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Indian Culture Portal

- Indian Culture Portal was launched in December, 2019.
- It aims to showcase information about the rich cultural heritage of India across the globe.
- The Indian Culture Portal is available in two languages i.e. Hindi and English.
- The portal will create awareness about both the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of India, through the content available on the portal.
- The portal comprises mainly of rare books, e-books, manuscripts, artefacts from museums, virtual galleries, archives, photo archives, gazetteers, Indian National Bibliography, videos etc.
- The portal also has detailed accounts of Indian UNESCO World Heritage site, Musical Instruments of India, write-ups and beautiful pictures on cuisines, festivals, paintings, folk art and classical art from different States of India etc.

UNESCO World Heritage Sites

- A World Heritage Site is a landmark or area, selected by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for having cultural, historical, scientific or other form of significance, which is legally protected by international treaties.
- The sites are judged to be important for the collective and preservative interests of humanity.
- To be selected, a World Heritage Site must be an already-classified landmark, unique in some respect as a geographically and historically identifiable place having special cultural or physical significance.
- It can be an ancient ruin or historical structure, building, city, complex, desert, forest, island, lake, monument, mountain, or wilderness area.
- It may signify a remarkable accomplishment of humanity, and serve as evidence of our intellectual history on the planet.
- The sites are intended for practical conservation for posterity, which otherwise would be subject to risk from human or animal trespassing, unmonitored/uncontrolled/unrestricted access, or threat from local

administrative negligence.
- Sites are demarcated by UNESCO as protected zones.
- The list is maintained by the international World Heritage Program administered by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee, composed of 21 "states parties" that are elected by their General Assembly.
- The programme catalogues, names, and conserves sites of outstanding cultural or natural importance to the common culture and heritage of humanity.
- Under certain conditions, listed sites can obtain funds from the World Heritage Fund.
- The programme began with the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World's Cultural and Natural Heritage, which was adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO in 1972.
- Since then, 193 state parties have ratified the convention, making it one of the most widely recognized international agreements and the world's most popular cultural programme.

World Heritage Sites in India

- At present, India has 38 World Heritage Sites, The details of India's World Heritage Sites are as below,

Cultural Sites (30)

Under Protection of Archaeological Survey of India (22)

S.No	Name of Site	State
1.	Agra Fort (1983)	Uttar Pradesh
2.	Ajanta Caves (1983)	Maharashtra
3.	Ellora Caves (1983)	Maharashtra
4.	Taj Mahal (1983)	Uttar Pradesh
5.	Group of Monuments at Mahabalipuram (1984)	Tamil Nadu
6.	Sun Temple, Konarak (1984)	Odisha
7.	Churches and Convents of Goa (1986)	Goa
8.	Fatehpur Sikri (1986)	Uttar Pradesh
9.	Group of Monuments at Hampi (1986)	Karnataka
10.	Khajuraho, Group of Temples (1986)	Madhya Pradesh
11.	Elephanta Caves (1987)	Maharashtra

12.	Great Living Chola Temples at Thanjavur, Gangaikondacholapuram and Darasuram (1987 & 2004)	Tamil Nadu
13.	Group of Monuments at Pattadakal (1987)	Karnataka
14.	Buddhist Monuments at Sanchi (1989)	Madhya Pradesh
15.	Humayun's Tomb, Delhi (1993)	Delhi
16.	Qutb Minar and its Monuments, Delhi (1993)	Delhi
17.	Rock Shelters of Bhimbetka (2003)	Madhya Pradesh
18.	Champaner-Pavagarh Archaeological Park (2004)	Gujarat
19.	Red Fort Complex, Delhi (2007)	Delhi
20.	Hill Forts of Rajasthan (Chittaurgarh, Kumbhalgarh, Jaisalmer and Ranthambhore, Amber and Gagron Forts) (2013) (Amber and Gagron Forts are under protection of Rajasthan State Archaeology and Museums)	Rajasthan
21.	Rani-ki-Vav (The Queen's Stepwell) at Patan (2014)	Gujarat
22.	Archaeological Site of Nalanda *Mahavihara* (Nalanda University) at Nalanda (2016)	Bihar

