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UPSC PRELIMS

CURRENT AFFAIRS

ART AND CULTURE



Strategic Current Affairs for UPSC Prelims

What's Inside

- Indian Culture & Heritage
- Art, Architecture & Literature
- Festivals, Dance & Music
- Religion & Philosophy
- Places, Personalities in News
- Integration with Current Affairs

Prepared by

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ART AND CULTURE | CURRENT AFFAIRS

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ART AND CULTURE

CURRENT AFFAIRS (JAN 2025 – FEB 2026)

UNESCO: CREATIVE CITIES, MEMORY OF WORLD & VIRTUAL MUSEUM

UNESCO CREATIVE CITIES NETWORK (UCCN) – LUCKNOW JOINS AS CITY OF GASTRONOMY

Lucknow has officially been declared a UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy during the 43rd Session of the UNESCO General Conference held in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, recognising its rich Awadhi cuisine heritage. India now has 9 cities in the UCCN.

News in Brief

- **UCCN was established by UNESCO in 2004** to promote cooperation among cities that have identified creativity as a strategic factor for sustainable urban development.
- For the first time, the UCCN welcomes **Creative Cities of Architecture** – a new 8th creative field in addition to the seven existing ones: **Crafts and Folk Art, Design, Film, Gastronomy, Literature, Media Arts, and Music**.
- India now has **9 cities** recognised under UCCN including Lucknow.
- The **43rd UNESCO General Conference** was held in **Samarkand, Uzbekistan** – the first time it was held in Central Asia.

Prelims Connect

Indian Cities in UNESCO Creative Cities Network

City	Year	Creative Field
Jaipur	2015	Crafts and Folk Art
Varanasi	2015	Music
Chennai	2017	Music
Mumbai	2019	Film
Hyderabad	2019	Gastronomy
Srinagar	2021	Crafts and Folk Art
Kozhikode	2023	Literature
Gwalior	2023	Music
Lucknow	2025	Gastronomy

Prelims Pointers

- **UCCN 2004:** Cities must identify creativity as a strategic factor for sustainable urban development.
- **Architecture** is the newest (8th) creative field added to UCCN in 2025.
- India has the **largest number of UCCN cities in Asia** with 9 cities across diverse creative fields.

BHAGAVAD GITA AND NATYASHASTRA — UNESCO MEMORY OF THE WORLD REGISTER

UNESCO added the Manuscript Collection of Bhagavad-Gita and Natyashastra to its Memory of the World (MoW) Register. With this, India's total inscriptions in the MoW Register became 14.

News in Brief

- **MoW Programme:** A compendium of documents — **manuscripts, oral traditions, audio-visual materials, and library and archive holdings** — of 'world significance and outstanding universal value'.
- **Natyashastra:** Attributed to **Bharata Muni** (c. 200 BCE – 200 CE). Ancient Sanskrit treatise on performing arts comprising **36,000 verses**. Defines **natya (drama), abhinaya (performance), rasa (aesthetic experience), bhava (emotion), sangita (music)**. Often called the '**Fifth Veda**'.
- **Bhagavad Gita:** Attributed to sage Vyasa. Sanskrit scripture comprising **700 verses in 18 chapters**, embedded in the **Bhishma Parva (6th book)** of the Mahabharata.
- India's total MoW inscriptions: **14** (including Ramcharitmanas 2024, Panchatantra 2024, Sahridaya loka-Locana 2024).

Prelims Connect

India's 14 Entries in UNESCO Memory of the World Register

#	Entry	Year
1-5	Archives of Dutch East India Co., Rigveda, Shantiniketan Archives, Tamil Medical Manuscripts, I.A.S. TN State Archives	Early
6-8	Gilgit Manuscripts, Tarikh-e-Firoz Shahi (Ziauddin Barani), Saiva Manuscripts (Pondicherry)	—
9	Saang Lok Collection	2023
10	Ramcharitmanas	2024
11	Panchatantra	2024
12	Sahridaya loka-Locana	2024
13	Bhagavad Gita Manuscripts	2025
14	Natyashastra Manuscripts	2025

Prelims Pointers

- **MoW Programme launched by UNESCO in 1992** to safeguard documentary heritage.
- **Bhagavad Gita** is in **Bhishma Parva (6th book)** of the Mahabharata — its 18 chapters align with the 18 days of the Kurukshetra battle.
- **Natyashastra** is divided into **36 chapters** — the world's most comprehensive treatise on theatre, music, and dance.
- **Ramcharitmanas** (by Goswami Tulsidas) was added to MoW in **2024** — also included in UNESCO's Memory of the World **Asia-Pacific Regional Register**.

UNESCO'S VIRTUAL MUSEUM OF STOLEN CULTURAL OBJECTS

UNESCO launched a Virtual Museum of Stolen Cultural Objects — a digital platform to reconnect communities with their stolen heritage and confront illicit trafficking. Launched at MONDIACULT 2025, showcasing ~240 missing objects from 46 countries using AI-generated 3D models.

News in Brief

- **MONDIACULT** — ministerial forum of **194 UNESCO Member States** that sets the global cultural agenda, organised by UNESCO and **hosted by Spain**.

- **Features:** ~240 missing objects from 46 countries; **AI-generated 3D models and interactive access;** numbers expected to decrease as items are returned.
- **Indian Artifacts Featured:** (a) **Nataraja figure (9th century sandstone sculpture)** from Mahadev Temple, Pali, Chhattisgarh – Shiva’s cosmic dance. (b) **Brahma sculpture with three faces,** four arms, seated in **lalitasana**.

Prelims Pointers

- **UNESCO 1970 Convention** – the key international framework against illicit trafficking of cultural property; India ratified it in **1977**.
- **UNIDROIT Convention 1995** – supplements the 1970 Convention; provides civil law remedies for return of stolen objects.
- **Lalitasana** – seated pose with one leg hanging down, commonly seen in Brahma and Bodhisattva sculptures.
- **Nataraja (Chola bronzes)** – the finest tradition of Indian metal casting; the Chidambaram Nataraja Temple is the most famous example.

SARNATH NOMINATED FOR UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE – 2025-26 CYCLE

India officially nominated the Ancient Buddhist Site of Sarnath (near Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh) for the UNESCO World Heritage List under the 2025-26 nomination cycle. Sarnath is where Gautama Buddha delivered his first sermon after enlightenment.

News in Brief

- Buddha’s first sermon: **Dhammachakkappavattana** (‘Setting the Wheel of Dhamma in Motion’) – containing the **Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path**.
- Also known as **Rishipatana, Mrigadava, Mrigadaya**. Modern name derived from **Saranganatha** (‘Lord of the Deer’).
- One of the **4 key Buddhist pilgrimage sites** – **Lumbini (birth), Bodh Gaya (enlightenment), Sarnath (first sermon), Kushinagar (death)**.
- Reflects architectural evolution from the **Mauryan to Kushan, Gupta, and Gahadavala periods**.
- **Group A:** Chaukhandi Stupa (5th century AD; octagonal tower added 1588 by Govardhan, son of Raja Todarmal; place where Buddha met his 5 disciples – Kaundinya, Assaji, Bhaddiya, Vappa, Mahanama).
- **Group B:** Dhamek Stupa (~500 CE, marks exact spot of first sermon); Dharmarajika Stupa (built by Ashoka, 3rd century BCE, houses Buddha’s relics); Ashokan Pillar (Lion Capital – now India’s National Emblem).
- **Destruction:** 11th-century raid by Mahmud of Ghazni; restored by Mahipala of the Pala dynasty.
- Last major monument: **Dharmachakra Jina Vihara** (11th century) – built by **Kumaradevi, wife of Govindachandra of the Gahadavala dynasty**.

Prelims Pointers

- **Lion Capital of Ashoka** at Sarnath – adapted as India’s **National Emblem**; shows 4 lions back to back; ‘**Satyameva Jayate**’ (from Mundaka Upanishad) inscribed below.
- **Dhammachakkappavattana Sutta** – the first sermon; contained the **Four Noble Truths (Dukkha, Samudaya, Nirodha, Magga)** and the Noble Eightfold Path.
- India’s **National Emblem** is adapted from the Lion Capital at Sarnath (3rd century BCE).

ARCHITECTURE, HERITAGE MONUMENTS & UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITES

MARATHA MILITARY LANDSCAPES – INDIA'S 44TH UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE

The crown jewel of 2025 for Indian heritage – Shivaji's fortification system inscribed on the Cultural category list at the 47th WHC session.

News in Brief

- **Maratha Military Landscapes of India** inscribed on the **UNESCO World Heritage List – Cultural** category, becoming India's **44th WHS**.
- **12 forts** across two States, all representing Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's envisioned military system:
 - **Maharashtra (11 forts):** Salher, Shivneri, Lohgad, Khanderi, Raigad, Rajgad, Pratapgad, Suvarnadurg, Panhala, Vijaydurg, Sindhudurg.
 - **Tamil Nadu (1 fort):** **Gingee Fort** – "*Troy of the East*".
- Timeline of the Maratha fortification ideology: **1670 CE onward** under Shivaji Maharaj, extended through the Peshwa rule till **1818 CE**.
- **44th WHS** means: **36 Cultural + 7 Natural + 1 Mixed** (Khangchendzonga). India now holds the **6th rank globally** in WHS count.

Prelims Connect – India's 44 UNESCO WHS Quick Map

Category	Count	Key Recent Additions
Cultural	36	Santiniketan (2023), Hoysala Temples (2023), Maratha Military Landscapes (2025)
Natural	7	Kaziranga, Manas, Keoladeo, Sundarbans, Nanda Devi & Valley of Flowers, Great Himalayan NP, Western Ghats
Mixed	1	Khangchendzonga NP (2016)

Fort Typology	Examples
Hill fort (Giri durg)	Salher, Shivneri, Rajgad, Lohgad, Raigad
Sea / island fort (Jala durg)	Suvarnadurg, Sindhudurg, Vijaydurg, Khanderi
Forest fort (Vana durg)	Gingee (Tamil Nadu)
Land-desert fort (Sthala durg)	Panhala

Prelims Pointers

- The **Ajnapatra** (1716) of Ramachandra Pant Amatya classified forts into **Giri durg, Jala durg, Sthala durg** and **Vana durg** – this typology is examined directly.
- **Raigad** served as Shivaji's **capital** – coronation (Rajyabhishek) held here on **6 June 1674**.
- **Shivneri Fort** (Pune district) = **birthplace of Shivaji**.
- **Gingee Fort**, Tamil Nadu – occupied successively by Vijayanagara, Marathas (under Rajaram 1690), Bijapur, Mughals, Carnatic Nawabs, French, British.
- **Hoysala temples** (Belur, Halebidu, Somanathapura) were inscribed in **2023** as the 42nd WHS.
- **Santiniketan** – 43rd WHS (2023).
- Maratha forts nomination was pushed via **ASI + Ministry of Culture** under the tentative list submitted at the **47th World Heritage Committee session**.

The 12 Forts

#	Fort	State	Type
1	Salher	Maharashtra (Nashik)	Hill fort – site of 1672 Salher battle (Shivaji defeated Mughals)
2	Shivneri	Maharashtra (Pune)	Birthplace of Shivaji (1630 CE)
3	Lohgad	Maharashtra (Pune)	Hill fort, Bhore Ghat
4	Khanderi	Maharashtra (Raigad)	Island fort near Mumbai
5	Raigad	Maharashtra (Raigad)	Shivaji's capital (1674 coronation)
6	Rajgad	Maharashtra (Pune)	"King of Forts" – Shivaji's first capital

7	Pratapgad	Maharashtra (Satara)	1659 battle – Shivaji killed Afzal Khan
8	Suvarnadurg	Maharashtra (Ratnagiri)	Coastal fort
9	Panhala	Maharashtra (Kolhapur)	Largest Deccan fort; siege of 1660
10	Vijaydurg	Maharashtra (Sindhudurg)	Coastal/naval HQ – oldest Maratha fort on Konkan coast
11	Sindhudurg	Maharashtra (Sindhudurg)	Island naval fort, built 1664 CE
12	Gingee Fort	Tamil Nadu (Villupuram)	" Troy of the East " – once held by Marathas under Rajaram (1691–1698) during Aurangzeb's siege

Fort Typology (ICOMOS nomination framework)

Type	Count	Examples
Hill forts (Giri-durg)	6	Salher, Shivneri, Lohgad, Raigad, Rajgad, Pratapgad
Hill-forest forts (Vana-durg)	1	Panhala
Plateau/fortified hill	1	Gingee
Coastal forts (Jala-durg)	2	Vijaydurg, Suvarnadurg
Island forts (Jaladurg)	2	Khanderi, Sindhudurg

Prelims Pointers:

- **Gingee Fort** is the **only TN fort** in the nomination – it has 3 hills (**Krishnagiri, Rajagiri, Chandragiri**) and was called "the most impregnable fort in India" by Shivaji. The Marathas held it under **Rajaram Chhatrapati** during 1691–1698, a lifeline during Aurangzeb's Deccan campaign.
- **Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj** coronated at **Raigad on 6 June 1674 CE** (Hindu Samrajya Diwas).
- **Peshwa rule end (1818 CE)** = Third Anglo-Maratha War, Battle of Koregaon (1 Jan 1818).
- **Maratha Navy** was founded by Shivaji – Vijaydurg and Sindhudurg were its twin bases; Admiral **Kanhoji Angre** was its great 18th-century commander.
- With this addition, India's UNESCO WHS count reached **44 → 43 Cultural + 1 Mixed (Khangchendzonga)** (note: Moidams 2024 was #43).

