Arunachaleswarar Temple

Prelims: *Current events of national and international importance*

Why in News?

Encroachments around Arunachaleswarar Temple demolished for Karthigai Deepam.

- **Location -** Tiruvannamalai, Tamil Nadu
- **Deity -** Lord Shiva (as **Arunachaleswarar / Annamalaiyar**), Goddess Unnamalai Amman.
- **Form of Shiva -** Agni Lingam (Fire)
- **Associated Hill -** Arunachala Hill.
- **Temple type -** Dravidian-style Hindu temple.
- **Religious Significance -** One of the **Pancha Bhoota Sthalams** represents the **Fire (Agni)** elements *(Others represent Earth, Water, Air, and Space)*
- Connected with the legend of Shiva as an endless pillar of fire
- Considered one of the holiest Shiva temples in South India.
- **Architecture -** Famous for its massive **gopurams (temple towers).**
- Eastern Rajagopuram is about 66 metres tall (one of India's tallest)
- Sprawling temple complex with:
  - Large mandapams (halls)
  - Sacred tanks
  - Intricate sculptures
- Built and expanded mainly by the ***Chola, Hoysala, and Vijayanagara dynasties***
- **Festivals - Karthigai Deepam** – the most famous festival
- A huge sacred flame is lit on Arunachala Hill
- Symbolizes divine light removing ignorance
- **Girivalam / Giri Pradakshina -** Devotees walk around the Arunachala Hill (about **14 km**) barefoot, especially on full moon nights.
- **Cultural Importance -** Centre for **Shaivism** and spiritual learning
- Associated with Saint **Ramana Maharshi**.

Reference

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