Prelim Bits 21-05-2023 & 22-05-2023 | UPSC Daily Current Affairs

Nigrantha

The naked ascetics of the Nigrantha sect and other nude ascetics.

- The word 'Nirgrantha' means 'without knots' or 'without bonds' (Nir - without; Granth - knot or bond).
- In Jainism, the Nirgranthas are those who have achieved a state of spiritual purity and liberation.
- They are free from all attachments, desires, and passions.
- As per the Buddhist texts, Mahavira was the founder of the Nigrantha movement.
- The name of the order refers to those who have destroyed the worldly ties as well as have given up their clothes.
- They were pravrajita (houseless ascetics) as well as the naked ascetics (nigrantha).
- These ascetics abstain from animal food and all food cooked by fire. They live on fruits picked up when they had dropped to the ground.
- They believed in soul's existence and abstained from killing animals and destroying plants.
- **Epic Manimegalai -** The Tamil epic Manimegalai, which is about 1,500 years old, refers to two types of naked ascetics: the Ajivika and the Nigrantha.

Ajivika	Nigrantha
Ajivika means those who endure life.	Nigrantha refers to those who consciously untie all knots of life.
The Ajivika believed that humans have no free will	Nigrantha believed humans have free will.
Both were yogis, seeking to do yoga to uncrumple the crumpled mind and break free from the limitations of the body.	

Nude Ascetics

- The idea of nude ascetics is at least 2,500 years old.
- The Greeks who accompanied Alexander, 2,300 years ago, encountered nude ascetics and referred to them as gymnosophists or naked philosophers.
- **Buddhism -** Buddha forbade monks from wandering in the nude as he was against nudity.
- **Jainism -** Male nudity is integral to the more conservative Digambara (sky-clad) Jain monasticism.

- Mahavir practised nudity that made him belong to sky-clad (Digambara sect).
- **Ajivika -** Gosala, the eventual founder of Ajivika sect, accepted nudity.

References

1. The Hindu - The naked philosophers

Neanderthals

A new study by a team of researchers has found some genes responsible for our nasal anatomy may have been inherited from Neanderthals.

- Neanderthals (or Neandertals) are the closest extinct relatives to humans (*Homo sapiens*).
- Neanderthals were shorter and stockier with angled cheekbones, prominent brow ridges and wide noses.
- Neanderthals were equipped with tall noses that could warm and moisten the cold and dry air around them in chilly climates.



- Neanderthals lived during the Ice Age.
- Neanderthals lived across Eurasia, as far north and west as the Britain, through part of the Middle East, to Uzbekistan.
- They often took shelter from the ice and snow in Eurasia's limestone caves.
- Neanderthals were primarily carnivorous.
- Neanderthals had some control of fire and ate cooked vegetables fairly regularly.

The 2022 Nobel Prize in physiology or medicine has been awarded to a Swedish geneticist who traced the evolution of modern day humans from the DNA of Neanderthals.

References

1. The Hindu - Are Neanderthals to blame for the human nose?
2. Live Science - Facts About Neanderthals, Extinct Human Relatives

Porunai Museum

The Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu laid the foundation for the 'Porunai Museum' project in Tirunelveli district, Tamilnadu.

- The 'Porunai Archaeological Museum' would come up in Tirunelveli district near Reddiyarpatti hillock.
- The museum will showcase the artefacts collected at Porunai excavation sites.
- The museum will have three separate sections for exhibiting the artefacts recovered from Korkai, Sivakalai and Aditchanallur excavations.

- The architecture of the museum will have local flavour with courtyards, verandah and stone and wooden pillars.
- A craft workshop will also be part of the project, to give a comprehensive idea about the handicrafts of the region.
- **Artefacts -** The museum will exhibit 2,617 artefacts artefacts that were collected at Sivakalai, Korkai and Adichanallur and artefacts that would be collected in the upcoming excavations.
- The artefacts includes utensils, terracotta, copper and iron tools, coins, burial urns, bangles, beads, polished black ware and porcelain pieces among others.