KHANGCHENDZONGA NATIONAL PARK – "GOOD" RATING IN IUCN WORLD HERITAGE OUTLOOK 2025

Sikkim's mountain paradise retains its status as India's only natural/mixed WHS with a clean IUCN conservation report.

News in Brief

- **Khangchendzonga National Park (KNP), Sikkim** received a "**Good**" rating in the IUCN's 2025 World Heritage Outlook.
- It is **India's only Mixed WHS** (Cultural + Natural, inscribed 2016) – the only Indian site to hold this positive conservation outlook.
- **IUCN World Heritage Outlook** is the global assessment published every 3 years rating each natural/mixed WHS as *Good / Good with some concerns / Significant concern / Critical*.

Prelims Connect

Fact	Detail
State	Sikkim
Area	1,784 sq km; Buffer 835 sq km

Core peak	Mt Kanchenjunga – 8,586 m; 3rd highest peak in the world
Inscription year	2016 – India's first Mixed WHS
Criteria	Natural + Cultural (sacred Lepcha landscape)
Other names	"Five Treasures of the Great Snow" (five summits)

Prelims Pointers

- Khangchendzonga is sacred to the **Lepcha** community (Sikkim's indigenous people) – the mountain is considered their guardian deity "**Kanchenjunga Dzo-nga**".
- The park hosts the **Snow Leopard**, **Red Panda** (Sikkim's State Animal), **Himalayan Tahr**, **Musk Deer**, **Asiatic Black Bear**, **Blue Sheep**, **Himalayan Monal**.
- It is part of the **Kanchenjunga Landscape Conservation and Development Initiative** – a trans-boundary **cooperation** between India, Nepal, and Bhutan facilitated by ICIMOD.
- India's other key Natural WHS (for comparison): **Kaziranga**, **Manas**, **Nanda Devi & Valley of Flowers**, **Keoladeo**, **Sundarbans**, **Great Himalayan NP**, **Western Ghats**.

Bhoramdev Corridor – "Khajuraho of Chhattisgarh"

Modelled on the Kashi Vishwanath Corridor, under the Swadesh Darshan 2.0 scheme.

News in Brief

- **Bhoramdev Corridor Project** – a ₹146 crore project launched in **Kabirdham district**, **Chhattisgarh**.
- Develops the **1,000-year-old Bhoramdev Temple**, popularly called the "**Khajuraho of Chhattisgarh**" for its intricate erotic sculpture panels.
- Funded under the central government's **Swadesh Darshan 2.0 scheme** (Ministry of Tourism).
- **Modelled after the Kashi Vishwanath Corridor** in Varanasi.
- The temple is attributed to the **Naga / Phanindra (Chhindaka Naga) dynasty** (c. 10th–11th century CE).

Prelims Connect

Temple	Dynasty	Style
Bhoramdev	Naga / Phanindra dynasty (11th c.)	Nagara style – erotic sculpture (Khajuraho parallel)
Khajuraho	Chandela dynasty (10th–12th c.)	Nagara with Panchayatana layout
Kashi Vishwanath Corridor	Modern (2021 inaugurated)	Redevelopment, not a style
Swadesh Darshan Themes		Sample Circuits
Heritage		Bhoramdev, Mahaparinirvan
Spiritual		PRASHAD scheme tie-up
Buddhist		Bodh Gaya–Sarnath–Kushinagar
Ramayana		Ayodhya–Chitrakoot–Nasik–Rameswaram
Krishna		Mathura–Vrindavan–Dwarka

Prelims Pointers

- **Swadesh Darshan 2.0** was launched in **2022** – destination-centric approach replacing the 2014 circuit-based original scheme.
- **PRASHAD** (Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spirituality Augmentation Drive) – launched 2014–15 under Ministry of Tourism for integrated pilgrimage destination development.
- **Nagara style** – dominant in North, with **curvilinear shikhara** and **amalaka + kalasha** at summit; **Khajuraho** = finest example.

- **Panchayatana** = main shrine + 4 subsidiary shrines at cardinal corners – seen at Lakshmana Temple Khajuraho, Brahmeshwara Bhubaneswar.

KONDAVEEDU FORT – ₹100-CRORE HERITAGE TOURISM PROJECT

Andhra Pradesh's 13th-century Reddi-dynasty citadel gets a Centre-backed revival.

News in Brief

- The **Central Government** announced a **₹100-crore comprehensive development project** for the historic **Kondaveedu Fort** in **Andhra Pradesh** to boost heritage tourism and regional growth.
- Kondaveedu Fort is located in **Phirangipuram Mandal, Guntur district**, atop the hill range known as the **Kondaveedu hills**.
- Built in the **14th century** by the **Reddi dynasty** (Prolaya Vema Reddi, 1325) – later held by Vijayanagar, the Gajapatis of Odisha, Qutb Shahis, Mughals, and the French.

Prelims Connect

Fort	Location	Dynasty
Kondaveedu	Guntur, AP	Reddi / Vijayanagar
Kondapalli	Krishna, AP	Reddi dynasty
Golconda	Hyderabad, TS	Qutb Shahi
Warangal	Warangal, TS	Kakatiya
Chittorgarh	Rajasthan	Guhila (Sisodia) – UNESCO WHS

Prelims Pointers

- The **Reddi Kingdom (1325–1448)** was founded by **Prolaya Vema Reddi** after the decline of the Kakatiya dynasty; capital was first **Addanki**, then **Kondaveedu**.
- **Allasani Peddana**, the "Andhra Kavita-pitamaha," was patronised at **Kondaveedu** during the Vijayanagara period (not Reddi – trap for MCQs).
- Kondaveedu held the famous **Kakatiya Kalashala** – centre of Telugu literary activity.
- The **Reddis of Kondaveedu** fiercely resisted both Bahmani and Vijayanagara expansion – key reason for the Vijayanagara sweep under Deva Raya II.

HARAPPAN SITES AT TIGHRANA & MITATHAL (HARYANA) DECLARED PROTECTED MONUMENTS

Two 4,400-year-old Indus-Valley sites in Bhiwani added to Haryana's protected list.

News in Brief

- The **Haryana government** declared two sites of the **4,400-year-old Harappan civilisation** in **Bhiwani district** as **protected monuments and archaeological sites**:
 1. **Tighrana**
 2. **Mitathal**
- Notification issued under the **Haryana Ancient and Historical Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1964**.
- Both sites reveal Mature Harappan urban features – brick structures, pottery, seals, beads and metal artefacts.

Prelims Connect – Major Harappan Sites in Haryana

Site	District	Key finds
Tighrana	Bhiwani	Brick structures, pottery, seals, beads and metal artefacts
Mitathal	Bhiwani	Brick structures, pottery, seals, beads and metal artefacts

Rakhigarhi	Hisar	Largest Harappan site in India; DNA study of ancient female skeleton
Banawali	Fatehabad	Plough furrow marks
Mitathal	Bhiwani	Pre-Harappan to Mature Harappan continuity
Bhirrana	Fatehabad	One of the oldest Harappan sites (~7500 BCE)
Kunal	Fatehabad	Pre-Harappan silver ornaments
Tighrana	Bhiwani	Newly-declared protected

Prelims Pointers

- **Rakhigarhi** and **Dholavira** (Gujarat) are Harappan sites on India's **UNESCO tentative/inscribed list** – Dholavira inscribed as **40th WHS in 2021**.
- The **Indus Valley / Harappan civilisation** flourished c. **2600–1900 BCE** (Mature phase).
- The **Protection of Monuments** is a **concurrent** domain – central sites under ASI (AMASR Act 1958), State sites under State Archaeology departments.
- The **Haryana Act of 1964** is one of the oldest State-level monument protection laws in India.

RED FORT – HOST TO THE 20TH UNESCO ICH COMMITTEE SESSION

For the first time, India hosts the global ICH Committee session at its own UNESCO WHS (Lal Qila). Detailed ICH coverage is in Topic 2; here treated from the monument-as-venue angle.

News in Brief

- India hosted the **20th Session of the UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH)** at the **Red Fort, New Delhi** – a **first** for India.
- The Committee session was chaired by **H.E. Vishal V. Sharma**, India's Permanent Delegate to UNESCO.
- At this session, **Diwali (Deepavali)** was inscribed as India's **16th ICH element** (details in Topic 2).
- The **Red Fort (Lal Qila)** is itself a **UNESCO Cultural WHS** (inscribed 2007), built by **Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan** between **1639 and 1648**, designed by **Ustad Ahmad Lahori**.

Prelims Connect

Red Fort Fact	Detail
Builder	Shah Jahan
Architect	Ustad Ahmad Lahori
Construction	1639–1648
UNESCO inscription	2007
Style	Indo-Islamic / Shahjahani (Charbagh + Pietra Dura)
Key structures	Diwan-i-Aam, Diwan-i-Khas, Rang Mahal, Moti Masjid, Nahr-i-Bihisht

Prelims Pointers

- The Red Fort is where **PM gives the Independence Day address** from the ramparts every 15 August.
- It originally had the **Peacock Throne (Takht-e-Taus)** – looted by **Nadir Shah** in 1739.
- **Naqqar Khana** is the "drum house" – the ceremonial entry between Lahori Gate and Diwan-i-Aam.
- India's other **Mughal-era WHS**: Agra Fort (1983), Humayun's Tomb (1993), Fatehpur Sikri (1986), Taj Mahal (1983).

KONARK SUN TEMPLE – 36TH KONARK FESTIVAL & 15TH INTERNATIONAL SAND ART FESTIVAL

Odisha's iconic 13th-century Surya temple serves as the backdrop for an annual classical dance and sand art double-header.

News in Brief

- Odisha's CM inaugurated the **36th Konark Festival** and the **15th International Sand Art Festival** – a 5-day dual festival held near the **Konark Sun Temple** and on the nearby **Chandrabhaga Beach**.
- Organised annually by the **Odisha State Tourism Department** to promote Odisha's cultural heritage.
- Konark Festival showcases classical dance forms – **Odissi, Bharatanatyam, Kathak, Kuchipudi, Manipuri, Sattriya**.

Prelims Connect

Konark Sun Temple	Detail
Built by	King Narasimhadeva I of the Eastern Ganga dynasty
Year	c. 1250 CE
Dedicated to	Surya (Sun God)
Design	Temple as a gigantic chariot – 12 pairs of wheels, 7 horses
Architecture	Kalinga style – a sub-variant of Nagara
UNESCO WHS	Inscribed 1984
Nickname	" <i>Black Pagoda</i> " (mariners' landmark)

Prelims Pointers

- Konark's **12 wheels** represent the 12 months; the **8 spokes** in each wheel represent the 8 praharas (3-hour watches) of a day.
- The **7 horses** draw the chariot = 7 days of the week.
- The main **Shikhara (Rekha Deul)** collapsed centuries ago – only the **Jagamohana** (assembly hall) survives intact.
- Part of the **Golden Triangle of Odisha: Puri (Jagannath) – Konark (Surya) – Bhubaneswar (Lingaraja)**.
- **Chandrabhaga Mela** is held annually at Chandrabhaga Beach on **Magha Saptami** – pilgrims bathe to honour the Sun.
- **International Sand Art Festival** is dominated by **Padma Shri Sudarsan Pattnaik**, India's foremost sand sculptor from Odisha.

