



INNOVATIVE IAS

Daily News Analysis

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General studies-1

Inscriptions confirm presence of two medieval monasteries at Moghalmari

Why in News?

- A study of inscriptions on clay tablets recovered from recent excavations at Moghalmari, a Buddhist monastic site of the early medieval period in West Bengal's Paschim Medinipur district, have confirmed the presence of two monasteries — Mugalayikaviharika and Yajñapindikamahavihara.

Key points:

- The presence of two monasteries dating to the same period within a single compound is unique in eastern India. Earlier excavations had indicated the presence of two monasteries on the basis of the structural plan.
- The monasteries at Moghalmari date from 6th century CE and were functional till the 12th century CE.
- Six tiny fragments of inscribed seals were found during excavations. Each of them contained a set of letters accompanied by the deer-dharmachakra symbols.
- The inscriptions are in Sanskrit and the script is a transitional phase between later north Indian Brahmi and early Siddhamatrika.
- The first name Yajñapindikamahavihara, implying etymologically 'a place of sacrificial offering' is of special significance.
- The second name on the seals, Mugalayikaviharika, bears a phonetic resemblance to the modern name of the site, Moghalmari.
- Archaeologists and historians point out that famous Chinese traveller Xuanzang (more widely identified as Huen Tsang), who visited India in the 7th century CE, referred to the existence of 'ten monasteries' within the limits of Tamralipta (modern day Tamluk in adjoining PurbaMedinipur district). However, he did not refer to any specific name or location.
- With the discovery of the site and the deciphering of the inscriptions, at least two of these monasteries are now identified.
- It is known from Buddhist texts that Buddhist monasteries have a definite hierarchy — Mahavihara, Vihara and Viharika — which is reflected in the inscriptions found.
- The study provides the only contextual epigraphical proof for the existence of a viharika (Mugalayikaviharika in this case) as early as the 6th century in this part of the subcontinent.
- The study of the inscribed seals suggests that the monastery was called Mugalayikaviharika.
- It is believed that the name Mugalayika suggests a fair connection to the modern place-name Moghalmari.
- In his paper, Prof.Sanyal refers to L.S.S. O'Malley's gazetteer of 1911, where the name Moghalmari is said to trace its name to a medieval battle between the Mughals and Pathans, sometime in the 16th or early 17th century.



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Daily News Analysis

GENERAL STUDIES-2

Govt. launches road accident database

Why in news?

- The government has launched a central accident database management system that will help in analysing causes of road crashes and in devising safety interventions to reduce such accidents in the country.

Key facts:

- India sees the largest number of road fatalities in the world.
- More than 1.5 lakh people lost their lives in road crashes in the country in 2018, according to government data. Of the total people killed in road crashes in 2018, 48% were between 18 years and 35 years old, and more than 60% of such fatalities were due to overspeeding.

Key points:

- The IT tool, known as the Integrated Road Accident Database (IRAD), has been developed by the Indian Institute of Technology-Madras (IIT-M).
- It will be implemented by the National Informatics Centre.
- The project costs Rs.258 crore and is being supported by the World Bank.
- The system will be first piloted in the six States with highest fatalities from road crashes — Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh.
- The IRAD will be improved on the basis of the learnings from the trial, following which it will be rolled out across the country.
- The IRAD mobile application will enable police personnel to enter details about a road accident, along with photos and videos, following which a unique ID will be created for the incident.
- Subsequently, an engineer from the Public Works Department or the local body will receive an alert on his mobile device.
- He or she will then visit the accident site, examine it, and feed the required details, such as the road design.
- Data thus collected will be analysed by a team at IIT-M, which will then suggest if corrective measures in road design need to be taken.
- Road users will also be able to upload data on road accidents on a separate mobile application.

SC not to review Sabarimala case, to examine 'larger issues'

Why in news?

- A nine-judge Bench led by Chief Justice of India Sharad A. Bobde have said that its objective was not to review the Sabarimala women entry case but examine “larger issues” of law arising from practices.



INNOVATIVE IAS

Daily News Analysis

Background:

- In November 2019, the five-judge Bench led by then Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi, instead of deciding the Sabarimala review entrusted to it, sought an “authoritative pronouncement” on the Court's power to decide the essentiality of religious practices.
- Framing seven questions, the Bench referred them to a seven-judge Bench.
- These referral questions included whether “essential religious practices” be afforded constitutional protection under Article 26 (freedom to manage religious affairs).
- Chief Justice Bobde, who succeeded Justice Gogoi, formed a Bench of nine, rather than seven judges, to examine these questions which concern multiple faiths.

