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The Petroglyphs of Ratnagiri

Different sites with petroglyphs in Ratnagiri and Rajapur districts have been found over the last two or three years.

The way the petroglyphs have been drawn, and their similarity to those found in other parts of the world, have led experts to believe that they were created in prehistoric times and are possibly among the oldest ever discovered.

Petroglyph

- A petroglyph is usually a prehistoric carving in a rock. Prehistory refers to the period of time before civilization and writing. There are only archeological sources available for prehistoric period which includes stone and bone tools, rock arts etc.
- The term rock art includes pictographs (paintings on rocks) and petroglyphs which are carved into the flat, open rock surface gives them a scale and look that is unique.

Features of these Petroglyphs

- The working theory around these petroglyphs is that they date back to about 10,000 BCE, placing them in the Mesolithic Period, which comes between the Old Stone Age or Paleolithic period, characterised by chipped stone tools, and the New Stone Age or Neolithic period, associated with smaller, more polished tools.
- The variety of the rock carvings are stunning as animals, birds, human figures and geometrical designs are all depicted.
- The images appear to have been created by hunter-gatherer communities as they depict hunted animals and detailing of animal forms.
- Prominent petroglyph and rock art sites in India that could be contemporary to this period are the Bhimbetka rock shelters in Madhya Pradesh, rock carvings in Mirzapur in Uttar Pradesh, petroglyphs from the Tindivanam and Villupuram districts in Tamil Nadu and Unakoti in Tripura.

- The carvings on laterite stone make the petroglyphs in Ratnagiri region unique, as the carvings discovered in other sites around India are on granite and sandstone.

Significance

- In the medieval age, the Konkan coast was lined with important port towns. It has been reconstructed from epigraphs and contemporaneous records that it has a history of trade and contact with Europe, and even with the Roman Empire. But there was a big void regarding what went on here in prehistoric times. The findings of these petroglyphs can fill a huge gap in the history of the Konkan region.
- Petroglyphs in Ratnagiri region are not yet the evidence of a civilisation, as there is no evidence of writing, agricultural or economic activity, or of living arrangements or settlements which are the essential attributes of a civilization.
- In Maharashtra's cultural records, there is no evidence of any art being practised until about 3,000 BCE, which is when the first mention of painted pots and clay figurines are found. That's why these petroglyphs are a significant find for a better understanding of the history of this region and its artistic traditions.
- Some of the carvings depict rhinoceroses and hippos, two species that were never thought to be prevalent in this part of India. This carvings, however, suggest that the Konkan may have once been a lot like the rainforests where these animals are typically found.
- Most of the art from the later medieval period is religious in nature it is quite likely that such a significant investment in art points to some form of religious belief or religious system.
- Some of the more complex reliefs, etched deep into the ground, may have been done using metal tools rather than stone. If his theory is proven right, then as in sites like Bhimbetka, where art has been dated from prehistoric times right down to the medieval period could point to a continuous habitation of this region, across millennia, possibly by various nomadic tribes.
- The discovery of these sites marks the commencement of a long project as there's still need to look for more evidence of stone tools and evidence of settlements around these sites so that more accurate dating can be obtained.
- Maharashtra tourism department has shown interest in developing some of these sites and incorporating them into the tourist circuit of a region that attracts lot of travellers, drawn to it by the beaches and temples.

12th Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Summit

The Vice President of India led the Indian delegation to Belgium and attended the 12th Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), 2018 in Brussels.

The theme of the ASEM Summit is 'Global Partners for Global Challenges'.

Asia-Europe Meeting

- The Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) is an intergovernmental process to foster dialogue and cooperation between Asia and Europe.
- The ASEM was established in 1996 during its first summit in Bangkok, Thailand.
- Initially, It consisted of 15 EU member states and 7 ASEAN member states plus China, Japan, Korea and the European Commission.
- Currently, It has 53 partners: 30 European and 21 Asian countries, the European Union and the ASEAN Secretariat.
- The ASEM Summit is held biennially.
- ASEM represents about 62% of the global population, 57% of global GDP and 60% of world trade.
- ASEM addresses political, economic, financial, social, cultural, and educational issues of common interest, in a spirit of mutual respect and equal partnership.

Key characteristics of the ASEM process include:

- ASEM has an informal process of dialogue, that is, it provides an open forum for policy makers and officials to discuss any issue.
- ASEM covers multi-dimensional issues and devotes equal weight to political, economic and socio-cultural dimensions.
- ASEM also emphasize on equal partnership based on mutual respect and mutual benefit and it has dual focus both on high-level meetings as well as and people-to-people.

Three Pillars of ASEM

- Political
- Economic and Financial
- Social, Cultural and Education

India and ASEM

- India joined ASEM during 2nd ASEM expansion in 2006.
- India's first Summit level participation was at the 7th Summit held in 2008 in Beijing.
- India hosted the 11th ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Delhi-NCR in 2013
- ASEM provides India a platform to work with like-minded countries.