INSV KAUNDINYA – RECREATED 5TH-CENTURY AJANTA-DEPICTED STITCHED-SAIL SHIP

A Ministry of Culture + Indian Navy project that recreates an ancient Indian Ocean trade vessel using only coir rope, coconut fibre and natural resin.

News in Brief

- INSV Kaundinya is a **stitched-sail wooden ship** inducted into the **Indian Navy** – a recreation of a **5th-century vessel** depicted in the **Ajanta Caves paintings**.
- Named after the legendary **mariner Kaundinya**, who is traditionally credited with founding the **Funan Kingdom** (present-day Cambodia-Vietnam) through maritime trade with Southeast Asia.
- Built **without modern nails**, using **coir rope, coconut fibre and natural resin** – a tribute to India's indigenous shipbuilding tradition.
- A joint effort between **India's Ministry of Culture**, the **Indian Navy** and **Hodi Innovations**.
- The ship is based at **Karwar (Karnataka)** and undertook a historic voyage from **Porbandar → Muscat (Oman)**, symbolising India's 5,000-year-old trade links with Oman.

Prelims Connect

Ancient Touchpoint	Maritime	Detail
Ajanta Caves		Rock-cut Buddhist caves in Maharashtra; 29 caves; UNESCO WHS (1983); feature 5th-c. paintings of ships
Mariner Kaundinya		Legendary founder of Funan kingdom via maritime trade
Lothal (Gujarat)		Harappan dockyard – world's earliest known
Poompuhar (Kaveripattinam, TN)		Chola-era port; Sangam literature mentions
Arikamedu (Puducherry)		Roman trading post, 1st c. BCE–1st c. CE
Muziris (Kerala)		Chera-period port with Mediterranean trade

Prelims Pointers

- **Ajanta Caves** – Buddhist; **Ellora Caves** – Buddhist + Hindu + Jain (triple-faith); both are in Maharashtra, both UNESCO WHS.
- Ajanta **paintings** cover **Jataka tales** – Cave 1 (Padmapani Bodhisattva), Cave 17 (Vessantara Jataka), Cave 10 (early Hinayana phase).
- India's **Ministry of Culture** + **Indian Navy** + **Hodi Innovations** collaboration signals a policy thrust on reviving **indigenous knowledge systems (IKS)** in shipbuilding.
- **INSV** = Indian Naval Sailing Vessel (prefix used for Navy sail craft like *Tarini*, *Mhadei*).

GRAND EGYPTIAN MUSEUM (GEM) – GLOBAL REFERENCE

Opened near the Giza Pyramids – world's largest archaeological museum dedicated to a single civilisation.

News in Brief

- **Egypt** opened the **Grand Egyptian Museum (GEM)** near the **Giza Pyramids** in November 2025 – now the **world's largest archaeological museum** dedicated to a single civilisation.
- Showcases **100,000+ artefacts**, including the **complete collection of Tutankhamun's treasures**.
- Context for comparative Prelims questions on India's **National Museum (Delhi)** and **Indian Museum (Kolkata – Asia's oldest, 1814)**.

Prelims Pointers

- **Indian Museum, Kolkata (1814)** – Asia's oldest museum; houses the **Bharhut Stupa** railings, **Gandhara** sculptures, Ashokan **lion-crowned column** fragments.
- **National Museum, New Delhi (1949)** – under Ministry of Culture; houses the **Dancing Girl of Mohenjodaro**.
- **Salar Jung Museum, Hyderabad** – one of the largest single-person art collections in the world.
- **Bihar Museum (Patna)** – inaugurated 2015; will host India's **first power-focused museum** (Dec 2025 news item).
- India has **9 institutions under the Ministry of Culture's museum umbrella** incl. IGNCA, ICCR, NGMA.

UNESCO INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE (ICH)

DEEPAVALI (DIWALI) – INDIA'S 16TH UNESCO INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE ELEMENT

News in Brief

Deepavali (Diwali) was officially inscribed on UNESCO's **Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity** during the **20th Committee Session held at the Red Fort, New Delhi** in December 2025. This makes Diwali **India's 16th element** on the list, joining Garba (2023), Durga Puja (2021), and Kumbh Mela (2017).

Prelims Connect – UNESCO ICH Convention Framework

Parameter	Detail
Parent Convention	Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, 2003
Adopted	17 October 2003 (UNESCO General Conference, Paris)
Entered into force	20 April 2006
India ratified	2005 (among the earliest signatories)
Governing body	Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of ICH (24 States Parties , elected for 4-year terms)
Lists maintained	(i) Representative List of ICH of Humanity; (ii) List of ICH in Need of Urgent Safeguarding; (iii) Register of Good Safeguarding Practices
Nodal body in India	Sangeet Natak Akademi (SNA) , Ministry of Culture

Prelims Connect – The 5 Domains of ICH under 2003 Convention

1. Oral traditions and expressions (including language as a vehicle of ICH)
2. Performing arts
3. Social practices, rituals and festive events
4. Knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe
5. Traditional craftsmanship

Prelims Pointers – Diwali Inscription

- Inscribed: **December 2025, 20th ICH Committee Session**
- Host: **India (Red Fort, New Delhi)** – first time India hosts
- Domain: Social practices, rituals and festive events
- Significance: Celebrates the triumph of light over darkness, good over evil; observed by Hindus, Jains, Sikhs, and Newar Buddhists
- Reference: 15th-century Ajnapatra; Rama's return to Ayodhya after 14-year exile (Valmiki Ramayana)

20TH SESSION OF THE UNESCO ICH COMMITTEE – RED FORT, NEW DELHI (DEC 2025)

News in Brief

India hosted the **20th Session of the UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage** for the first time at **Red Fort, New Delhi** in December 2025. The session was **chaired by H.E. Vishal V. Sharma, India's Permanent Delegate to UNESCO**.

Prelims Connect – Host Venue

Parameter	Detail
Venue	Red Fort (Lal Qila), Delhi
Built by	Shah Jahan

Construction period	1639–1648 CE
Architect	Ustad Ahmad Lahori (also designed Taj Mahal)
Style	Mughal (blend of Persian, Timurid, Hindu elements)
UNESCO WHS	Inscribed 2007 (Criteria ii, iii, vi)
Key structures	Lahori Gate, Delhi Gate, Diwan-i-Aam, Diwan-i-Khas, Moti Masjid, Rang Mahal, Khas Mahal
Historical significance	PM hoists national flag here every August 15 since 1947

Prelims Pointers

- ICH Committee comprises **24 States Parties** elected by General Assembly for 4-year terms
- Meets annually to evaluate nominations to the Representative List
- **Vishal V. Sharma** – India's Permanent Delegate to UNESCO; chaired the 20th Session
- India, first-time host in 2025, earlier hosted 2013 Session at Baku? → No: **2025 is India's first hosting**

India's Complete List of 16 UNESCO ICH Elements (Master Table)

#	Element	Year	Domain	Key Facts
1	Kutiyattam (Sanskrit Theatre)	2008	Performing arts	Kerala; 2000+ years old; oldest surviving theatre tradition; earlier proclaimed Masterpiece in 2001
2	Vedic Chanting (Tradition)	2008	Oral traditions	Earlier Masterpiece 2003 ; oral transmission of 4 Vedas
3	Ramlila – Traditional Performance of the Ramayana	2008	Performing arts	UP (Ramnagar, Ayodhya), Uttarakhand, Bihar; earlier Masterpiece 2005
4	Ramman – Religious Festival and Ritual Theatre of Garhwal Himalayas	2009	Social practices	Saloor-Dungra village, Chamoli district, Uttarakhand ; Bhumiya Devta temple courtyard
5	Mudiyettu – Ritual Theatre and Dance Drama of Kerala	2010	Performing arts	Depicts battle between Goddess Kali and demon Darika; performed in Bhagavathi Kavus
6	Kalbelia Folk Songs and Dances of Rajasthan	2010	Performing arts	Rajasthan's Kalbelia serpent tribe ; women dancers in black swirling skirts
7	Chhau Dance	2010	Performing arts	3 styles – Purulia (WB) , Seraikella (Jharkhand) , Mayurbhanj (Odisha) ; masked (except Mayurbhanj); martial-tribal-folk origins
8	Buddhist Chanting of Ladakh – Recitation of Sacred Buddhist Texts	2012	Oral traditions	Trans-Himalayan Ladakh; monks in monasteries (Hemis, Thiksey, Diskit)
9	Sankirtana – Ritual Singing, Drumming and Dancing of Manipur	2013	Performing arts	Vaishnavite tradition; narrates lives of Radha and Krishna; uses pung (drum) and kartal (cymbals)
10	Traditional Brass and Copper Craft of Utensil-Making among the Thatheras of Jandiala Guru, Punjab	2014	Traditional craftsmanship	Town of Jandiala Guru, Amritsar district ; founded in reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh

11	Yoga	2016	Knowledge & practices concerning nature and the universe	Rooted in ancient Indian philosophy; UN International Yoga Day – June 21 (declared 2014, first observed 2015)
12	Nowruz (shared with 12 countries)	2016	Social practices	Persian New Year; shared with Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Iran, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Turkey, Uzbekistan
13	Kumbh Mela	2017	Social practices	4 locations – Prayagraj, Haridwar, Ujjain, Nashik-Trimbak ; rotates every 3 years; astronomically determined
14	Durga Puja in Kolkata	2021	Social practices	West Bengal; 10-day festival; features community pandals, clay idols by Kumortuli artisans
15	Garba of Gujarat	2023	Performing arts	Devotional dance around a central earthen lamp (garbo) during Navratri; dedicated to Goddess Amba
16	Deepavali / Diwali	2025	Social practices	India's 16th element ; inscribed at 20th Session, Red Fort, Delhi

Prelims Pointers – High-Value Chronology

- **2008** is the landmark year – Kutiyattam, Vedic Chanting, and Ramlila (originally "Masterpieces" of 2001–2005) were integrated into the Representative List when it was formally created post-2006.
- **Oldest element** (by inscription): Kutiyattam (2001 as Masterpiece; 2008 integrated)
- **Latest element: Deepavali (2025)**
- **Shared element:** Nowruz (2016) – shared across **12 countries**
- **Only craftsmanship element:** Thatheras of Jandiala Guru (2014)
- **Only "knowledge & practices concerning nature" element:** Yoga (2016)

GEET GAWAI – MAURITIUS (INDIAN DIASPORA ICH – MARCH 2025)

News in Brief

Geet Gawai, a pre-wedding ceremonial song-and-dance tradition of Bhojpuri-speaking women in Mauritius, was in news (March 2025) as a reference tradition of Indian indentured-labour heritage. It was inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of ICH in December 2016.

Prelims Connect

Parameter	Detail
Element	Geet Gawai
Country	Mauritius (not India – but Indian diaspora origin)
Inscribed	2016
Origin	Indian indentured labourers who arrived in Mauritius in the early 1700s (Bhojpuri-speaking migrants from UP/Bihar)
Language	Bhojpuri
Performed by	Women, primarily during pre-wedding rituals
Significance	Testifies to endurance of Indian cultural practices across diaspora

Prelims Pointer

- Geet Gawai is **NOT** an Indian ICH element – it is Mauritius's inscription. Common exam trap.
- Other Indian-origin diaspora ICH elements include Tamil cultural practices in Singapore/Malaysia (not inscribed yet).

SACRED THEATRE TRADITIONS – UNESCO RECOGNITION

News in Brief

In October 2025, the sacred theatre traditions of Kerala's **Kutiyattam** and **Mudiyettu**, Uttarakhand's **Ramman**, and North India's **Ramlila** were highlighted as UNESCO-recognized Intangible Cultural Heritage elements – all supported nationally by the **Sangeet Natak Akademi**.