Under Protection of Ministry of Railways (2)

23.	Mountain Railways of India (Darjeeling,1999), Nilgiri (2005), Kalka-Shimla(2008)	West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, Himachal Pradesh
24.	Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus (formerly Victoria Terminus) (2004)	Maharashtra

Under Protection of Bodhgaya Temple Management Committee (1)

25	Mahabodhi Temple Complex at Bodh Gaya, (2002)	Bihar

Under Protection of Rajasthan State Archaeology and Museums (1)

26.	The Jantar Mantar, Jaipur (2010)	Rajasthan

Under Protection of Chandigarh Administration (1)

27.	The Architectural Work of Le Corbusier, an Outstanding Contribution to the Modern Movement (2016)	Chandigarh

Under Protection of Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (1)

28.	Historic City of Ahmedabad (2017)	Gujarat

Under Protection of Bombay Municipal Corporation (1)

29.	Victorian and Art Deco Ensemble of Mumbai (2018)	Govt of Maharashtra

Under Protection of Jaipur Municipal Corporation (1)

30.	Jaipur City, Rajasthan (2019)	Govt of Rajasthan

Natural Sites (7)

Under Protection of Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Changes

31.	Kaziranga National Park (1985)	Assam
32.	Keoladeo National Park (1985)	Rajasthan
33.	Manas Wildlife Sanctuary (1985)	Assam
34.	Sunderbans National Park (1987)	West Bengal
35.	Nanda Devi and Valley of Flowers National Parks (1988, 2005)	Uttarakhand
36.	Western Ghats (2012)	Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra,Tamil Nadu
37	Great Himalayan National Park (2014)	Himachal Pradesh

Mixed Site (1)

Under Protection of Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Changes

38.	Khangchendzonga National Park (2016)	Sikkim

Central Sanskrit Universities Bill, 2020

- The Central Sanskrit Universities Bill, 2020 has been passed by the Parliament after it was passed by Rajya Sabha recently.
- This bill will convert the following universities into central Sanskrit universities

1. Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan, New Delhi,
2. Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri Rashtriya Sanskrit Vidyapeeth, New Delhi,
3. Rashtriya Sanskrit Vidyapeeth, Tirupati.

- These 3 universities will have more opportunities to spread the knowledge of Sanskrit language not only in India but also across the world in a better way.

Sanskrit Language

- Sanskrit is an Indo-Aryan language of the ancient Indian subcontinent with a 3,500-year history.
- It is the primary liturgical language of Hinduism and the predominant language of most works of Hindu philosophy as well as some of the principal texts of Buddhism and Jainism.
- Sanskrit, in its variants and numerous dialects, was the lingua franca of ancient and medieval India.
- In the early 1st millennium CE, along with Buddhism and Hinduism, Sanskrit migrated to Southeast Asia, parts of East Asia and Central Asia, emerging as a language of high culture and of local ruling elites in these regions.
- Sanskrit traces its linguistic ancestry to the Proto-Indo-Aryan language, Proto-Indo-Iranian and the Proto-Indo-European languages.
- Sanskrit is traceable to the 2nd millennium BCE in a form known as Vedic Sanskrit, with the Rigveda as the earliest-known composition.
- A more refined and standardized grammatical form called Classical Sanskrit emerged in the mid-1st millennium BCE with the Aṣṭadhyayi treatise of Paṇini.
- It is the root language of many Prakrit languages, Examples include numerous, modern, North Indian, subcontinental daughter languages such as Hindi, Marathi, Bengali, Punjabi, Gujarati, Sindhi, Kashmiri, Kumaoni, Garhwali, Urdu, Dogri, Maithili, Konkani, Assamese, Odia, and Nepali.
- The body of Sanskrit literature encompasses a rich tradition of philosophical and religious texts, as well as poetry, music, drama, scientific, technical and other texts.
- The earliest known inscriptions in Sanskrit are from the 1st century BCE, such as the few discovered in Ayodhya and Ghosundi-Hathibada (Chittorgarh).
- Sanskrit is one of the 22 languages listed in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution of India, it has only 24,821 speakers (according to 2011 Census).
- It continues to be widely used as a ceremonial and ritual language in Hinduism and some Buddhist practices such as hymns and chants.

