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## INTACH Efforts to Protect Buddhist Site

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### Why in News

The **Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH)**, heritage lovers and officials have almost stopped the stone-pelting ritual at **Bojjannakonda**, a famous Buddhist site at **Sankaram, near Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh**.

On the **Kanuma day during Sankranti**, the villagers used to pelt stones at a belly-shaped object, believing it to be a part of a demon.

### Kanuma Day

- It is an important day during the **Pongal and Sankranti festivals**, which are both **ancient harvest festivals** that take place in mid-January, celebrating the movement of the sun reversing, marking the start of the end of winter.
- In Andhra Pradesh, the Kanuma festival is celebrated on the **third day of the four-day Sankranti** festival.
- It is an important festival of Telugu people and is **dedicated to cattle** and other animals that are an important part of the rural economy in Andhra Pradesh.

## Key Points



- The main stupa is carved out of rock and then covered with bricks, with a number of images of the Buddha sculpted on the rock face all over the hill.
- **Bojjannakonda** and **Lingalametta** are the **twin Buddhist monasteries** dating back to the 3rd century BC.
  - At Lingalametta, there are hundreds of rock-cut monolithic stupas in rows.
- These sites have seen **three forms of Buddhism**-
  - **Theravada period**: when Lord Buddha was considered a teacher.
  - **Mahayana**: where Buddhism was more devotional.
  - **Vajrayana**: where Buddhist tradition was more practised as Tantra and esoteric form.
- The name **Sankaram** is derived from the term, '**Sangharama**'.
  - It is famous for votive stupas, rock-cut caves, brick-built structural edifices, early historic pottery and Satavahana coins that date back to the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD.
- Visakhapatnam is famous for **Buddhist sites at Thotlakonda, Appikonda, and Bavikonda too.**

## Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage

- It is a **non-profit charitable organisation** registered under **the Societies' Registration Act, 1860.**
- It was founded in **1984 in New Delhi** with the vision to spearhead heritage awareness and conservation in India.
- It has pioneered the conservation and preservation of not just our natural and built heritage but intangible heritage as well.
- In **2007**, the **United Nations** awarded INTACH a special consultative status with the **United Nations Economic and Social Council.**

**Source: TH**