Prelims Connect – Ritual Theatre Comparison Table

Tradition	State	UNESCO Year	Key Feature
Kutiyattam	Kerala	2008 (Masterpiece 2001)	Sanskrit theatre; performed in temples (Koothambalams); oldest continuing theatre form in the world (~2000 years)
Mudiyettu	Kerala	2010	Ritual dance-drama in Bhagavathi Kavus; depicts Kali-Darika battle; performed by specific communities – Maranchetti, Kuruppu, Marars
Ramman	Uttarakhand (Chamoli, Garhwal)	2009	Village-specific to Saloor-Dungra; Bhumiyal Devta courtyard; combines oral, literary, musical, theatrical, and ritual elements
Ramlila	UP, Uttarakhand, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh	2008 (Masterpiece 2005)	Dramatic enactment of Ramayana during Dussehra; Ramnagar Ramlila (Varanasi) is the most famous

Prelims Pointers

- **Sangeet Natak Akademi (SNA)** – India's national academy for music, dance, and drama; the **nodal agency for ICH nominations**
- Established **1952**; HQ: **New Delhi**; Chairman (as of 2025): **Sandhya Purecha** (first woman chair in academy's history)
- Other Akademis: **Sahitya Akademi** (literature, 1954), **Lalit Kala Akademi** (fine arts, 1954)

UNESCO ICH FRAMEWORK

The Three UNESCO Lists

1. **Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity** (India has 16 elements)
2. **List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding** (India has 0 elements)
3. **Register of Good Safeguarding Practices** (India has 0 programmes)

Key Institutions

Body	Role
UNESCO General Assembly of States Parties	Supreme body; meets every 2 years
Intergovernmental Committee	24 members; annual sessions; evaluates nominations
Evaluation Body	12 experts/NGOs; recommends inscriptions
National Focal Point (India)	Sangeet Natak Akademi

Nomination Cycle

- Submitted by State Party → Evaluation Body review → Committee decision at annual session
- Each element must demonstrate: community consent, safeguarding plan, inventory inclusion, ICH criteria fit

CLASSICAL DANCE & MUSIC

KUMUDINI LAKHIA – "INDIA'S MARTHA GRAHAM"

News in Brief

Eminent **Kathak exponent and choreographer Kumudini Lakhia**, often hailed as "**India's own Martha Graham**" for rewriting the language of Kathak, passed away at her residence in **Ahmedabad** at age 95 (April 2025). She was conferred with the **Padma Vibhushan** on Republic Day 2025 (just months before her death) in recognition of her lifelong dedication to Kathak.

Prelims Connect – Kumudini Lakhia

Parameter	Detail
Born	May 17, 1930 , Ahmedabad
Died	April 2025, Ahmedabad (age 95)
Dance form	Kathak (Lucknow Gharana lineage, reformed)
Institution founded	Kadamb School of Dance and Music , Ahmedabad (1964)
Film choreography	Umrao Jaan (1981) – choreographed ghazals for Rekha
Awards	Padma Shri, Padma Bhushan, Padma Vibhushan (2025) , Sangeet Natak Akademi, Kalidas Samman, Gaurav Puraskar (Gujarat)
Signature contribution	Moved Kathak from solo-narrative to group-choreography & contemporary ensembles

Prelims Connect – Kathak Dance Form

Parameter	Detail
Origin	North India (UP region); derived from "Kathakar" (storyteller)
Three main Gharanas	Lucknow, Jaipur, Banaras (also Raigarh as a later offshoot)
Lucknow Gharana	Grace, elegance, expressiveness; patronised by Nawab Wajid Ali Shah
Jaipur Gharana	Rhythmic virtuosity, footwork
Banaras Gharana	Balance of grace and footwork
Costume	Anarkali-style with churidar (Mughal influence)
Key features	Chakkars (spins), tatkar (footwork), bhava (expression), hastakas (hand gestures)

MAYADHAR RAUT – FATHER OF ODISSI DANCE

News in Brief

Renowned **Odissi maestro Mayadhar Raut**, often referred to as the "**Father of Odissi Dance**", passed away in February 2025. Born **July 6, 1933** in Odisha, he was trained from age 7 in the **Gotipua** dance form (a precursor to Odissi), and was the first to present Gotipua on stage in 1944. He later codified, redefined and restructured Odissi to give it the status of a **shastra-based classical dance**, establishing concepts like **Sanchari Bhava, Mudra Viniyoga, and Rasa Theory** in Odissi.

Prelims Connect – Mayadhar Raut

Parameter	Detail
Born	July 6, 1933 , Odisha
Died	February 2025
Title	Father of Odissi dance
Contribution	Codified Odissi as a shastra-based classical form

Key concepts introduced	Sanchari Bhava, Mudra Viniyoga, Rasa Theory
1959	Joined Kala Kshetra (first institute where Odissi was taught)
Awards	Padma Shri , Orissa Sangeet Natak Akademi (1977), Sahitya Kala Parishad (1984), Sangeet Natak Akademi (1985), Rajeev Gandhi Sadbhavana

Prelims Connect – Odissi Classical Dance

Parameter	Detail
State	Odisha
Precursor	Gotipua (boys dressed as girls performing in village temples)
Historical root	Mahari tradition (temple dancers in Jagannath temple, Puri)
Earliest evidence	Sculptural evidence in Ranigumpha caves (Udayagiri) , 2nd c. BCE
Tribhangi	Three-body-bend posture (head, torso, knees) – signature Odissi stance
Chauka	Square-stance (symbolising Lord Jagannath)
Associated revivalists	Kelucharan Mohapatra, Pankaj Charan Das, Mayadhar Raut , Deba Prasad Das
Texts	Abhinaya Chandrika, Abhinaya Darpana, Natya Shastra

ALLADI SARADA ("SARADA HOFFMAN") – BHARATANATYAM EXPONENT

News in Brief

Bharatanatyam exponent and Kalakshetra teacher Alladi Sarada (Sarada Hoffman), affectionately called "**Chinna Sarada**", passed away in California in September 2025. She was born on **15 June 1929** at the **Theosophical Society campus in Adyar, Chennai**. She was the **first recipient of the Rukmini Devi Medal for Excellence in the Arts** (Centre for Contemporary Culture, New Delhi) and was awarded the **Sangeet Natak Akademi Award in 1996**.

Prelims Connect – Kalakshetra & Rukmini Devi Context

Parameter	Detail
Institution	Kalakshetra Foundation , Chennai
Founded by	Rukmini Devi Arundale , 1936
Location	Thiruvannamiyur, Chennai (originally Adyar, Theosophical Society)
Status	Institution of National Importance (Kalakshetra Foundation Act, 1993)
Mission	Revival of Bharatanatyam (earlier "Sadir") & allied arts
Rukmini Devi	First woman nominated to Rajya Sabha (1952); refused Presidency offered by Morarji Desai (1977)

Prelims Connect – Bharatanatyam Classical Dance

Parameter	Detail
State	Tamil Nadu
Earlier name	Sadir / Dasi Attam / Chinna Melam
Revivers	E. Krishna Iyer, Rukmini Devi Arundale (1930s)
Repertoire (Margam)	Alarippu → Jathiswaram → Shabdham → Varnam → Padam → Tillana → Mangalam (7 items)
Central aesthetic	Nritta (pure dance) + Nritya (expressive) + Natya (drama)
Musical system	Carnatic
Scripture	Natya Shastra of Bharata Muni
Banned	Anti-Nautch movement (late 19th c.); Madras Devadasi (Prevention of Dedication) Act, 1947

PANDIT PRABHAKAR KAREKAR – HINDUSTANI VOCALIST

News in Brief

Hindustani classical vocalist Pandit Prabhakar Karekar (age 80) passed away in Mumbai (February 2025). Known for his renditions of 'Bolava Vithal Pahava Vithal' and 'Vakratund Mahakay' (Marathi abhangs and bhajans), he was honoured with the **Tansen Samman** (Madhya Pradesh's highest classical music award) and the **Sangeet Natak Akademi Award**.

Prelims Connect – Tansen Samman

Parameter	Detail
Instituted by	Government of Madhya Pradesh
Instituted year	1980
Named after	Mian Tansen – one of the Navaratnas of Akbar's court ; disciple of Swami Haridas; buried at Gwalior
Presented at	Tansen Samaroh , held annually at Behat village near Gwalior , at Tansen's tomb
Awarded for	Excellence in Hindustani classical music

PANDIT CHHANNULAL MISHRA – KIRANA & BANARAS GHARANA MASTER

News in Brief

Pandit Chhannulal Mishra, a renowned **Hindustani classical vocalist** and **Padma Bhushan** awardee, passed away at age 89 in **Mirzapur, Uttar Pradesh** (October 2025). A master of the **Kirana and Banaras Gharana** styles, he was celebrated for his renditions of **Khayal and Thumri** which blended classical and folk traditions. He also performed semi-classical genres like **Dadra, Chaiti, and Kajri**.

Prelims Connect – Major Hindustani Gharanas

Gharana	State/City	Speciality	Famous Exponents
Gwalior	Madhya Pradesh	Oldest gharana; pure Khayal	Haddu & Hassu Khan
Kirana	Kairana, UP	Slow-tempo, swara (note) based	Abdul Karim Khan , Bhimsen Joshi, Gangubai Hangal
Agra	UP	Dhrupad-influenced; bold voice	Faiyaz Khan
Patiala	Punjab	Ornate taans, romantic	Bade Ghulam Ali Khan
Jaipur-Atrauli	Rajasthan/UP	Complex ragas	Alladiya Khan, Kesarbai Kerkar
Banaras	UP	Thumri, Dadra; folk-influenced	Girija Devi , Chhannulal Mishra , Siddheshwari Devi
Mewati	Haryana/Rajasthan	Devotional; bhakti-laden	Pandit Jasraj , Sulakshana Pandit
Bhendi Bazaar	Mumbai	Breath control, aakar	Aman Ali Khan

Prelims Connect – Semi-Classical Genres of Hindustani

Genre	Features
Khayal	Imaginative, improvisational; dominant genre since 18th c.
Dhrupad	Oldest surviving; meditative; 4-part structure (Sthayi-Antara-Sanchari-Abhog)
Thumri	Romantic, emotive; associated with Lucknow & Banaras

Dadra	Similar to Thumri but in 6-beat Dadra taal
Tappa	Rapid-fire short taans; camel-rider folk origin (Punjab)
Tarana	Nonsense-syllable composition at fast tempo
Chaiti, Kajri, Jhoola, Hori	Seasonal/festival semi-classical forms of UP-Bihar

SULAKSHANA PANDIT – MEWATI GHARANA & PLAYBACK SINGER

News in Brief

Veteran actor and playback singer **Sulakshana Pandit** (71), known for films "Uljhan" and "Chehre Pe Chehra", died of cardiac arrest in Mumbai (November 2025). She belonged to the **Mewati Gharana** – a prominent school of Indian classical music based in **Hisar, Haryana**.

Prelims Connect – Mewati Gharana

- Founded in the late 19th century by **Ghagge Nazir Khan**
- Most famous exponent: **Pandit Jasraj** (Padma Vibhushan, 2000)
- Known for bhakti-based khayal rendition and emotional depth
- The Pandit siblings – Jatin, Lalit (music directors), Sulakshana, Vijayta – all came from this tradition

R.K. SHRIRAMKUMAR – SANGITA KALANIDHI AWARDEE

News in Brief

Violinist R.K. Shriramkumar has been selected for the **Sangita Kalanidhi award** of the **Music Academy, Chennai** (announced March 2025). He hails from the **Rudrapatnam family** of musicians, known for their deep-rooted traditions in **Carnatic music**.

Prelims Connect – Sangita Kalanidhi

Parameter	Detail
Instituted by	The Music Academy, Madras (Chennai)
Year instituted	1942
Considered	Highest honour in Carnatic music
Presented at	Annual December Music Season (Margazhi festival), Chennai
Includes	A birudu (title), shawl and purse; Sadas honouree delivers a lecture
Music Academy founded	1928 (after Madras session of Indian National Congress, 1927)

Prelims Connect – Carnatic Music Essentials

Parameter	Detail
Carnatic Music Trinity	Tyagaraja, Muthuswami Dikshitar, Syama Sastri (all born Tiruvarur, TN, late 18th c.)
Parent	Purandara Dasa – "Pitamaha of Carnatic Music" (16th c.)
Raga system	72 Melakarta (parent) ragas
Tala system	7 basic talas with 175 variations
Principal instruments	Veena, Violin, Mridangam, Ghatam, Kanjira, Flute, Nadaswaram
Principal form	Kriti (composition in sahitya + swara + tala)
Season	Margazhi (Dec-Jan) – Chennai Music Season

BANARAS SHEHNAI – GI TAG

News in Brief

Banaras Shehnai, a renowned musical instrument, has been awarded the **Geographical Indication (GI) tag** in April 2025. This means only authorised users or those residing in **Varanasi** can use the name "Banaras Shehnai."

