

2020



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CURRENT AFFAIRS

**INDIAN CULTURE AND
HISTORICAL EVENTS**

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BusinessLine



1. Rakhigarhi to be Developed as an Iconic Site

Why in News?

Union Budget (2020-21) has proposed to develop **Rakhigarhi** as an **iconic site**.

- 4 other archaeological sites will also be developed as iconic sites:
 - **Hastinapur** (Uttar Pradesh),
 - **Shivsagar** (Assam),
 - **Dholavira** (Gujarat)
 - **Adichanallur** in (Tamil Nadu)

Rakhigarhi

- **Rakhigarhi** is the largest Harappan site in the **Indian subcontinent**.
 - It is situated in Hisar district of Haryana.
- At Rakhigarhi, the excavations are being done to **trace its beginnings** and to study its **gradual evolution** from **6000 BCE (Pre-Harappan phase)** to **2500 BCE**.
 - The site was excavated by **Amarendra Nath** of ASI.

Major Findings at the Site

- The archaeological excavations revealed **the mature Harappan phase** represented by planned township having **mud-brick** as well as **burnt-brick** houses with a **proper drainage system**.
- A **cylindrical seal** with **5 Harappan characters** on one side and a symbol of an **alligator** on the other is an **important** find from this site.
- The ceramic industry represented by **red ware**, which included **dish-on-stand**, vase, **perforated jar** among others.
- **Animal sacrificial pit** lined with mud-brick and **triangular** and **circular fire altars** on the mud floor have also been excavated that signifies the ritual system of Harappans.
- The excavations have yielded a few extended burials, which certainly belong to a very late stage, maybe the medieval times.

Iconic Tourist Sites

- It is an initiative to develop **17 “Iconic Tourist Sites”** in the country as world **class tourist destinations** which in turn would serve as a model for other tourism sites.
- **“Iconic Tourist Sites” Initiative**
 - **The Tourism Ministry is the nodal ministry** for the implementation of the initiative.
 - The **17 sites** identified by the Ministry are:
 - Taj Mahal and Fatehpur Sikri (Uttar Pradesh)
 - Ajanta & Ellora (Maharashtra)
 - Humayun’s Tomb, Red Fort and Qutub Minar (Delhi)
 - Colva (Goa)
 - Amer Fort (Rajasthan)

- Somnath & Dholavira (Gujarat)
- Khajuraho (Madhya Pradesh)
- Hampi (Karnataka)
- Mahabalipuram (Tamil Nadu)
- Kaziranga (Assam)
- Kumarakom (Kerala) and
- Mahabodhi Temple (Bihar)
- The initiative is aimed at **enhancing India's soft power**.
- The monuments taken up for development under the initiative fall under the jurisdiction of **Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)** and State Archaeology Departments.

Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)

- ASI is the premier organization for the archaeological **research, scientific analysis, excavation of archaeological sites, conservation and preservation of protected monuments**.
- It is an attached office under the **Department of Culture (Ministry of Culture)**.
- **ASI was founded in 1861** by Alexander Cunningham who became its first Director-General.

Harappan Civilization

- It is also known as **Indus Valley Civilization**.
- It flourished around 2,500 BC, in the western part of South Asia, in contemporary Pakistan and Western India.
- The Indus Valley was home to the largest of the four ancient urban civilizations of Egypt, Mesopotamia, India, and China.
- In the 1920s, the Archaeological Department of India carried out excavations in the Indus valley wherein the ruins of the two old cities, viz. Mohenjodaro and Harappa were unearthed.

2. Consecration at the Brihadeshwara Temple

Why in News?

Recently, the consecration (Kumbhabhishekam) ceremony was held at the Brihadisvara Temple after 23 years in Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu.

- The ceremony was held after the Madras High Court settled an old argument over the ritual purification process.
- The ceremony got embroiled in the struggle for supremacy between the Sanskrit and Tamil traditions.
- The court **allowed** the consecration to be performed in **both Tamil and Sanskrit**.
- It argued that there is nothing either in the **Agamas (canonical texts)** or in any other religious script to prohibit the chanting of Tamil mantras in the temples.

Brihadeshwara Temple

- Brihadeshwara Temple, also known as Raja Rajeswara Temple or Peruvudaiyar Kovil Temple, is dedicated to Shiva and is located in Thanjavur (Tamil Nadu).
 - Thanjavur lies in the delta of the Cauvery River.
- It is one of the best examples of the **Dravidian style** of temple architecture built by Chola emperor **Raja Raja Chola I** (985-1014 AD) between 1003 AD and 1010 AD.
 - The Dravidian style of temple architecture flourished roughly from the **8th century to about the 13-14 century AD**.
- The temple consists of a **pyramidal spire** and is adorned with sculptures and paintings inside as well as outside.
- The temple entered the **UNESCO World Heritage Site** list in **1987** and is also a part of "**Great Living Chola Temples**" along with the **Brihadisvara Temple** at **Gangaikondacholapuram** and the **Airavatesvara Temple** at **Darasuram**.
 - **Brihadisvara Temple (Gangaikondacholapuram, Tamil Nadu)**.
 - It was built for Shiva by **Rajendra I** (1014-1044 CE).
 - The **bronze sculptures** of **Bhogasakti** and **Subrahmanya** are masterpieces of Chola metal icons.
 - **Airavatesvara Temple (Darasuram)**
 - It was built by the **Chola king Rajaraja II** (1144-1173 CE).
 - The temple consists of a sanctum **without a circumambulatory path** and axial mandapas.
 - The front mandapa is **unique** as it was conceptualized as a chariot with wheels.
- **Special Features:**
 - The temple is one of the tallest temples in India.
 - It is an **engineering mystery** as it is **completely made of granite** and archaeologists still don't know how the builders got such huge pieces of granite for construction at this height.
 - The apex structure on **top of the temple** is believed to be carved out of a **single stone carving**.
 - It is so designed that the **Vimana does not cast a shadow at noon during any part of the year**.
 - **Vimana:** Vimana is the structure over the garbhagriha or inner sanctum in the Hindu temples of South India and Odisha.
 - It is like a stepped pyramid that rises up geometrically rather than the curving **Shikhara** of North India.