Communication Network in Plants

- US researches has discovered a communication network in plants that helps them respond to a hormone involved in pest resistance.
- This may help develop crops that can withstand insect attacks.
- In the study, the scientists used the plant Arabidopsis thaliana, a widely studied small flowering plant in the mustard family, whose genome has been well characterized.
- It is observed that the hormone called jasmonic acid is particularly important for a plant's defense response against fungi and insects.
- The research has opened avenues to understand how environmental information and developmental information is processed, and how it ensures proper growth and development.
- According to the scientists, the genes MYC2 and MYC3 rose to the top in their degree of importance across the system.
- The two genes are involved in producing proteins that regulate the activity of thousands of other genes.
- These gene networks and subnetworks could help in understand the architecture of the whole plant hormone system.
- It also helped them to understand which genes are turned on and off during a plant's defense response.
- Ultimately, the process helps in identifying breeding crops that are able to better withstand attacks from pests.

AISHE

- All India Survey of Higher Education was started in India in 2010-11.
- A task force was formed constitution representatives from HRD ministry, University Grants Commission, All India Council of Technical Education, Medical Council of India, National University of Education Planning and Administration, Distance Education Council of India and representatives of many universities.
- Task force recommended survey making an annual exercise which was accepted and now it is a regular survey being conducted by department of Higher Education in ministry of HRD India.
- Each institution is allotted a code known as AISHE code, There are about 50000 Institutes of Higher Education in India, out of this about 800 are universities, 12,000 are professional institutes and remaining academic colleges and institutes.
- In survey, Data is collected about details of Institute, Students enrolled, no. and details of teachers, infrastructure available, scholarship, loans and accreditation etc.
- As per All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2018-19, there are

39931 colleges in India, out of which 60.53% are located in rural areas.
- Further, majority of the colleges provide higher education to both males and females and 11.04% colleges are exclusively for females.
- Additionally, as per AISHE 2018-19, females constitute 48.6% of the total enrolment in higher education and the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for females in higher education at 26.4% is higher than the national GER of boys at 26.3%.
- Also, the Gender Parity Index (GPI) has increased during the last 5 years, from 0.92 in 2014-15 to 1 in 2018-19.

Gross Enrollment Ratio

- Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) or Gross Enrolment Index (GEI) is a statistical measure used in the education sector, and formerly by the UN in its Education Index.
- It is used to determine the number of students enrolled in school at several different grade levels (like elementary, middle school and high school), and use it to show the ratio of the number of students who live in that country to those who qualify for the particular grade level.
- The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), describes "Gross Enrolment Ratio" as the total enrolment within a country "in a specific level of education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the population in the official age group corresponding to this level of education".

Gender Parity Index

- The Gender Parity Index (GPI) is a socioeconomic index usually designed to measure the relative access to education of males and females, released by UNESCO.
- It is calculated as the quotient of the number of females by the number of males enrolled in a given stage of education (primary, secondary, etc.).
- A GPI equal to one signifies equality between males and females.
- A GPI less than one is an indication that gender parity favors males while a GPI greater than one indicates gender parity that favors females.
- The closer a GPI is to one, the closer a country is to achieving equality of access between males and females.
- It is used by international organizations, particularly in measuring the progress of developing countries.
- The World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2016 allows users to look at and compare country GPI data.

Mission Solar Charkha

- The Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) has launched the Mission Solar Charkha in 2018-19 for implementation of 50 Solar Charkha Clusters across the country.
- The aims and objectives of Mission Solar Charkha are

1. To ensure inclusive growth by generation of employment, especially for women and youth and sustainable development through solar charkha cluster in rural areas.
2. To boost rural economy and help in arresting migration from rural to urban areas.
3. To leverage low-cost, innovative technologies and processes for substance.

- As of now 10 projects have been approved under Mission Solar Charkha.
- One Solar Charkha cluster has been identified in Andhra Pradesh.
- The scheme envisages to generate direct employment to nearly one lakh persons.

Source: PIB, News on AIR

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