Prelims Connect – Shehnai & Banaras Connection

Parameter	Detail
Instrument type	Double-reed aerophone (wind instrument)
Family	Suranai / Sundri family of reed instruments
Made of	Wood, metal bell (usually brass)
Most famous exponent	Ustad Bismillah Khan (1916–2006); Bharat Ratna 2001 (only third musician after M.S. Subbulakshmi and Ravi Shankar)
Bismillah Khan	Played shehnai from the Red Fort on August 15, 1947 (India's first Independence Day)
Cultural role	Auspicious instrument played at weddings, temple rituals, royal ceremonies
GI tag significance	Legal protection for Banaras-based craftsmen & performers

K. PAJANIVEL – SILAMBAM EXPONENT, PADMA SHRI

News in Brief

Silambam exponent K. Pajanivel of Puducherry has been conferred the **Padma Shri (January 2026)** in recognition of his outstanding contribution to traditional martial arts. Born **30 January 1973** at Pooranankuppam in Puducherry, he had earlier received the **Sangeet Natak Akademi Award for Martial Arts in 2023**.

Prelims Connect – Silambam

Parameter	Detail
Type	Traditional weapon-based martial art of Tamil Nadu
Key weapon	Bamboo staff (silambam kambu)
Antiquity	References in Sangam literature (~2nd c. BCE) ; associated with Sage Agastya
Sponsors	Chera, Chola, Pandya, Pallava dynasties
Related Tamil martial arts	Varma Kalai (vital points), Kuttu Varisai (unarmed combat), Adimurai
Modern recognition	Silambam Asia established 2008; World Silambam Federation recognized by Government of India

Prelims Connect – Other Indian Martial Arts

Martial Art	State
Kalaripayattu	Kerala (world's oldest surviving martial art)
Silambam	Tamil Nadu
Thang-Ta / Sarit Sarak	Manipur
Gatka	Punjab (Sikh)
Mardani Khel	Maharashtra
Kuttu Varisai	Tamil Nadu
Cheibi Gad-Ga	Manipur
Paika Akhada	Odisha
Mallakhamb	Maharashtra/MP (gymnastic-style; recognised as national sport 2013)

SUKRI BOMMAGOWDA ("SUKRAJJI") – HALAKKI FOLK LEGEND

News in Brief

Renowned folk singer and Padma Shri awardee Sukri Bommagowda, fondly called "Sukrajji", passed away in Uttara Kannada district, Karnataka (February 2025). Revered in the Halakki community, she was often described as a "walking encyclopaedia" of Halakki folk traditions. She was also a recipient of the Rajyotsava Award and the Nadoja Award.

Prelims Connect – Halakki Community

- Halakki Vokkaliga / Halakki Gowda – an indigenous community of coastal Karnataka (Uttara Kannada district)
- Listed as an OBC / Scheduled Tribe (varies by state classification)
- Distinct oral-tradition culture; rich folk-song repertoire
- Nadoja Award – instituted by Hampi University, Karnataka's highest literary honour

BIMSTEC TRADITIONAL MUSIC FESTIVAL

News in Brief

As part of the 6th BIMSTEC Summit outcomes (April 2025), India committed to hosting a BIMSTEC Traditional Music Festival, along with a BIMSTEC Athletics Meet (2025) and the first BIMSTEC Games in 2027 (marking BIMSTEC's 30th anniversary).

Prelims Connect – BIMSTEC Cultural Initiatives

Parameter	Detail
Full form	Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation
Founded	1997 (Bangkok Declaration)
Members	Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand (7)
HQ	Dhaka, Bangladesh
Culture sector lead	Bhutan
2027	30th anniversary + first BIMSTEC Games
Music Festival	Reflects shared Buddhist-cultural heritage across member states

BOONG – MANIPURI FILM WINS BAFTA

News in Brief

Manipuri film "Boong", directed by Lakshmi Priya Devi and produced by Farhan Akhtar's Excel Entertainment, won the prestigious BAFTA Award for Best Children's & Family Film in London (February 2026).

Prelims Connect – Manipuri Culture Context

- Manipuri is one of the 8 classical dance forms of India
- Key Manipuri dance forms: Ras Leela, Sankirtana, Thang-Ta, Pung Cholom
- Sankirtana is on UNESCO ICH List (2013)
- Manipuri language included in 8th Schedule (1992, 71st Amendment)
- Imphal – state capital; historical Kangla Palace

The 8 Classical Dance Forms of India

#	Dance	State	Key Feature	Recognition as Classical
1	Bharatanatyam	Tamil Nadu	Temple origin (Sadir); Tribhangi & Sama stances; Kalakshetra style	Revived by Rukmini Devi (1930s)
2	Kathak	Uttar Pradesh	3 Gharanas (Lucknow, Jaipur, Banaras); Chakkars & Tatkar	Sangeet Natak Akademi recognition
3	Kathakali	Kerala	Elaborate make-up (chutti), male dominated, mythological themes	Kalamandalam (founded 1930 by Vallathol)

4	Kuchipudi	Andhra Pradesh	Village-origin dance-drama; Tarangam (dance on brass plate)	Siddhendra Yogi (17th c.)
5	Manipuri	Manipur	Ras Leela; round skirts; Pung drum	Ras Leela tradition
6	Mohiniyattam	Kerala	Lasya (feminine); "Dance of the Enchantress"; white & gold costume	Attikoyi Pacha Thampuran / Vallathol
7	Odissi	Odisha	Tribhangi posture; Gotipua precursor; Jagannath Puri temple link	Revival by Kelucharan Mohapatra, Mayadhar Raut
8	Sattriya	Assam	Founded by Sankardeva (15th c.); Vaishnavite monastery (Sattri) origin	Recognised as classical by SNA in 2000 (youngest classical form)

Prelims Pointers – Classical Dance Traps

- **Sangeet Natak Akademi** recognises **8 classical dances** (Sattriya added in 2000, the most recent)
- **Ministry of Culture** also lists 8, but some lists add **Chhau** (9th), however Chhau is recognised as **UNESCO ICH (2010)** and classified as folk/semi-classical, **not** a classical dance
- **Natya Shastra** (Bharata Muni, ~200 BCE–200 CE) is the foundational text for all Indian classical performing arts
- **Abhinaya Darpana** (Nandikeshvara) – key treatise on gestures
- The **Tandava-Lasya binary**: Tandava = masculine/vigorous (Shiva); Lasya = feminine/graceful (Parvati)

The 2 Classical Music Systems of India – Comparison

Parameter	Hindustani	Carnatic
Region	North India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal	South India (TN, AP, KA, KL)
Origin	Samaveda + Persian/Islamic influence (13th c. onwards)	Samaveda + indigenous Tamil/Sanskrit tradition
Key figure	Amir Khusrau (13th c.) – innovator	Purandara Dasa (16th c.) – Pitamaha
Ragas	~100 prominent ragas; improvisation-based	72 Melakarta ragas (parent) + derivatives
Composition type	Bandish (Khayal, Dhrupad, Thumri)	Kriti (Pallavi-Anupallavi-Charanam)
Main instruments	Sitar, Sarod, Tabla, Shehnai, Santoor	Veena, Mridangam, Violin, Ghatam, Nadaswaram
Famous Trinity	–	Tyagaraja, Muthuswami Dikshitar, Syama Sastri
Gharana system	Yes (Lucknow, Kirana, Gwalior, etc.)	No gharana; Bani system (style lineage)
Women icons	M.S. Subbulakshmi (Bharat Ratna), D.K. Pattammal	Gangubai Hangal, Kishori Amonkar, Girija Devi

DHRUPAD – OLDEST SURVIVING FORM OF HINDUSTANI CLASSICAL MUSIC

A legal dispute between music composer AR Rahman and the Dagar family over use of Dhrupad music brought this ancient art form into focus. Dhrupad is considered the oldest extant form of Hindustani classical music.

News in Brief

- **Dhrupad** (meaning 'structured') – **oldest extant form of Hindustani classical music**; preceded the Khayal form.
- **Structure**: Rigid composition and rhythm; primarily uses **Rudra Veena, Pakhawaj, and Tanpura**.
- **Nature**: Contemplative; **lacks taans and sargams**; often viewed as a form of **spiritual worship or deep listening**.
- **Themes**: Many texts derived from Hindu devotional poetry, particularly from the **Bhakti Movement**.
- **Dagar Lineage**: Traces musical roots to **Swami Haridas** – the **guru of Tansen**.

Prelims Pointers

- **Swami Haridas** – the guru of **Tansen** and **Baiju Bawra**; associated with the **Haridasi Sampradaya** of Vrindavan.
- **Tansen** – one of the **Navaratnas (Nine Gems)** of Akbar's court; greatest musician of the Hindustani tradition.

- **Rudra Veena** – stick zither associated with Dhruwad; one of the rarest and most ancient instruments in Indian music; associated with Lord Shiva.
- **Pakhawaj** – barrel-shaped, two-headed drum; the predecessor of the tabla; primary rhythm instrument in Dhruwad.

LITERATURE, LANGUAGES, JNANPITH & SAHITYA AKADEMI

BANU MUSHTAQ – INTERNATIONAL BOOKER PRIZE 2025

News in Brief

Activist-lawyer **Banu Mushtaq** made history by becoming the **first Indian author writing in Kannada** to win the **International Booker Prize 2025**. Her book **"Heart Lamp"**, translated from Kannada by **Deepa Bhashthi**, is the **first short story collection ever to win the £50,000 prize**, and it is the **first time Kannada has been honoured** at the Booker. "Heart Lamp" interprets and inhabits the faultlines and silent revolts in the everyday lives of Muslim women.

Prelims Connect – Banu Mushtaq

Parameter	Detail
Profession	Activist, lawyer, writer
Language	Kannada
Prize-winning work	"Heart Lamp" (short story collection)
Translator	Deepa Bhashthi (prize shared equally with author)
Prize	International Booker Prize 2025 – £50,000
Milestones	(i) First Indian author writing in Kannada to win; (ii) First short story collection to win; (iii) First time Kannada honoured
Movement	Bandaya Sahitya Chaluvalli (protest literature movement, Karnataka)

Prelims Connect – International Booker Prize

Parameter	Detail
Awarded to	Fiction translated into English and published in UK/Ireland
Established	2005 (as Man Booker International); current form since 2016
Prize money	£50,000 (shared equally between author and translator)
Administered by	The Booker Prize Foundation
Predecessors of Indian winners	Geetanjali Shree for "Tomb of Sand" (Hindi, 2022) – translated by Daisy Rockwell; first Indian-language book ever to win
Kannada connection	Banu Mushtaq 2025

Prelims Pointers – Indian Booker Laureates

Year	Author	Book	Prize
1971	V.S. Naipaul	In a Free State	Booker (diaspora)
1981	Salman Rushdie	Midnight's Children	Booker
1997	Arundhati Roy	The God of Small Things	Booker
2006	Kiran Desai	The Inheritance of Loss	Booker

2008	Aravind Adiga	The White Tiger	Booker
2022	Geetanjali Shree	Tomb of Sand (Hindi)	International Booker
2025	Banu Mushtaq	Heart Lamp (Kannada)	International Booker

VINOD KUMAR SHUKLA — 59TH JNANPITH AWARD FOR 2024

News in Brief

Eminent Hindi writer **Vinod Kumar Shukla** was named the recipient of the **59th Jnanpith Award** (India's highest literary honour) for the year **2024**. He became the **first writer from Chhattisgarh** to receive the award. He had earlier received the **Sahitya Akademi Award in 1999** for his book "**Deewar Mein Ek Khirkee Rahati Thi**". His other notable works include "**Naukar ki Kameez**" (1979) — a novel adapted into a film by **Mani Kaul** — and the poetry collection "**Sab Kuch Hona Bacha Rahega**" (1992).

Prelims Connect — Vinod Kumar Shukla

Parameter	Detail
Language	Hindi
State	Chhattisgarh (first Jnanpith from CG)
Signature novels	Naukar ki Kameez (1979), Deewar Mein Ek Khirkee Rahati Thi (1996)
Poetry	Sab Kuch Hona Bacha Rahega (1992)
Film adaptation	Naukar ki Kameez directed by Mani Kaul
Earlier honour	Sahitya Akademi Award 1999
Jnanpith for year	2024 (59th)

GULZAR & RAMBHADRACHARYA — 58TH JNANPITH AWARD FOR 2023

News in Brief

President **Droupadi Murmu** presented the **58th Jnanpith Award for 2023** (jointly) to renowned poet-lyricist **Gulzar** and Sanskrit scholar **Jagadguru Rambhadracharya** in May 2025.

