

2019



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CURRENT AFFAIRS

**INDIAN CULTURE AND
HISTORICAL EVENTS**

23rd December- 28th December



BusinessLine



1. Ajanta and Ellora Caves

Why in News?

Two tourist visitor centres set up at Ajanta and Ellora caves by the Maharashtra government with funding from the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) have been shut due to their pending water and electricity dues.

Ajanta Caves

- Ajanta Caves are a series of 30 Buddhist rock-cut caves carved in the period between the 3rd century B.C. to 7th century A.D. in the Sahyadri ranges (Western Ghats) along the **Waghora River**.
- **It is near Aurangabad in Maharashtra.**
- These caves were inscribed by the Buddhist monks under the **patronage of Vakataka king- Harishena.**
- **Fresco paintings** are the striking feature of these paintings.
- Encompassing both **Theravada and Mahayana Buddhist traditions**, the Ajanta caves preserve some of the best masterpieces of Buddhist art in India.
- The Ajanta Caves have been a **UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1983.**

Ellora Caves

- These caves are situated in Aurangabad district in the Sahyadri Ranges, Maharashtra.
- There are 34 monasteries and temples:
 - Hinduism (17)
 - Buddhism (12)
 - Jainism (5)
- Constructed between 6th century A.D. to 10th century A.D.
- Under the patronage of:
 - Rashtrakutas
 - Kalachuris
 - Chalukyas
 - Yadavas
- Some prominent Example of caves in Ellora are:
 - Buddhist chaitya cave known as Vishwakarma cave.
 - Cave no. 14 themed “Ravan ki khai”.
 - Cave no. 15 is Dashavatar temple.
 - Cave no. 16 is Kailash temple dedicated to Shiva.
- There are two famous Jain caves Indra sabha and Jagannath sabha.

- The Ellora caves have been a **UNESCO World Heritage Site** since 1983.

2. Earliest Sanskrit Inscriptions in South India found in Andhra Pradesh

Why in News?

The **Epigraphy** branch of the Archaeological Survey of India has discovered the earliest evidence of Saptamatrika cult; which is also the earliest sanskrit inscription to have been discovered in South India.

- The discovery was made in chebrolu village in Guntur, Andhra Pradesh.
- The discovery was made in chebrolu village in Guntur, Andhra Pradesh.
- **Inscriptions related to Saptamatrika:** The found inscription records the construction of a Prasada (temple), a mandapa and consecration of images by a person named Kartika at the temple of Goddess Saptamatrika at Tambrap.
- **Location:** Tambrap is the ancient name of Chebrolu, Andhra Pradesh.
- **Earlier References to Saptamatrika:** Earlier references to Saptamatrika worship have been found in the early Kadamba copper plates and the early Chalukyas and Eastern Chalukya copper plates dated around 600 A.D.
- The inscription is in sanskrit and in Brahmi characters; issued by Satavahana king Vijaya in 207 A.D.

Saptamatrukas

- These are seven mother goddesses which are an embodiment of the female principle of prakriti, the counterpart of purusha.
- They are:
 - Brahmani
 - Maheshwari
 - Kaumari
 - Vaishnavi
 - Varahi
 - Indrani
 - Yami

3. Kalaripayattu

- Kalaripayattu is a martial art based on the ancient knowledge of the human body.
- It originated in Kerala during 3rd century B.C. to the 2nd century A.D.
- The place where this martial art is practised is called 'Kalari'.

- It is a Malayalam word that signifies a kind of gymnasium.
- Kalari literally means 'threshing floor' or 'battlefield'.
- The word Kalari first appears in the Tamil Sangam literature to describe both a battlefield and combat arena.
- It is considered to be one of the oldest fighting systems in existence.
- It is also considered as the father of modern Kung-Fu.

4. Konda Reddy Tribe

Why in News?

- It is **one of the most backward tribal groups** in the states of **Andhra Pradesh** and **Telangana**.
- They inhabit both the banks of the **Godavari River** (East and West Godavari districts), in the hilly-forest region of Khammam (Telangana) and Srikakulam (Andhra Pradesh).
 - Their mother tongue is Telugu with a unique accent.
- They live in the interior forest areas largely cut-off from the mainstream.
- Konda Reddis have also been recognised as **Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG)s**.
 - 75 tribal groups have been categorised by the **Ministry of Home Affairs** as PVTGs.
 - PVTGs reside in 18 States and Union Territory of Andaman & Nicobar Islands.
 - The criteria for identifying Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups are:
 - i. Pre-agricultural level of technology
 - ii. Low level of literacy
 - iii. Economic backwardness
 - iv. A declining or stagnant population.
- The Konda Reddis are **known for their eco-friendly practices** such as use of household articles made of bamboo, bottle gourd, and seed.
 - Collection of non timber forest products and basket-making supplement the sources of their livelihood.
 - Traditionally, they were **shifting cultivators** and recently, some of them have adopted **settled agriculture and horticulture**.

5. Bharatnatyam

- It is **one of the eight classical styles** of Indian dance.
- Bharatnatyam Dance is considered to be over 2000 years old.

- Several texts beginning with **Bharata Muni's Natya Shastra** and **Abhinaya Darpana by Nandikesvara** is one of the main sources of

textual material, for the study of the technique and grammar of body movement in Bharatnatyam Dance.

- **Brihadeshwara temple** in Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu, was a major centre for Bharatanatyam since 1000 C.E.
- There is also a great deal of visual evidence of this dance form in paintings and stone and metal sculptures of ancient times.
 - Gopurams of the Chidambaram temple has a series of Bharatanatyam poses.
- Bharatnatyam dance is known to be **ekaharya**, where one dancer takes on **many roles in a single performance**.
- The dance involves transitional movements of leg, hip and arm. Expressive eye movements and hand gestures are used to convey emotions.
- The accompanying orchestra consists of a vocalist, a mridangam player, violinist or veena player, a flautist and a cymbal player. The person who conducts the dance recitation is the Nattuvanar.
- **E. Krishna Iyer** and Rukmini Devi Arundale had played a significant role in helping the dance regain its lost popularity and position.

6. Sahitya Akademi Award

Why in News?

The Sahitya Akademi has announced the winners of the annual Sahitya Akademi Awards for 2019.

About Sahitya Akademi Award

- The Sahitya Akademi Award, established in 1954, is a literary honour that is conferred annually by the Sahitya Akademi.
 - **Sahitya Akademi is India's National Academy of letters.**
- Award is presented to the most outstanding books of literary merit published **in 22 languages enumerated Eighth Schedule of the Constitution of India.**
 - **The Akademi also includes works in English and Rajasthani.**
- The Sahitya Akademi award is the **second highest literary honour** by the Government of India, after the **Jnanpith Award**.

7. Belum Caves Festival

Why in News?

The Belum Caves Festival has been postponed due to administrative reasons. Earlier the plan was to organise the festival on December 21 and 22.

Belum Caves

- Belum Caves derive their name from "Bilum" Sanskrit word for caves. In Telugu, it is called Belum Guhalu.
- It is the second largest cave in Indian subcontinent known for its stalactite and stalagmite formations.
- It is a natural underground cave formed by the constant flow of underground water.
- It is one of the centrally protected **Monument of National Importance**.
- Many Buddhist relics were found inside the caves.
- The caves reach its deepest point (150 ft. from the entrance level) at the point known as **Pataalaganga**.

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