Cholanaikkan Tribes

Why in News?

Education department recently prepares exclusive talking texts for bed-ridden tribal girl in Kerala under the Samagra Shiksha Kerala' program.

- They are one of the most isolated tribes inhabits the forests in the ***Nilambur Valley*** of Malappuram district of ***Kerala.***
- **Nomenclature** - They call themselves as Malanaikan or Sholanaikan.
- Cholanaikkans (coolanaaykkan) are called the Cavemen of Kerala.
- Shola or chola means deep thicket in the forest and naikan means king.
- They are the ***only cave dwelling community*** in India.
- **Population -** They are small tribe with a total population of less than 400 persons, they ***are diminishing*** recently.
- **Groups -** They are divided into smaller groups called Jenmam. They have no fixed dwellings but prefer to live close to water sources.
- They are found in groups consisting of ***2 to 7*** primary families. Each group is called a Chemmam.
- **Diet -** The community lives essentially by scavenging the forest.They do not cultivate due to the problem of elephants trampling over their produce.
- **Habitat -** A fraction of whom live in caves, the rest in temporary self-built structures.
- Their forest area is completely protected and outsiders are not even allowed to scavenge for forest produce or contact the tribal communities.
- They live in a protected forest with elephants and other wild animals including occasional sighting of tigers. Antelopes are very common.
- **Language -** They speak a language which is weakly called Dravidian but it is not directly related to any of the modern Dravidian languages.
- Their names also suggest local words and do not carry any names from Hindu mythologies or other more prevalent names suggesting long period of isolation.
- **Classification Status -** They are classified as ***Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs).***

References

1. The Hindu | Cholanaikkan tribe
2. PTI News | Cholanaikkan tribe