Prelims Connect — Gulzar

Parameter	Detail
Real name	Sampoorn Singh Kalra
Language	Urdu (for Jnanpith purposes; also Hindi cinema lyrics)
Poetic innovation	Pioneered the Triveni poetic form (3-line poem)
Famous films	Maachis, Aandhi, Koshish ; also directed Ijaazat, Hu Tu Tu
Earlier honours	Sahitya Akademi Award (2002), Padma Bhushan (2004), Academy Award (Oscar — "Jai Ho" from Slumdog Millionaire, 2009), Grammy Award (2010), Dadasaheb Phalke Award (2013)
Jnanpith	58th Award (for 2023)

Prelims Connect — Jagadguru Rambhadracharya

Parameter	Detail
Age	75 (as of May 2025)
Base	Tulsi Peeth, Chitrakoot (founder and head)
Language	Sanskrit
Works	Author of 240+ books and texts , including four epics (Bhargava Raghaviyam and others)
Other roles	Hindu spiritual leader, educator, writer; visually impaired since age 2 months
Jnanpith	58th Award (for 2023) — first Sanskrit Jnanpith since Satya Vrat Shastri (2006)

Prelims Connect — Jnanpith Award

Parameter	Detail
Conferred by	Bharatiya Jnanpith (a Delhi-based trust)
Instituted	1961
First presented	1965 (to G. Sankara Kurup for Malayalam work "Odakkuzhal")
Prize components	₹11 lakh cash, bronze statue of Vagdevi/Saraswati , citation
Status	India's highest literary honour
Eligibility	Indian citizen writing in any of the Scheduled 8th Schedule languages + English
Posthumous awards?	Not allowed
Frequency	Annual; can be given to 2 persons jointly (e.g., 58th to Gulzar + Rambhadracharya)
1st woman recipient	Ashapura Devi (Bengali, 1976)

SAHITYA AKADEMI AWARD 2024 – CHAMAN ARORA

News in Brief

The government announced that **late Chaman Arora** has been chosen for the **Sahitya Akademi Award 2024 in Dogri** for his book '**Ik Hor Ashwthama**'. The award is presented in a casket containing an **engraved copper plaque** and a cash amount of **₹1,00,000**.

Prelims Connect – Sahitya Akademi Award

Parameter	Detail
Instituted	1954
Nodal body	Sahitya Akademi – India's National Academy of Letters
Sahitya Akademi founded	1954 (Ministry of Culture autonomous body)
Rank	Second-highest literary award in India after Jnanpith
Languages covered	24 languages (22 from 8th Schedule + English + Rajasthani)
Components	Engraved copper plaque + cash prize of ₹1,00,000
Eligibility	Indian citizen; writing in recognized languages; no posthumous conferral (but announced awards are honoured if winner dies before ceremony, as with Chaman Arora)
Dogri inclusion	Dogri was added to the 8th Schedule via the 92nd Amendment Act, 2003

Prelims Pointers – Sahitya Akademi Structure

- **President (as of 2025):** Madhav Kaushik (Hindi author)
- **HQ:** Rabindra Bhavan, New Delhi
- **Regional offices:** Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Bengaluru
- Publishes "**Indian Literature**" (bi-monthly journal in English)

SAHITYA AKADEMI'S FESTIVAL OF LETTERS

News in Brief

Sahitya Akademi organized its annual **Festival of Letters** at **Rabindra Bhavan, New Delhi** in March 2025. Union Minister for Culture and Tourism **Gajendra Singh Shekhawat** inaugurated the festival. **Mahesh Dattani**, eminent English playwright, was the chief guest at the award ceremony where **Sahitya Akademi Awards in 23 languages** were presented. **Upamanyu Chatterjee**, eminent writer and scholar, delivered the **Samvatsar Lecture**.

Prelims Connect – Festival of Letters

Parameter	Detail
Status	Asia's Largest Literature Festival
Participation	~700 writers from 50+ languages
Venue	Rabindra Bhavan, New Delhi (Sahitya Akademi HQ)

Key lectures	Samvatsar Lecture (annual literary address)
Chief guest (2025)	Mahesh Dattani – 1998 Sahitya Akademi Award for "Final Solutions and Other Plays"; first English playwright to receive SA Award
Samvatsar Lecture 2025	Upamanyu Chatterjee ("English, August")
23 language awards	Marathi, Hindi, Tamil, Telugu... + English + Rajasthani (excluding Dogri 2024 – already covered as Chaman Arora's)

UNMESHA INTERNATIONAL LITERATURE FESTIVAL – 3RD EDITION, PATNA

News in Brief

Sahitya Akademi, in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture and the Government of Bihar, organized the **3rd edition of Unmesha**, a four-day **International Literature Festival** at the **Samrat Ashok Convention Centre, Patna, Bihar** (October 2025). **Unmesha is Asia's largest and most inclusive international literature festival**. More than **550 eminent writers, poets, scholars, translators, and publishers** participated, representing **100+ languages**.

Prelims Connect – Unmesha Festival

Parameter	Detail
Name meaning	"Unmesha" = "Awakening / Opening of the Eye" (Sanskrit)
First edition	2022, Shimla
2nd edition	2023, Bhopal
3rd edition (2025)	Patna, Bihar
Status	"Asia's largest and most inclusive international literature festival" (both Festival of Letters and Unmesha use similar superlatives)
Organizing body	Sahitya Akademi + Ministry of Culture + Host State Government
Participation	550+ writers, 100+ languages

TAMIL NADU CM'S \$1 MILLION REWARD FOR INDUS SCRIPT DECODING

News in Brief

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister **M.K. Stalin** announced a reward of **\$1 million** for researchers who decode the **ancient script of the Indus Valley Civilisation** (January 2025). This initiative seeks to crowdsource solutions to one of archaeology's most enduring mysteries.

Prelims Connect – Indus Valley Script

Parameter	Detail
Also called	Harappan Script / Indus Script
Period	~2600–1900 BCE (Mature Harappan phase)
Direction	Generally written right to left (boustrophedon – alternating directions)
Symbols	~400–600 distinct signs
Earliest known	Seal from Harappa (1875, Alexander Cunningham)
Still undeciphered	Yes – despite 150+ years of attempts
Tamil connection	Dravidian hypothesis (Asko Parpola, Iravatham Mahadevan) – theory that Harappans spoke a proto-Dravidian language
Iravatham Mahadevan	Indian epigraphist; Tamil-Brahmi and Indus Script scholar; Padma Shri 2009

PRELIMS POINTERS

- **IGNCA** (Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts) – nodal agency under the Ministry of Culture for research and dissemination of Indian arts.
- The **Dholavira 'signboard'** is unique – a large inscription found on a wall, considered the **world's earliest known public notice/signboard** (c. 2600–1900 BCE).
- Famous **Harappan seals**: **Pashupati seal** (Proto-Shiva), **Unicorn seal** (most common), **Bull seal**.
- The **Rosetta Stone** (1799) helped decode Egyptian hieroglyphics – no equivalent bilingual text has been found for Harappan script, making decipherment extremely difficult.

PONNIYIN SELVAN & THE YANAIMEL THUNJIYA DEVAR REFERENCE

News in Brief

In connection with Chola heritage coverage in February 2025, it was noted that **Rajaditya Chola** earned the title '**Yanaimel Thunjiya Devar**' ("The king who died on the back of an elephant") in Chola inscriptions at **Kumbakonam and Thirunageswaram**. **Kalki** (**Kalki Krishnamurthy**), the author of "**Ponniyin Selvan**" – later adapted into a landmark film – makes reference to this title.

Prelims Connect – Kalki & Ponniyin Selvan

Parameter	Detail
Author	Kalki Krishnamurthy (1899–1954)
Real name	R. Krishnamurthy
Language	Tamil
Magnum opus	"Ponniyin Selvan" (1950–54) – 5-volume historical novel on Chola dynasty
Protagonist	Arulmozhiarman (future Rajaraja Chola I)
Other major works	Sivakamiyin Sabadam, Parthiban Kanavu, Alai Osai (Sahitya Akademi Award 1956)
Journalism	Founded Kalki magazine (1941)
Film adaptation	Ponniyin Selvan: I (2022) + II (2023) directed by Mani Ratnam
Rajaditya Chola	Son of Parantaka I; died in Battle of Takkolam (c. 949 CE) against Rashtrakuta Krishna III; died seated atop his war elephant

DR. K.S. MANILAL & HORTUS MALABARICUS

News in Brief

Dr. **K.S. Manilal**, the esteemed botanist who brought the ancient botanical treasure "**Hortus Malabaricus**" – a **17th-century Latin manuscript** compiled by Dutch Governor **Hendrik Adrian van Rheede** – to the modern world, passed away in January 2025.

Prelims Connect – Hortus Malabaricus

Parameter	Detail
Meaning	"Garden of Malabar" (Latin)
Author/Compiler	Hendrik Adrian van Rheede – Dutch Governor of Malabar
Period of compilation	1678–1693 (12 volumes, published in Amsterdam)
Language	Latin (with Malayalam, Arabic, Konkani scripts for plant names)
Subject	742 plant species of Malabar region (Kerala) with medicinal uses
Significance	First comprehensive treatise on Indian flora; influenced Linnaean taxonomy
Key Indian contributors	Itty Achudan (Ezhava physician) , Apu Bhat, Vinayaka Pandit, Ranga Bhat

Manilal's translation	Published English & Malayalam editions (1980s–2010s)
Manilal's awards	Padma Shri , Vishwambhar Puri Medal (1990), YD Tyagi Gold Medal (1998), E.K. Janaki Ammal Taxonomy Award (2003), Officer of the Order of Orange-Nassau (2012) by Queen Beatrix – first Asian recipient

PRATUL MUKHOPADHYAY – BENGALI SINGER-SONGWRITER

News in Brief

Veteran **Bengali singer-songwriter Pratul Mukhopadhyay** passed away in Kolkata (February 2025). His timeless compositions like "Ami Banglar Gaan Gai" and "Dinga Bhasao Re" became synonymous with the cultural identity of West Bengal.

Prelims Connect

- Associated with the **Ganasangeet (people's songs)** tradition of Bengal
- The Ganasangeet movement draws from the legacy of **Salil Chowdhury, Hemanga Biswas, and Bhupen Hazarika** (Assamese)
- Part of broader **IPTA (Indian People's Theatre Association)** heritage (founded 1943)

THE 11 CLASSICAL LANGUAGES OF INDIA

The Union Cabinet approved the recognition of five more languages as 'classical,' expanding India's list to a total of 11 classical languages. The new additions are Marathi, Pali, Prakrit, Assamese, and Bengali.

Prelims Connect – Classical Language Framework

Parameter	Detail
Criterion fixed by	Government of India, 2004 (initially)
Current criteria (revised 2024)	(i) High antiquity of early texts (1500–2000 years); (ii) Body of ancient literature considered heritage by generations; (iii) Knowledge texts, especially prose in addition to poetry, epigraphic and inscriptional evidence; (iv) Classical language and literature being distinct from modern

All 11 Classical Languages of India

Language	Year	Key Significance
Tamil	2004 (First)	Oldest classical language; Sangam literature (3rd BCE - 3rd CE)
Sanskrit	2005	Language of Vedas, Upanishads, epics; mother of many Indian languages
Telugu	2008	Andhra Mahabharata by Nannaya (11th CE)
Kannada	2008	Kavirajamarga (9th CE) – oldest Kannada literary work

Malayalam	2013	Ramacharitam (13th CE) – oldest surviving text
Odia	2014	Sarala Das's Odia Mahabharata (14th-15th CE)
Marathi	2024	Dnyaneshwari (1290 CE) by Sant Dnyaneshwar
Pali	2024	Language of Theravada Buddhism; Pali Tripitaka (Buddhist Canon)
Prakrit	2024	Middle Indo-Aryan; literature spans 3rd BCE to 12th CE; sacred to Jainism
Assamese	2024	Charya literature (10th-12th CE); first prose texts from 13th CE
Bengali	2024	Charyapada (10th-12th CE); vast modern literary tradition

Prelims Pointers

- **Tamil** is the **oldest classical language** recognized (2004); often regarded as world's oldest surviving classical language with continuous use.
- **October 2024** saw the biggest single expansion: **5 languages added in one go** – Marathi, Pali, Prakrit, Assamese, Bengali.
- Benefits of classical status: Two international awards for scholars; centres of excellence; dedicated professional chairs at central universities.
- **Benefits of Classical Language status:** Presidential Award of Certificate of Honour, **Maharshi Badrayan Samman Award**, Professional Chairs in central universities, Centre of Excellence at **CIIL, Mysore**.
- **Pali** – sacred language of **Theravada Buddhism**; the **Pali Tripitaka** is the complete Theravada Buddhist Canon.
- **Prakrit** – a group of Middle Indo-Aryan languages; **Ardhamagadhi Prakrit** is the sacred language of **Jainism**; Ashokan rock edicts are in Prakrit.