Key points:

- The nine judge bench has set an objective of examining “larger issues” of law arising from practices such as:
- The prohibition of women from entering mosques and temples
- Female genital mutilation among DawoodiBohras
- The ban on Parsi women who married inter-faith from entering the fire temple.
- CJI has said that the nine-judge Bench was only examining propositions of law raised about religious practices believed to be essential to various religions. The Bench would not go into the individual facts of the various petitions before it.
- The Bench, clarified that it would not go into the legality of issues such as the practice of polygamy and 'nikah-halala' in Islam.

Retail inflation at 5-year high of 7.3% in December

Why in news?

- Retail inflation has surged to over 5-year high of 7.35% in December 2019.

Key points:

- Retail inflation soared to a five-and-a-half year high of 7.35% in December 2019, significantly breaching the upper limit of 6%, set by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).
- The Centre has mandated the Reserve Bank of India to keep inflation in the range of 2-6%.
- According to information released by the National Statistical Office on Monday, retail inflation based on the Consumer Price Index was only 2.11% in December 2018 and 5.54% in November 2019.

Retail Inflation

- Inflation as measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI) captures retail inflation.
- In India, retail inflation is linked to Consumer Price Index (CPI) which is released by the Central Statistics Office of the Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation.
- CPI numbers are widely used as a macroeconomic indicator of inflation, as a tool by governments and central banks.

India starts voluntary disclosure scheme for persons flying non-compliant drones

What's in News?

- The Ministry of Civil Aviation has asked all drone owners to voluntarily register their drones before January 31 2019.



INNOVATIVE IAS

Daily News Analysis

Key points:

- As per the rules framed by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), all drones in India must be registered on the Digital Sky portal and must have a unique identification number.
- All drone operators must also have an Unmanned Aircraft Operator Permit (UAOP). Both came into effect from December 1, 2018.
- According to a DGCA official, there are a total of seven drone manufacturers registered with it, whereas there is no data is available for the number of drones registered.
- Penalty:
- The penalty for non-registration would be a prison sentence of up to two years or a fine of 10 lakh.
- According to the rules, if a person operates a drone without registering it, he or she may be booked for endangering someone's life or for negligence with respect to machinery- both of which are crimes under the Indian penal code and carry a punishment of up to six months.
- The person can also face a penalty under the Aircraft Act, 1936, which provides for a punishment of up to two years and a fine of up to 10 lakh.

Railways invites RFQ from private train operators

What's in News?

- Indian Railways has invited interested parties to submit a Request for Qualification (RFQ) document for selection of private parties to operate 150 passenger trains on 100 routes.

Key points:

- As per the draft proposal, the Ministry has grouped routes into 12 clusters that are to be operated through Public Private Partnership (PPP) on design, build, finance and operate basis, with a concession period of 35 years.
- Railways will adopt a 2-stage bidding process for selecting bidders. The first stage involves qualification.
- Short-listed applicants will be eligible to take part in the second stage comprising Request for Proposals.
- Each bidder is entitled to bid for a maximum of three clusters.
- Selection would be based on highest revenue share.
- The project work broadly includes designing, procurement, financing and operation and maintenance of passenger trains comprising a minimum of 16 coaches with the right to collect market-linked fares.
- Mumbai-New Delhi, Chennai-Okhla, Howrah-Chennai, New Delhi-Howrah, Shalimar-Pune and New Delhi-Patna are some of the routes on which private trains will operate.

Lava gushes from Philippine volcano as ash spreads to Manila

What's in News?

- A volcano near Manila spewed a massive cloud of ash that drifted across the Philippine. Authorities said there was a risk that an eruption could cause a tsunami in the lake.

Key points:

- Taal is one of the world's smallest active volcanoes.
- It is the second most active volcano in the Philippines.



INNOVATIVE IAS

Daily News Analysis

- The lake partially fills Taal Caldera, which was formed by prehistoric eruptions.
- The volcano has had several violent eruptions in the past, causing loss of life on the island and the populated areas surrounding the lake, with the death toll estimated at about 6,000.
- Because of its proximity to populated areas and its eruptive history, the volcano was designated a Decade Volcano, worthy of close study to prevent future natural disasters.
- All volcanoes of the Philippines are part of the Pacific Ring of Fire.
- It sits in the middle of a lake about 70 km south of the centre of the capital, Manila.

Manual scavenging

Why in news?

- The Central Monitoring Committee to review the implementation of the prohibition of employment as manual scavengers and their rehabilitation Act, 2013 has mentioned that many states are lagging behind in the rehabilitation of manual scavengers.
- Though most of the sewer death compensation had been paid but states like Gujarat, Maharashtra is yet to pay compensation.