- **Porunai Civilisation -** Aditchanallur and Korkai (Pandya kingdom's port town) and Sivakalai, in Thoothukudi district are few among the other Porunai sites.
- The entire Tamirabharani watercourse is known as 'Cradle of Civilization of South India'.
- Large quantities of ornaments made of gold and tin-mixed bronze, reflect the life style of people.
- The carbon dating of the rice found in one of the burial urns in Sivakalai hillock revealed that it is from 1155 BC making the Tamirabharani civilisation 3,200 years old.

References

1. The Hindu - 'Porunai Museum' in Tirunelveli district

Khadi and Village Industries Commission

The Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) celebrated Diamond Jubilee at Central Bee Research Training Institute, Pune.

- The Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) is a statutory body established by 'Khadi and Village Industries Commission Act of 1956' in 1957.
- KVIC took over the work of former All India Khadi and Village Industries Board since then.
- It was established with the object to plan, support and promote Khadi and Village Industries.
- **Ministry -** KVIC functions under the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MoMSME).
- It is an apex body with regard to khadi and village industries within India.
- **Functions -** It is charged with the planning, promotion, organisation and implementation of programs for the development of Khadi and other village industries in the rural areas.
- It acts in coordination with other agencies engaged in rural development wherever necessary.
- **Schemes -** Some of the schemes and projects implemented by KVIC -
    1. PM's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP)
    2. National Beekeeping & Honey Mission (NBHM)
    3. Scheme of Fund for Regeneration of Traditional Industries (SFURTI)

4. Project RE-HAB
5. Project BOLD

- In order to effectively implement the schemes of KVIC, the state level Khadi and Village Industries Boards (KVIBs) were also set up.

References

1. PIB - KVIC celebrated Diamond Jubilee
2. Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC)

International Pathogen Surveillance Network

The World Health Organization launched the International Pathogen Surveillance Network (IPSN).

- The International Pathogen Surveillance Network (IPSN) was launched on the side-lines of the World Health Assembly in Geneva by WHO.
- IPSN is a global network to help protect people from infectious disease threats through the power of pathogen genomics.
- **Aim -** To help ensure infectious disease threats are swiftly identified and tracked and the information shared and acted on to prevent catastrophes like the COVID pandemic.
- **Function -** IPSN will provide a platform for connecting countries and regions.
- It improves systems for collecting and analysing samples.
- The data gathered will feed into a broader disease surveillance system used to identify and track diseases.
- The data is also used to develop treatments and vaccines
- **Organisational Structure -** The IPSN consists of 3 main operational bodies that bring together different sets of stakeholders and supported by a Secretariat.
- **Bodies -** The 3 main operational bodies are -
    1. Communities of Practice (COPs) - To collaborate partners and increase harmonization and innovation in pathogen genomics.
    2. Country Scale-Up Accelerator (CSUA) - To scale-up country capacity building through stakeholders working together.
    3. Funders Forum - To coordinate philanthropic, multi-lateral and governmental donors and financing efficiency of pathogen genomic surveillance.
- **Secretariat -** The IPSN Secretariat will be hosted by the WHO Hub for Pandemic and Epidemic Intelligence.

The WHO Hub for Pandemic and Epidemic Intelligence

- The WHO Hub for Pandemic and Epidemic Intelligence (the WHO Pandemic Hub) forms part of the WHO Health Emergencies Programme.
- The WHO Pandemic Hub was established in September 2021 in Berlin, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- It facilitates a global collaboration of partners from multiple sectors to address future pandemic and epidemic risks.
- It aims to address pandemic and epidemic risks with better access to data, better analytical capacities, and better tools and insights for decision-making.

References

1. The Hindu - WHO launches global network IPSN
2. WHO - Launched International Pathogen Surveillance Network
3. The WHO Hub for Pandemic and Epidemic Intelligence