THE 22 LANGUAGES OF THE EIGHTH SCHEDULE

Prelims Connect – 8th Schedule of the Constitution

Parameter	Detail
Article reference	Articles 344(1) and 351
Original languages (14)	Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Malayalam, Marathi, Odia, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu
21st CAA (1967)	Sindhi added
71st CAA (1992)	Konkani, Manipuri, Nepali added (total 18)
92nd CAA (2003)	Bodo, Dogri, Maithili, Santhali added (total 22)
Total (current)	22 languages
Languages in queue	English is NOT in 8th Schedule; Rajasthani, Bhojpuri, Tulu, Pahari, etc. are demanding inclusion

Prelims Pointer – Tricky Traps

- **Sanskrit** – official language of **Uttarakhand** (2nd official, 2010); earlier only HP had similar recognition.
- **Urdu** – official language of several states including **UP, Telangana, J&K, Bihar, Delhi, WB**.

- **Sindhi** – has no state of origin in India (Sindh is in Pakistan); added in 1967.
- **Santhali** – only 8th Schedule language written in **Ol Chiki script** (by Pandit Raghunath Murmu, 1925).

AWARDS & CIVILIAN HONOURS

PADMA AWARDS 2025 – COMPLETE LIST & FRAMEWORK

News in Brief

For the year **2025**, the President approved conferment of **139 Padma Awards**, comprising **7 Padma Vibhushan, 19 Padma Bhushan**, and **113 Padma Shri Awards** (with a duo case). The awards were conferred in the traditional Republic Day announcement.

Prelims Connect – Padma Awards Framework

Parameter	Detail
Instituted	1954
Announced	Republic Day (January 26) every year
Conferred at	Rashtrapati Bhavan (usually March–April) by the President of India
Categories	Padma Vibhushan → Padma Bhushan → Padma Shri
Padma Vibhushan	"Exceptional and distinguished service"
Padma Bhushan	"Distinguished service of a high order"
Padma Shri	"Distinguished service in any field"
Rank in civilian awards	After Bharat Ratna (PV is 2nd-highest , PB is 3rd, PS is 4th)
Fields covered	Art, Social Work, Public Affairs, Science & Engineering, Trade & Industry, Medicine, Literature & Education, Civil Service, Sports, Others
Total for 2025	139 (7 PV + 19 PB + 113 PS)
Awards Committee	Constituted annually by PM; recommends names to PM and President
Not hereditary or titles	Cannot be used as prefix/suffix to name

Padma Vibhushan 2025 – All 7 Recipients

#	Name	Field	State/Country
1	Shri Duvvur Nageshwar Reddy	Medicine	Telangana (AIG Hospitals; "Legends of Endoscopy" awardee from Japan, 2025)
2	Justice (Retd.) Jagdish Singh Khehar	Public Affairs	Chandigarh (45th CJI)
3	Smt. Kumudini Rajnikant Lakhia	Art	Gujarat (Kathak – "India's Martha Graham"; passed April 2025)
4	Shri Lakshminarayana Subramaniam	Art	Karnataka (Carnatic violinist; "God of Indian Violin")
5	Shri M.T. Vasudevan Nair (Posthumous)	Literature & Education	Kerala (Malayalam; Jnanpith 1995 for "Randamoozham"; died Dec 2024)
6	Shri Osamu Suzuki (Posthumous)	Trade & Industry	Japan (Founder-Chairman of Suzuki Motor; brought Maruti to India)

7	Smt. Sharda Sinha (Posthumous)	Art	Bihar (Bhojpuri/Maithili folk singer; "Chhath Geet" queen; died Nov 2024)
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Prelims Pointers – Padma Vibhushan 2025

- 3 posthumous awards in PV 2025 (M.T. Vasudevan Nair, Osamu Suzuki, Sharda Sinha)
- Kumudini Lakhia received her Padma Vibhushan on Republic Day 2025 and passed away in April 2025
- First PV to a Japanese industrialist in several years – **Osamu Suzuki** (recognition of Maruti Suzuki partnership)

PADMA AWARDS 2026 – COMPLETE LIST (JANUARY 2026)

News in Brief

Padma Awards 2026: The President approved conferment of **131 Padma Awards**, including **2 duo cases** (counted as one each). The list comprises **5 Padma Vibhushan**, **13 Padma Bhushan**, and **113 Padma Shri Awards**. **19 women awardees**, **6 Foreigners/NRI/PIO/OCI**, and **16 Posthumous awardees**.

Padma Vibhushan 2026 – All 5 Recipients

#	Name	Field	State/Country
1	Shri Dharmendra Singh Deol (Posthumous)	Art	Maharashtra (veteran Bollywood actor "He-Man of Bollywood"; Phool Aur Patthar, Sholay, Chupke Chupke; passed Nov 2025)
2	Shri K.T. Thomas	Public Affairs	Kerala (former SC judge, 1996–2002)
3	Ms. N. Rajam	Art	Uttar Pradesh (Carnatic–Hindustani violin fusion exponent; Banaras Hindu Univ)
4	Shri P. Narayanan	Literature & Education	Kerala
5	Shri V.S. Achuthanandhan (Posthumous)	Public Affairs	Kerala (former CM of Kerala 2006–11; last surviving founder of CPI-M; died Aug 2025)

Padma Bhushan 2026 – All 13 Recipients

#	Name	Field	State/Country
1	Ms. Alka Yagnik	Art	Maharashtra (Bollywood playback singer)
2	Shri Bhagat Singh Koshyari	Public Affairs	Uttarakhand (former Governor of Maharashtra)
3	Shri Kallipatti Ramasamy Palaniswamy	Medicine	Tamil Nadu
4	Shri Mammooty	Art	Kerala (Malayalam superstar; received Bharat Jyoti earlier)
5	Dr. Nori Dattatreyyudu	Medicine	USA (radiation oncology pioneer)
6	Shri Piyush Pandey (Posthumous)	Art	Maharashtra (legendary ad-man – Ogilvy India; "Har Ek Friend Zaroori Hota Hai")
7	Shri S.K.M. Maeilanandhan	Social Work	Tamil Nadu
8	Shri Shatavadhani R. Ganesh	Art	Karnataka (Sanskrit scholar & polymath)
9	Shri Shibu Soren (Posthumous)	Public Affairs	Jharkhand (JMM founder; former CM; "Dishom Guru"; died Aug 2025)
10	Shri Uday Kotak	Trade & Industry	Maharashtra (Kotak Mahindra Bank founder)
11	Shri V.K. Malhotra (Posthumous)	Public Affairs	Delhi
12	Shri Vellappally Natesan	Public Affairs	Kerala (SNDP Yogam)
13	Shri Vijay Amritraj	Sports	USA (tennis legend; "Fourth Musketeer")

Prelims Pointers – Padma Awards 2026 Composition

- Total: 131 awards (with 2 duo cases counted as one each)

- Women: 19
- Foreigners/NRI/PIO/OCI: 6
- Posthumous: 16
- Only 5 PV (compared to 7 in 2025) – reflects year-to-year variability
- 3 posthumous in PV 2026: Dharmendra Deol, V.S. Achuthanandan

NOTABLE PADMA SHRI 2026 PROFILES

R. Madhavan – Padma Shri 2026 (Cinema)

R. Madhavan will be conferred the Padma Shri by President Droupadi Murmu for his contribution to Indian cinema. The actor made his Bollywood debut with "Rehna Hai Tere Dil Mein" (2001) and rose to prominence in Tamil cinema with Mani Ratnam's "Alaipayuthey". Also known for Rocketry: The Nambi Effect (2022) (director-actor – on ISRO scientist Nambi Narayanan).

Savita Punia – Padma Shri 2026 (Sports)

Indian women's hockey goalkeeper Savita Punia was conferred with the Padma Shri, 2026. Known as the "Wall of Indian Hockey," the Haryana-born veteran has played over 300 international matches and was pivotal in the team's historic 4th-place finish at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. She received the Arjuna Award in 2018 and has been recognised multiple times as the FIH Goalkeeper of the Year.

Anke Gowda – Padma Shri 2026 (Unsung Heroes)

75-year-old Anke Gowda, selected for the Padma Shri in the "Unsung Heroes" category, runs Pustaka Mane (House of Books) in Haralahalli village of Pandavapura taluk, Mandya district, Karnataka, which has a collection of more than 20 lakh books.

T.T. Jagannathan – Padma Shri 2026 (Posthumous)

Late T.T. Jagannathan, popularly known as 'Kitchen Mogul', of TTK Prestige Group, was awarded Padma Shri posthumously (died October 2025). Honoured in the Trade and Industry category. He invented the GRS safety system (pressure cooker gasket release safety mechanism).

Kollakkayil Devaki Amma – Padma Shri 2026 (Environment)

92-year-old Kerala-based green activist Kollakkayil Devaki Amma was awarded the Padma Shri for 2026, recognising her 45-year dedication to environmental conservation. She transformed barren coastal land in Alappuzha into a thriving five-acre forest called "Tapovanam", containing over 3,000 trees and medicinal plants. Earlier honours: Nari Shakti Puraskar (2018), Vanamithra Award, Indira Priyadarshini Vrikshamitra Award.

K. Pajanivel – Padma Shri 2026 (Martial Arts)

Covered in Topic 3.9 – Silambam exponent from Puducherry; earlier Sangeet Natak Akademi Award for Martial Arts (2023).

Dr. S. Muthunayagam – Padma Shri 2026 (Science & Engineering)

Dr. Muthunayagam awarded Padma Shri 2026 for foundational contributions to Science and Engineering – former Director of Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre (LPSC), Kerala.

NOTABLE PADMA SHRI 2025 PROFILES

Hariman Sharma – "The Apple Man of India"

Hariman Sharma, a Himachal Pradesh resident, was selected for the Padma Shri for developing the HRMN-99 apple variety – an apple that grows in summer temperatures of 40–45 °C, enabling cultivation in tropical plains (not just cool hill stations). A breakthrough for low-chill apple cultivation in India.

Libia Lobo Sardesai – Padma Shri 2025

Goan freedom fighter Libia Lobo Sardesai, age 100, was honoured with the Padma Shri for her pivotal role in Goa's liberation struggle against Portuguese rule. It was she who announced the news of Goa's liberation on radio in 1961.

Prelims Connect – Goa Liberation

- Operation Vijay (1961) – India's military action ending 451 years of Portuguese rule
- Date: December 19, 1961 – now observed as Goa Liberation Day
- Goa became a Union Territory in 1962; 25th State on 30 May 1987

INDIVIDUAL PADMA AWARDEES IN NEWS – PASSINGS & RECOGNITION

Dr. Jayant Vishnu Narlikar – Padma Vibhushan 2004

Eminent **astrophysicist, science communicator, and Padma Vibhushan (2004) awardee Dr. Jayant Vishnu Narlikar** passed away in **Pune** (May 2025). Born **July 19, 1938**. Studied at **Cambridge University** (Wrangler, Tyson Medal). Joined **TIFR** in 1972. Co-developed the **Hoyle-Narlikar theory of gravity** with Fred Hoyle. Founded **IUCAA (Inter-University Centre for Astronomy and Astrophysics), Pune** in 1988. Also **Padma Bhushan (1965, at just 26) – one of the youngest recipients.**

Ram Sutar – Maharashtra Bhushan 2025

Renowned **sculptor Ram Sutar**, designer of the **Statue of Unity** (Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Gujarat), was awarded **Maharashtra's highest civilian honour – the Maharashtra Bhushan**. Award includes a **₹25 lakh cash prize** and a memento.