Key Points:

- Since 1993, a total of 926 deaths related to the manual scavenging is reported in the country, out of which 172 families are yet to receive compensation.
- Engaged Workers: According to the National Commission of SafaiKaramcharis (NCSK), a total of 53,598 people, of which 29,923 were in Uttar Pradesh alone, had been identified as engaged in manual scavenging after surveys in 2013 and 2018.
- Deaths: Tamil Nadu reported the highest number of deaths but has paid compensation in all but seven of the 234 cases.
- Compensation: Gujarat has the highest number of cases where the compensation amount was not paid followed by Maharashtra.

Steps taken for Elimination

- Currently, one-time cash assistance, capital subsidy and skill development training are provided to the identified manual scavengers.
- Prohibition of Employment of Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013
- Prohibition: The act prohibits the employment of manual scavengers, manual cleaning of sewers and septic tanks without protective equipment, and the construction of insanitary latrines.
- Rehabilitation: It seeks to rehabilitate manual scavengers and provide for their alternative employment.
- Implementing Authority: Each local authority, cantonment board and railway authority is responsible for surveying insanitary latrines within its jurisdiction. They shall also construct a number of sanitary community latrines.
- The District Magistrate and the local authority shall be the implementing authorities. Offences under the Act shall be cognizable and non-bailable and may be tried summarily.

Reasons for Persistence of Manual Scavenging

- Despite the most stringent penal provisions in the law against manual scavenging, it continues in

parts of India largely due to governmental indifference and social prejudice.

- The continued presence of insanitary latrines, of which there are about 2.6 million that require cleaning by hand, according to SafaiKarmachariAndolan.
- Many communities still regard the presence of a sanitary toilet inside the house as physical pollution.
- The entrenched belief in the caste system that assumes people belonging to a particular caste group will readily perform the stigmatised task of emptying latrines.
- The state governments are not keen to demolish and rebuild old facilities lacking sanitation, or conduct a full census of both the latrines and the people engaged in clearing such waste.

Raisina dialogue

Why in news?

- The 5th edition of Raisina Dialogue is being held in New Delhi. The 1st edition was held in 2016.
- The title of the Raisina Dialogue this year (2020) is “Navigating the Alpha Century”.

Key Points:

- The conference will host 700 participants from more than 100 countries and at least 40% of the speakers will be women.
- The Dialogue has been India's contribution to global efforts to discover solutions, identify opportunities and provide stability to a century that has witnessed an eventful two decades.

Raisina Dialogue

- It is a multilateral conference committed to addressing the most challenging issues facing the global community. Every year, global leaders in policy, business, media and civil society are hosted in New Delhi to discuss cooperation on a wide range of pertinent international policy matters.
- The Dialogue is structured as a multi-stakeholder, cross-sectoral discussion, involving heads of state, cabinet ministers and local government officials, as well as major private sector executives, members of the media and academics.
- The conference is hosted by the Observer Research Foundation in collaboration with the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India.

GENERAL STUDIES-3

Marijuana cultivation to organic turmeric

Why in news?

- Recently, the Malkangiri district administration, Odisha has initiated a project to divert the region's tribals from illegal marijuana cultivation by promoting organic turmeric as a profitable cash crop.
- Organic turmeric will weed out the marijuana cultivation in remote areas ofswabhimanAnchal in Malkangiri.

Key Points:

- Reasons for Illegal Marijuana Cultivation:
 - Lack of communication.
 - Poverty.
 - Financed by the Drug mafias from outside, allegedly.



INNOVATIVE IAS

Daily News Analysis

- Source of easy money.
- This move comes after a survey, conducted in 2019 by the Malkangiri district administration.
- It revealed that almost all tribal families grow turmeric for their consumption but not for commercial purposes.
- The district has a suitable climate and geographical conditions so organic turmeric can become the tool of economic development for poor tribals as well as cash crop alternative of marijuana.
- It is estimated that each acre of organic turmeric can provide ₹70,000 to 80,000 income to the farmers.

Giant tortoise

- Recently, Diego (*Chelonoidis hoodensis*, or the giant tortoise species) has retired from the captive breeding programme in the Galapagos National Park, Ecuador.
- He will be returned to Española Island, from where he was taken around 80 years ago.
- Diego is 100 years old and joined the breeding programme in 1976.
- The tortoise population has since gone up from 15 to 2,000.
- He is responsible for about 40% of the offspring produced.
- Another male tortoise 'E5' has generated about 60% offspring.
- Diego has a long leathery neck, dull-yellow face and beady eyes. Fully stretched out, he extends to about five feet and weighs about 176 pounds.
- The long neck is critical for his species' survival, helping the tortoises crane their necks to feed on cacti.

Threats:

- Tortoises on the Galápagos Islands served as an excellent source of food for seafarers in the 1800s so a large number were picked up from the islands.
- Feral goats on the islands posed another danger, competing for food, destroying the tortoises' habitat.
- IUCN Red list Status: Critically Endangered

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