- India is an active participant in ASEM. Since its inception in the grouping, India has been working with the ASEM in different areas of cooperation like green energy, pharma sector, disaster management, sustainable development and preserving the cultural heritage of two continents.
- The Asia Europe Foundation (ASEF) is the permanently established institution of ASEM. India has regularly contributed to ASEF since becoming a member of ASEM in 2007 to support collaborative initiatives being undertaken by ASEF.
- During the 12th summit, India used the platform to raise concern about terrorism and urged the international community to work towards the early adoption of the United Nations Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT).
- India also called for cooperation on Climate change and gave an example of the 'International Solar Alliance', as an excellent example of Asia and Europe cooperation.
- India also shared its commitment towards connectivity, free trade, the rules-based international system, in particular, strengthening WTO, multilateralism and cyber-security.

Issues with ASEM

- While high hopes and a mood of optimism prevailed during the first two years of ASEM, the subsequent development of the relationship has not been significant.
- A major criticism of ASEM is regarding the lack of concrete achievements.
- Lack of visibility and public profile is a major problem for ASEM as its awareness in the media and among the wider public remains low.
- Over the time ASEM summits have become increasingly scripted and mundane, and several ASEM summits showed poor attendance.
- The dialogue process has stayed at the information-sharing level and has not moved into substantive cooperation.
- There seems to exist no overall consensus on whether ASEM should be developed as a state-to-state or a region-to-region structure.
 - When ASEM was first conceived, it was seen as an intergovernmental, state-to-state forum. However, over the years the process has adopted features of a region-to-region dialogue because of its intraregional coordination and deepening integration in both areas.
 - This ambiguity is a problem that reflects itself in many contexts of ASEM.
- ASEM dialogue is supposed to be "informal, loose and non-binding, and not intended to produce new agreements, treaties or contracts". Yet, there is the desire to achieve "concrete and substantial results". This lack of clarity in its overall principle and the lack of clearly defined objectives gave rise to different expectations and unrealized potential.

- ASEM's management and coordination are affected by the differences between the two regions in their respective degree of integration. The European partners are very well integrated but coordination and integration are much less developed among the Asian partners.

Way Forward

- ASEM as a unique dialogue forum that links Asia and Europe and is still needed and has its usefulness. Its principles and operations require re-evaluation for the future.
- ASEM's ambiguities must be solved and its identity must be clarified in order to bring it more in line with the ideal and objectives of close interregional cooperation.
- ASEM should be viewed from a long-term perspective. The dialogue in various areas from the official summits to all the different conferences and workshops are building blocks towards greater partnership. At the same time, it is also necessary to deliver on tangible achievements that could be profiled in the media and enhance public interest.

RBI Opposes Independent Payments Regulatory Board

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has opposed the move to have an independent Payments Regulatory Board (PRB) as proposed by the draft amendments to the Payment & Settlement Systems Act, 2007.

The 2007 Act designates the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) as the authority to regulate the payment systems in the country. These systems include inter-bank transfers such as the National Electronics Funds Transfer system, ATMs, credit cards, mobile banking, etc.

Background

- An inter-ministerial committee was set up by the government for finalization of amendments to the Payment & Settlement Systems Act, 2007.
- According to the draft Payment and Settlement System Bill, 2018, submitted by the committee, an independent payments regulatory board (PRB) needs to be established outside the purview of RBI to regulate the payments sector aimed at fostering competition, consumer protection, systemic stability and resilience in the payments sector.
- The committee said that it is important to distinguish the role of the central bank (RBI) as an infrastructure institution providing settlement function from its role as a regulator of the payment sector.

- The committee had recommended that the chairperson of the payments regulator should be appointed by the government in consultation with the RBI.

The Dissent Note by RBI

- According to the RBI, the PRB must remain with the central bank and should be headed by the RBI governor. The RBI and the government may nominate three members each to the board, with a casting vote for the governor.
- The payment system is bank-dominated in India. Regulation of the banking systems and payment system by the same regulator **provides synergy and inspires public confidence** in the payment instruments.
- Regulation of the payment system by the central bank is the dominant **international model for stability consideration**.
- Thus, having the regulation and supervision over Payment and Settlement systems with the central bank will ensure holistic benefits. Also, it will not result in increased compliance costs.
- Certain payment systems like cards are issued by banks globally and dual regulation over such instruments will not be desirable.
- Payment systems are a sub-set of currency which is regulated by the RBI. The overarching impact of Monetary policy on payment and settlement systems and vice versa provides support for the regulation of payment systems to be with the monetary authority. There is an underlying bank account for payment systems which is under the purview of banking system regulation which is vested with the RBI.
- The RBI cited the report of the **Ratan Watal Committee** on digital payments as recommending the establishment of the PRB within the overall structure of the RBI, arguing therefore that there is no need for any deviation.
- There has been no evidence of any inefficiency in payment systems of India. Hence, there need not be any change in a well-functioning system.

Way Forward

- The RBI has stated that though the changes are welcomed by it, they should not result in existing foundations being shaken and the potential creation of disturbances in an otherwise well-functioning structure as far as India is concerned.
- The central bank said that objectives for the PRB should not be mandated by law, as it will lack flexibility. The views of the Ministry of Law could also be taken into account on jurisdictional conflict. Further, it added that innovation is generally not mandated – it evolves based on requirements.
- The RBI also opposed the panel's proposal on designating the Securities Appellate Tribunal (SAT) for grievance redressal, stating that exchanges and securities markets are not under the purview of the Payment Systems Bill.

