Mudumal Megalithic Menhirs

Why in News?

Mudumal Megalithic Menhirs of Telangana's Narayanpet have been added to a tentative list of Unesco World Heritage Sites from India.

- The site is a significant megalithic astronomical observatory and possibly the largest megalithic-era burial site in South India.
- **Time Period -** Dating back approximately 3,500 to 4,000 years.
- It showcases an intricate and precise arrangement of boulder alignments, formations, and stone circles.
- Besides the standing stones, there are smaller stones placed in circular formations and also thousands of boulders appearing to be placed in certain alignments across an 80-acre spread of land.
- There are close to ***80 tall menhirs*** of 10 to 14 feet height, accompanied by nearly 3,000 alignment stones *related to the funerary rights* of the ancient community.
- These stones are arranged in lines or rows in a 20-25 feet gap.
- The menhirs are considered sacred by the local population, who refer to them as 'Niluralla Thimmappa' (Thimmappa of the Standing Stones)
    - One particular menhir being worshipped as ***Goddess Yellamma.***
- **Purpose -** It appears they have been designed in a manner such that they ***align with the sun*** on particular days.
- The sun's propagation can be used to *calculate the dates and calendrical events, and change of season*, etc by carefully observing the movement of the sun in relation with these monuments.
- One of the stones with a flat face present here is the earliest depiction of the night sky and a star constellation from anywhere in South Asia.
- An alignment stone here with cup-marks of 3-4 mm depressions. It has seven prominent stars. This is a depiction of *Ursa Major or Saptarshi Mandal.*
- When an imaginary line is drawn between the top stars of the rectangle Merak and Dubhe, it points to the Pole Star or North Star. This is the earliest depiction of a constellation from South Asia.
- The precise alignment of its menhirs reflects an advanced grasp of mathematics and astronomy, establishing it as a ***rare archaeo-astronomical site.***

Telangana has only one UNESCO World Heritage Site at Ramappa temple, inscribed in 2021.

- **Other properties added to India's Tentative List, 2025**
    1. Kanger Valley National Park in Chhattisgarh,

2. Ashokan Edict Sites in multiple states,
3. Chausath Yogini Temples in Madhya Pradesh and Odisha,
4. Gupta Temples in multiple states, and the
5. Palace-Fortresses of the Bundelas in Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh.

- With these additions, India now has ***62 sites*** on the tentative list.

Reference

The Indian Express - Mudumal Megalithic Menhirs

