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Vishnu Temple in Pakistan

- Recently a Hindu temple, believed to have been constructed 1,300 years ago, has been discovered by Pakistani and Italian archaeological experts.
- The discovery was made during an excavation at Barikot Ghundai, a mountain in northwest Pakistan's Swat district.
- The temple discovered is of Lord Vishnu, which was built by the Hindus during the Hindu Shahi period.
- The Hindu Shahis or Kabul Shahis (850-1026 CE) was a Hindu dynasty that ruled the Kabul Valley (eastern Afghanistan), Gandhara (modern-day Pakistan), and present-day north-western India.
- During their excavation, the archaeologists also found traces of cantonment and watchtowers near the temple site.
- The experts also found a water tank near the temple site which they believe was used by the Hindus for bathing before worship.
- This was the first temple of the Ghandhara civilisation discovered in Swat district.

Ghandhara Civilisation

- The Gandhara Civilization existed in what is now Northern Pakistan and Afghanistan from the middle of the 1st millennium BCE to the beginning of the 2nd millennium CE.
- Gandhara was not known to have been geographically described in detail until the pilgrimage of the Buddhist monk Xuanzang (Hsüan-tsang, 602- 664 CE) in the 7th century CE.
- He visited the region during the tail end of the Gandhara civilization, after the time when it had achieved its greatest feats and was falling into decay.
- Well-known cities of the gandhara include

1. Takshasila (taxila),
2. Purushapura (peshawar)
3. Pushkalavati (mardan),

- It has been speculated that Gandhara was a triangular tract of land about 100 kilometers east to west and 70 km north to south, lying mainly to the west of the Indus River and bounded on the north by the Hindukush

Mountains.

- The name of Gandhara may have several meanings, but the most prominent theory relates its name to the word Qand/Gand which means "fragrance", and Har which means 'lands'.
- Hence in its simplest form, Gandhara is the 'Land of Fragrance'.
- Gandhara witnessed the rule of several major powers of antiquity as listed here:

1. Persian Achaemenid Empire (c. 600-400 BCE)
2. Greeks of Macedon (c. 326-324 BCE),
3. Mauryan Empire of Northern India (c. 324-185 BCE),
4. Indo-Greeks of Bactria (c. 250-190 BCE),
5. Scythians of Eastern Europe (c. 2nd century to 1st century BCE),
6. Parthian Empire (c. 1st century BCE to 1st century CE),
7. Kushans of Central Asia (c. 1st to 5th century CE),
8. White Huns of Central Asia (c. 5th century CE)
9. Hindu Shahi of Northern India (c. 9th to 10th century CE)
10. This was followed by Muslim conquests by which time we come to the medieval period of Indian history.

Study on Radicalisation

- Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has, for the first time, approved a research study on “status of radicalisation in India.
- The study would attempt to legally define “radicalisation” and suggest amendments to the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA).
- The Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D), the police think tank of the MHA, had invited research proposals from academicians and legal experts in the year 2018.
- It received 75 proposals, and two topics - “Status of Radicalization in India: An Exploratory Study of Prevention and Remedies” and “Functioning and Impact of Open Prisons on Rehabilitation of Prisoners” were shortlisted by the MHA recently.
- G.S. Bajpai, Director of the Centre for Criminology and Victimology, National Law University (NLU), Delhi, will conduct the research on radicalisation.
- Tthe study will be religion-neutral and will go by facts and the reported cases.
- Radicalisation is yet to be defined legally, this leads to misuse by the police.
- It should be defined and necessary amendments made to the UAPA.

Safai Mitra Suraksha Challenge

- Recently, the Union Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs has launched the

Safai Mitra Suraksha Challenge.

- It aims to ensure that no life of any sewer or septic tank cleaner is ever lost again owing to the issue of 'hazardous cleaning.
- India still continues to witness over hundred deaths per year due to manual scavenging.
- It is in line with PM's vision who has always placed the safety and dignity of sanitation workers at the core of the Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban (SBM-U).
- The challenge has been launched in 243 cities to mechanize all sewer and septic tank cleaning operations by 30th April 2021.
- The challenge will focus extensively on creating citizen awareness on this critical issue along with infrastructure creation for mechanized cleaning and capacity building of workforce.
- This challenge is in line with the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act (2013) and various judgements of the Supreme Court expressly prohibit hazardous cleaning.

Defence Land Management System

- Recently Union Defence Ministry has launched the portal for Defence Land Management System (LMS).
- It has been developed by Department of Defence in collaboration with Directorate General Defence Estates (DGDE) and Armed forces.
- The Intra-net portal shall digitize all requests of defence land management received by the Department in future.
- The portal is expected to bring in greater speed, transparency and efficiency into the Land Management System (LMS) of the Department.
- The portal, along with integration of GIS based tool, will improve decision making process by removing duplication/unnecessary communication between various stakeholder groups involved in the decision-making process.
- It will integrate several mapping tools into the existing "Raksha Bhoomi" software, which was launched with the data updated in 2011.
- The technical support for the GIS-based system has been provided by Bhaskaracharya Institute for Space Applications and Geoinformatics (BISAG) which is India's premier organization in GIS based informatics.

Raksha Bhoomi

- In 2006 Defence Estates Department has developed Raksha Bhoomi software in collaboration with NIC, Chennai.
- This software records complete defence land data.
- This software can be used to generate area wise, state wise and category wise reports of defence lands throughout the country.

- The present version of Raksha Bhoomi Software is 3.3. updated in 2011.

Chapare virus

- US researchers have recently discovered a rare Ebola-like illness that is believed to have first originated in rural Bolivia in 2004.
- The virus is named Chapare after a rural province in the northern region of central Bolivia, in which it was first observed.
- Chapare Virus belongs to the same Arenavirus family that is responsible for illnesses such as the Ebola virus disease (EVD).
- Chapare virus are generally carried by rats and can be transmitted through direct contact with the infected rodent, its urine and droppings, or through contact with an infected person.
- A disease vector is any agent which carries and transmits an infectious pathogen into another living organism.
- The virus causes Chapare Hemorrhagic Fever (CHHF), with the following symptoms

1. Hemorrhagic fever much like Ebola.
2. Viral hemorrhagic fevers are a severe and life-threatening kind of illness that can affect multiple organs and damage the walls of blood vessels.

- Virus can spread from person to person, it spreads only through direct contact with bodily fluids.
- The disease is also known to be most commonly transmitted in more tropical regions, particularly in certain parts of South America where the small-eared pygmy rice rat is commonly found.
- Since there are no specific drugs to treat the disease, patients generally receive supportive care such as intravenous fluids.
- The recent biggest outbreak of the ‘Chapare virus’ was reported in 2019, when three healthcare workers contracted the illness from two patients in the Bolivian capital of La Paz.

Edinburgh Medal

- The Edinburgh Medal is an award given each year to women and men who have made significant contributions to science and technology and the understanding and well-being of humanity.
- Edinburgh medal is instituted by the City of Edinburgh Council
- Sunita Narain, director-general of a think tank Centre for Science and Environment (CSE), has won this year’s Edinburgh Medal 2020.
- The Medal is being awarded in recognition of the role Narain has played and continues to play, in formulating policies on climate emergency in India as well as in the global arena.

- The recognition also underscores strong leadership by her, especially in championing climate justice for the poor and disenfranchised.
- Narain has also been named the ‘national climate leader’ from India for 2019 in the first National Climate Leader Awards published in the Global Spotlight Report #22 by Climate Scorecard.

Source: PIB, Indian Express, Hindustan Times, the Hindu

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