World Bank's Human Capital Index Released

The World Bank released its first report on the Human Capital Index (HCI) as part of the World Development Report 2019.

- The theme of the World Development Report (WDR) this year is “The Changing Nature of Work”.
- Human Capital Index (HCI) has placed India at the 115th position, lower than Nepal, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, and Bangladesh.

Human Capital

- Human capital consists of the knowledge, skills, and health that people accumulate over their lives, enabling them to realize their potential as productive members of society.
- As part of this report, the World Bank has launched a Human Capital Project (HCP).
 - The HCP programme is a program of advocacy, measurement, and analytical work to raise awareness and increase demand for interventions to build human capital.
 - There are three components of HCP-
 - a human capital measurement metric called the Human Capital Index (HCI)
 - a programme of measurement and research to inform policy action
 - a programme of support for country strategies to accelerate investment in human capital.
- This report unveils the World Bank's new Human Capital Index, it seeks to measure the amount of human capital that a child born today can expect to attain by age 18 and also the consequences of neglecting investments in human capital in terms of the lost productivity of the next generation of workers.
- The HCI has been constructed for 157 countries.

Parameters used in HCI

The HCI has three components:

- **Survival**, as measured by **under-5 mortality rates**
- **Expected years of Quality-Adjusted School** which combines information on the quantity and quality of education:
 - **quality** is measured by harmonizing test scores from major international student achievement testing programs
 - **quantity** from the number of years of school that a child can expect to obtain by age 18 given the prevailing pattern of enrolment rates across grades in respective countries
- **Health environment** is measured by
 - **adult survival rates**
 - **the rate of stunting for children under age 5**

How Human Capital Index (HCI) is different from the Human Development Index (HDI)?

- UN Development Program releases HDI while HCI is released by the World Bank.
- The HCI uses survival rates and stunting rate instead of life expectancy as the measure of health.
- HCI uses quality-adjusted learning instead of merely years of schooling as the measure of education.
- HDI uses per capita income whereas it is excluded in HCI.

Findings of the report at Global Level

- The HCI measures the Index outcomes for each country as a fraction of maximum value of 1.
- The advanced economies such as North America and Europe have HCI value of above 0.75.
- South Asia and Sub Saharan Africa have the lowest HCI among the regions.
- Singapore topped the poll as it was highly rated for its universal health care system, education exams results, and life expectancy figures.
- Singapore is followed by South Korea, Japan, Hong Kong, and Finland.

Findings with respect to India

- The HCI for India has been estimated at 0.44.

- The key observations regarding HCI for India in the Report are as under
 - **Human Capital Index: A child born in India today will be only 44 percent as productive when she grows up as she could be if she enjoyed complete education and full health.**
 - The **probability of Survival to Age 5**: 96 out of 100 children born in India survive to age 5.
 - **Expected Years of School**: In India, a child who starts school at age 4 can expect to complete 10.2 years of school by her 18th birthday.
 - **Harmonized Test Scores**: Students in India score 355 on a scale where 625 represents advanced attainment and 300 represents minimum attainment.
 - **Learning-adjusted Years of School**: Factoring in what children actually learn, expected years of school is only 5.8 years.
 - **Adult Survival Rate**: Across India, 83 percent of 15-year olds will survive until age 60.
 - **Healthy Growth (Not Stunted Rate)**: 38 out of 100 children are stunted, and so at risk of cognitive and physical limitations that can last a lifetime.
 - **Gender Differences**: In India, HCI for girls is marginally higher than for boys.
 - The HCI in India for females is marginally better than that for males.
 - There has been a marked improvement in the HCI components in India over the last five years.

Why India Rejected?

- The Government of India has decided to ignore the HCI stating there are major methodological weaknesses and data gaps in the index. Also, the HCI score for India does not impact of the key initiatives by the government that is being undertaken for developing human capital.
- For instance, for the schooling parameter, the quality is assessed by using enrolment rates reported by UNESCO but for quality harmonized test scores from different student achievement testing programs have been used by the World Bank. Instead, country-wide assessments of elementary education, by each country could have been used.
- For India, the data for quality of education belongs 2009 assessment by PISA, which was conducted for Himachal Pradesh and Tamil Nadu only.
- Adult survival rates, stunting, and under 5 mortality are outcome indicators which change at a relatively slow rate as compared to process indicators used in computing, for example, the Ease of Doing Business.
- The differences in development outcomes arising from governance issues, political systems, socio-cultural context have been totally ignored.
- The government of India also mentioned various initiatives like Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan, Ayushman Bharat Programme, Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojan etc. it has undertaken to improve the Human Capital.

Important Facts for Prelims (20th October 2018)

COPE INDIA

- India and US have elevated the format of their bilateral exercise 'COPE INDIA' to a trilateral level by including Japan.
 - COPE INDIA was first conducted in 2004 and is hosted by Indian Air Force.
 - The three countries already conduct naval war games under the Malabar exercise.
 - The scheduled exercise will held in December.
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