area or others may not be converted or vested to an agency or agencies for any type of usage, in future. Such conversion of grazing land for other purposes are compelling tribes to sell-out their animals and leave their animals and the centuries old migratory culture and these changes widely affecting the livelihood of nomadic tribes such as Gujjars, Bakarwals, Gaddis and Sippis”.

● The speakers on the occasion said that being an animal rearing community, Gujjar and Bakarwals are solely dependent on the grazing land and the government should come up with a law, immediately, and restrict the conversion of the grazing land, including change of title and ownership of the land.

Reference:
http://brighterkashmir.com/grazing-land-should-not-be-converted-demand-gujjar-bakarwals

3. Tribal Children & Online Classes

● Amid escalating concerns over lack of access to digital classes, Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has promised digital education for all students in the State, with priority for tribal children.

● Children, he said, should be able to pursue their education without being bogged down by the digital divide. With uncertainty over how long the pandemic would drag on, digital classes were unavoidable.

● Children required digital equipment of their own, just like textbooks, to study.

● Mr. Vijayan directed that utmost priority be given to addressing the problems in the tribal areas. In areas that lacked electricity supply, generators and solar power could be used.

● Facilities for students to study would be arranged in every tribal settlement. Support of individuals, institutions, and corporates could be sought for purchase of equipment. A special fund would be launched for the purpose.

● An appeal would be made to internet service providers to provide free connectivity to the needy and waive service charges. School parent-teacher associations should calculate how many students require the facilities.

Reference:
https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/cm-promises-digital-education-for-all-students/article34771900.ece

B. PRIMATOLOGY

1. Primates helping against Covid

● Many of the primates, mostly rhesus macaques, at the Tulane National Research Center are destined for use in scientific research, including in experiments for COVID-19.

● The facility, with high-level biosafety laboratories able to handle biological threat agents like anthrax, was well-positioned to pivot quickly to COVID-19 research when the coronavirus pandemic hit.

● Primates’ DNA and physiological features make them ideal models for human comparison when studying diseases, said Skip Bohm, associate director and chief veterinary medical officer at the Tulane center.

● Non-human primates are really critical for us to understand not only the disease and how it affects the organism but also to compare treatments, therapies, vaccinations.
● Rhesus macaques, the primate species most commonly used for scientific research.
● Once experiments are concluded, the Tulane center euthanizes the monkeys for tissue collection, allowing researchers to study COVID-19's impact beyond the respiratory system.
● Kathy Guillermo, of laboratory investigations at the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), said primates should not be used for testing.

Reference:

2. Primates & Facial Dexterity
Context:
Non-parents expand the range of their facial expressions in caring for infants among primates. The study shows the ability, among non-relatives, to both decipher facial expressions and to be attuned to others' emotional states, revealing the evolutionary nature of communication.

Highlights:
● The research, which appears in the journal Evolution, focused on the relationship between alloparenting, or infant care by non-parents, and the adoption of detailed facial expressions across more than 30 species of primates.
● The results confirm previous work indicating that facial expressions facilitate communication between individuals living in larger social groups.
● This is the first study to demonstrate that the frequency of infant care by non-parents further predicts the ability to produce complex facial expressions across primate species.
● The adaptive value of facial expressions has been debated in evolutionary biology ever since Darwin's seminal work, The Expression of Emotion in Man and Other Animals (1872). It's been long established that primates, including humans, exhibit the most intricate facial displays. And while earlier scholarship has focused on the role of social interaction in the evolution of primate facial expressions, this relationship had not been verified in a wide sample of species.
● The researchers hypothesized that the frequency of infant care by individuals other than the parents predicts facial musculature dexterity -- the ability to produce intricate facial expressions.
● Consistent with their hypothesis, the results showed that, across the studied species, increased facial dexterity was positively correlated with the frequency of alloparental care.
● Notably, however, these relationships were not found with paternal care, suggesting that fathers may, similarly to mothers, rely on hormonal changes to help them become attuned to the infants' needs.
● Overall, this work suggests that all parenting requires increased facial dexterity to facilitate nonverbal communication between infants and their non-parent caregivers. Accordingly, alloparenting and complex facial expressions are likely to have co-evolved in primates.

Reference:
https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2021/05/210526115510.htm
UPSC Previous year questions based on today’s concept:

1. Role of primatology in Anthropological Studies.  
   (10 Marks – 2013)
2. Tribe Caste Continuum.  
   (S.N. - 2004)

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. Contemporary pastoral communities.  
   (20 Marks)