3. World Heritage Site certificate for Jaipur Why in News?

Recently, UNESCO presented the 'World Heritage City' certificate to the pink city- Jaipur.

- Jaipur was declared 'World Heritage City' in July 2019 at the session of UNESCO World Heritage Committee in Baku, Azerbaijan.

Intangible Heritage Promotion Project

- It is signed between the Tourism Department of Rajasthan and UNESCO.
- The Project is being implemented by UNESCO in 10 cities of Rajasthan,
- It includes Barmer, Jodhpur, Bikaner, Jaisalmer, etc.

Selection Criteria

- The World Heritage Sites are selected on the basis of four natural criteria and six cultural criteria.
- They are as follows
 - The site should represent human creativity
 - It should reflect the interchange of human values.
 - It should bear unique testimony to cultural tradition
 - An example for a particular type of architecture
 - An example for human settlement, their sea-use and land-use
 - It should represent biological or ecological
 - An example to represent major stages of earth's history
 - To exhibit natural beauty
 - It should be directly related to the traditions of living people
- There are three types of Heritage sites:
- **Cultural**
 - Cultural heritage sites include historic buildings and town sites, important archaeological sites, and works of monumental sculpture or painting.
 - Example: Taj Mahal, Agra
- **Natural heritage sites** are restricted to those natural areas that:
 - Furnish outstanding examples of Earth's record of life or its geologic processes
 - Provide excellent examples of ongoing ecological and biological evolutionary processes.
 - Furnish habitats for rare or endangered animals or plants or are sites of exceptional biodiversity.
 - Example- Great Himalayan National Park, Himachal Pradesh
- **Mixed heritage sites**
 - These contain elements of both natural and cultural significance.
 - Example- Khangchendzonga National Park, Sikkim

Jaipur

- Jaipur, the capital of Rajasthan was founded in 1727 by the Kachwaha Rajput ruler of Amber, Sawai Jai Singh II.
- The city was established on the plains and built according to a grid plan interpreted in the light of Vedic architecture.
- Jaipur has become the second city of the country after Ahmedabad to get the recognition of the World Heritage Site.

4. Poompuhar

Why in News?

The Department of Science and Technology (DST) has launched 'Project Digital Poompuhar' to recreate the Chola Dynasty port city (Poompuhar) in Tamil Nadu.

- The reconstruction of Poompuhar is a part of **Indian Digital Heritage (IDH)** project.
- An exhibition of its first project 'Digital Hampi' is currently on display at the National Museum.
- The Poompuhar project is a part of the second phase of IDH. The second phase will focus on the heritage sites that are currently underwater in Gujarat (eg. Dwarka) and Tamil Nadu.

Project Digital Poompuhar

- The project involves underwater surveys and photography by remotely operated vehicles and remote sensing-based geodynamic studies to bring out comprehensive information on the time series evolution and extinction.
- It also involves the visualisation of geodynamic processes of the last 20,000 years like land subsidence, sea-level rise, Cauvery's migration, floods, tsunami, cyclones and erosion.
- The study is also expected to provide scientific information not only on the life history of Poompuhar and the socio-cultural evolution but also the science and technological evolution and the disaster history of this region.

History:

- Poompuhar city finds mention in Sangam Tamil literature.
- The city is located in southern Tamil Nadu.
- The port city flourished in inter-continental trade but shifted with time.
- Finally, it was re-established at the present location at the mouth of the river Cauvery around 3,000 years ago.
- The shifts took place due to the continuous "kadalkol" or rising sea levels and the submergence of the deltas.

Cholas

- The Cholas controlled the central and northern parts of Tamil Nadu.
- Their core area of the rule was the Kaveri delta, later known as Chola mandalam.
- Their capital was Uraiyur (near Tiruchirapalli town) and Puhar or Kaveripattinam was an alternative royal residence and chief port town.
- The Cholas also maintained an efficient navy.
- King Karikala was a famous king of the Cholas.
- Many Sangam poems mention the **Battle of Venni** where he defeated the confederacy of Cheras, Pandyas and eleven minor chieftains.
- Trade and commerce flourished during his reign.
- He founded the port city of Puhar (identical with Kaveripattinam) and constructed 160 km of an embankment along the Kaveri River.

Indian Digital Heritage Initiative

- India Digital Heritage is an initiative by the Department of Science and Technology in the areas of technology and humanities for digital documentation and interpretation of our tangible and intangible heritage.
- The project highlights art, architecture and cultural legacy of the world heritage site Hampi in Karnataka, the medieval capital of the Vijayanagara dynasty.

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