PRELIMS CONNECT – STATUE OF UNITY

- **Height: 182 m (597 ft) – world's tallest statue**
- Location: **Kevadia, Gujarat** (on Sadhu Island, Narmada River facing Sardar Sarovar Dam)
- Inaugurated: **31 October 2018** (Sardar Patel's 143rd birth anniversary)
- Material: **Bronze cladding on steel frame**
- Subject: **Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel – "Iron Man of India"**
- **Ram Sutar – Padma Shri, Padma Bhushan, Padma Vibhushan, Maharashtra Bhushan, JJ School of Art gold medalist**

Prelims Connect – Maharashtra Bhushan

Parameter	Detail
Instituted	1996
Status	Highest civilian honour of Maharashtra
Cash prize	₹25 lakh
First recipient	Pu La Deshpande (1996)
Previous notable recipients	Lata Mangeshkar, Babasaheb Purandare, Appasaheb Dharmadhikari

Ram Bahadur Rai – Padma Bhushan (June 2025)

Shri Ram Bahadur Rai, veteran journalist, cultural thinker, and **President of the IGNCA (Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts) Trust**, was awarded the **Padma Bhushan** at a special ceremony by the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Prelims Connect – IGNCA

- Full name: **Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts**
- Founded: **1987** (launched by PM Rajiv Gandhi in memory of Indira Gandhi)
- Location: **Janpath, New Delhi**
- Mandate: **Research, documentation, dissemination of arts**
- Autonomous trust under **Ministry of Culture**

Mark Tully – Padma Bhushan 2005

Sir Mark Tully, veteran BBC journalist who covered India for decades, passed away in January 2026. He was **knighted in 2002** and received the **Padma Bhushan from the Government of India in 2005.**

OTHER PADMA PROFILES IN NEWS

- **Sudarshan Pattnaik** (Padma Shri, Odisha) – sand artist; set Guinness World Record with Giant Santa Claus from Apples (December 2025); 65+ international festivals
- **Sanjeev Kapoor** (Padma Shri) – celebrated chef; honoured as **Top Agri-Food Pioneer** by World Food Prize Foundation (October 2025)
- **Hugh Gantzer** (Padma Shri) – travel writer; passed at Mussoorie (February 2026)
- **Pandit Chhannulal Mishra** (Padma Bhushan; passed Oct 2025 – covered in Topic 3)

- **Ilaiyaraaja** (Padma Vibhushan) – to be honoured with the **Padmapani Award** at 11th **Ajanta-Ellora International Film Festival (AIFF)** (Jan 2026)

Bharat Ratna Reference

Prelims Connect – Bharat Ratna Framework

Parameter	Detail
Instituted	January 2, 1954
By	President Rajendra Prasad
Status	India's highest civilian award
Design	Peepal leaf-shaped medallion with platinum Sun motif
Ribbon	White
Cash prize	No cash component – only Sanad + Medallion
Criteria	"Exceptional service of the highest order" – initially confined to arts, literature, science, and public service; expanded in 2011 to any field of human endeavour (including sports)
Max per year	3
First recipients (1954)	C. Rajagopalachari, Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, Dr. C.V. Raman
First posthumous	Lal Bahadur Shastri (1966)
First woman	Indira Gandhi (1971)
First foreigner (non-citizen)	Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan (1987) – Pakistan
First non-Indian-born	Mother Teresa (1980)
First sportsperson	Sachin Tendulkar (2013)
2024 awardees (5)	Karpoori Thakur (P), L.K. Advani, Chaudhary Charan Singh (P), P.V. Narasimha Rao (P), M.S. Swaminathan (P)
2025/2026	<i>No new Bharat Ratna announced in sources</i>

Prelims Pointer – July 2025: Sustainable Agriculture Day

Maharashtra government announced **August 7** will be celebrated annually as "**Sustainable Agriculture Day**" to mark the birth centenary of **Bharat Ratna Dr. M.S. Swaminathan** (Father of India's Green Revolution; Bharat Ratna posthumously in 2024).

FOREIGN CIVILIAN HONOURS CONFERRED ON PM NARENDRA MODI

News in Brief

Between 2025 and early 2026, PM Narendra Modi received **multiple foreign civilian honours**, adding to his record tally of international recognitions. By December 2025, this marked **PM Modi's 29th international honour**.

Prelims Connect – Foreign Honours to PM Modi (2025–26)

#	Honour	Country	Month	Notes
1	Grand Cross of the Order of Makarios III	Cyprus	Jun 2025	Highest civilian honour of Cyprus; conferred by Pres. Nikos Christodoulides
2	The Officer of the Order of the Star of Ghana	Ghana	Jul 2025	Conferred by Pres. John Dramani Mahama
3	The Order of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago	Trinidad & Tobago	Jul 2025	Country's highest civilian honour; T&T became first Caribbean nation to adopt UPI
4	Great Honor Nishan of Ethiopia	Ethiopia	Dec 2025	Highest award of Ethiopia

5	First Class of the Order of Oman	Oman	Dec 2025	Sultanate's top national honour; marked PM Modi's 29th international honour
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Prelims Pointers – Foreign Honours Cumulative (Select Earlier)

- Order of Zayed – UAE (2019) – first PM to receive
- Legion of Merit – USA (2020)
- King Hamad Order of the Renaissance – Bahrain (2019)
- Order of the Distinguished Rule of Nishan Izzuddin – Maldives (2019)
- Order of the Nile – Egypt (2023)
- Grand Cross of the Order of Honour – Greece (2023)
- Grand Collar of the National Order of the Southern Cross – Brazil (2024)
- Order of the Druk Gyalpo – Bhutan (2024) – Bhutan's highest civilian honour
- Cyprus → Ghana → T&T → Ethiopia → Oman (2025, 29th by Oman)

OTHER NOTABLE CIVILIAN HONOURS IN NEWS

Vijay Sankar – Knight's Cross of the Order of Dannebrog

Vijay Sankar, Honorary Consul General of Denmark for Southern India at Chennai and Chairman of The Sanmar Group, was honoured with the Knight's Cross of the Order of Dannebrog by the King of Denmark in recognition of his consular services.

Payal Kapadia – Officer of the Order of Arts and Letters

Payal Kapadia, a Mumbai-based filmmaker, was awarded the prestigious 'Officier dans l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres' (Officer of the Order of Arts and Letters) by the French Government. Her film "All We Imagine as Light" won the Grand Prix at Cannes 2024 (first Indian film in Cannes competition in 30 years).

Prelims Connect – Order of Arts and Letters

- Instituted: 1957 by French Ministry of Culture
- Three ranks: Chevalier (Knight) → Officier (Officer) → Commandeur (Commander)
- Recognizes significant contributions to art or literature
- Notable Indian recipients: Satyajit Ray, Shah Rukh Khan, Amitabh Bachchan, Nandita Das

Victoria Beckham – Chevalière of Order of Arts & Letters (January 2026)

Victoria Beckham, 51, was awarded the Chevalière de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres (Knight of the Order of Arts and Letters) by the French Ministry of Culture in Paris (January 2026).

RASHTRIYA VIGYAN PURASKAR 2025 – INDIA'S HIGHEST SCIENCE CIVILIAN AWARD

News in Brief

The Rashtriya Vigyan Puraskar (RVP) 2025 winners were announced in December 2025, honouring 24 individuals and one team for excellence in science and technology. It is the nation's highest civilian honour for contributions to science, technology, and innovation.

Prelims Connect – Rashtriya Vigyan Puraskar

Parameter	Detail
Instituted	2023 (first presented 2024)
Replaces	300+ earlier science awards (Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Prize, etc. – subsumed)
Announced on	National Science Day – February 28
Conferred on	National Space Day – August 23 (anniversary of Chandrayaan-3 landing)
Categories	(i) Vigyan Ratna – lifetime achievement;

	(ii) Vigyan Shri – distinguished contributions; (iii) Vigyan Yuva - Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar – for scientists under 45; (iv) Vigyan Team
Maximum per year	56 total (3 Ratna + 25 Shri + 25 Yuva + 3 Team)
2025	24 individuals + 1 team
Eligibility	Indian citizens; OCI/PIO/NRI also eligible

CINEMA, DADASAHEB PHALKE & FILM AWARDS

MOHANLAL – DADASAHEB PHALKE AWARD 2023

News in Brief

The **Ministry of Information and Broadcasting** announced in September 2025 that actor **Mohanlal** would receive the prestigious **55th Dadasaheb Phalke Award 2023** during the **71st National Film Awards ceremony**. **Mohanlal Viswanathan Nair** (born **21 May 1960, Kerala**) is an acclaimed Indian actor, producer and playback singer, best known for his work in **Malayalam cinema**. He began his acting career with **"Thiranottam" (1978)** and debuted as a villain in **"Manjil Virinja Pookkal" (1980)**.

Prelims Connect – Dadasaheb Phalke Award Framework

Parameter	Detail
Instituted	1969
Named after	Dhundiraj Govind Phalke (Dadasaheb Phalke) – "Father of Indian Cinema"
Dadasaheb Phalke's first film	"Raja Harishchandra" (1913) – first full-length Indian feature film
Conferred by	Government of India / Ministry of Information & Broadcasting
Selection committee	Formed by I&B Ministry
Presented at	National Film Awards ceremony
Prize components	Swarna Kamal (Golden Lotus) medallion + ₹10 lakh cash + shawl
Status	India's highest award in cinema (for lifetime achievement)
First recipient	Devika Rani (1969) – "First Lady of Indian Cinema"
1st male	Birendranath Sircar (1970)
1st South Indian	B.N. Reddi (Telugu, 1974)
1st Malayali	Adoor Gopalakrishnan (2005)
Mohanlal	2023 (announced Sep 2025) – to be presented at 71st National Film Awards

Prelims Pointers – Recent Dadasaheb Phalke Awardees (Memorisable Chain)

Year	Awardee	Industry
2018	Amitabh Bachchan	Hindi
2019	Rajinikanth	Tamil
2020	Asha Parekh	Hindi
2021	Waheeda Rehman	Hindi
2022	Mithun Chakraborty	Hindi/Bengali
2023	Mohanlal	Malayalam
(historical)	K. Balachander (2010), Soumitra Chatterjee (2011), Pran (2012), Gulzar (2013), Shashi Kapoor (2014), Manoj Kumar (2015), K. Viswanath (2016), Vinod Khanna (2017)	Various

70TH FILMFARE AWARDS 2025

News in Brief

The **70th Filmfare Awards 2025** were held (covering films of 2024). **"Laapataa Ladies"** (directed by **Kiran Rao**, produced by Aamir Khan Productions) dominated, winning Best Film and Best Director.

Prelims Connect – 70th Filmfare Awards – Major Winners

Category	Winner
Best Film	Laapataa Ladies (Kiran Rao)
Best Director	Kiran Rao – Laapataa Ladies
Best Actor (Male)	Abhishek Bachchan for "I Want To Talk"; Kartik Aaryan for "Chandu Champion" (tied)
Best Actress (Female)	Alia Bhatt for "Jigra"

Prelims Connect – Filmfare Awards Framework

Parameter	Detail
Instituted	1954 (same year as National Film Awards)
First edition	1953 films (awarded 1954)
Presented by	The Times Group (Filmfare magazine)
Trophy	"Black Lady" statuette (originally sculpted by NG Pansare)
Nickname	"Indian Oscars"
Scope	Primarily Hindi cinema (also has South, Bengali, Marathi, Punjabi regional editions)
First Best Actor winner	Dilip Kumar (1954, for "Daag")
First Best Actress winner	Meena Kumari (1954, for "Baiju Bawra")
Laapataa Ladies significance	India's 2025 Oscars submission for Best International Feature

"BOONG" – MANIPURI FILM WINS BAFTA

News in Brief

Manipuri film **"Boong"**, directed by **Lakshmi Priya Devi** and produced by **Farhan Akhtar's Excel Entertainment**, won the prestigious **BAFTA Award for Best Children's & Family Film** in London (February 2026).

Prelims Connect

- **"Boong"** – first major BAFTA recognition for Manipuri cinema
- Landmark win given Manipur's post-2023 conflict context
- Director: **Lakshmi Priya Devi** – female director from North-East
- Producer: **Excel Entertainment** (Farhan Akhtar & Ritesh Sidhwani)

NETPAC AWARD – "BAD GIRL" BY VARSHA BHARATH

News in Brief

"Bad Girl", the debut feature film by director **Varsha Bharath**, won the **NETPAC Award** at the **International Film Festival Rotterdam (IFFR) 2025**. The Tamil coming-of-age drama is presented by ace filmmakers **Anurag Kashyap** and **Vetri Maaran**.

Prelims Connect – NETPAC

Parameter	Detail
Full form	Network for the Promotion of Asian Cinema
Given at	Multiple festivals (IFFR, Busan, Locarno, etc.)

Criteria	Recognises emerging talents – only first and second features of directors
Previous Indian winners at IFFR	Arun Karthick's Nasir (2019), Mani Kaul's Naukar ki Kameez (1999), Adoor Gopalakrishnan's Vidheyan (1995)
Founded	1990

WAVES SUMMIT 2025 – WORLD AUDIO VISUAL & ENTERTAINMENT SUMMIT

News in Brief

The **World Audio Visual & Entertainment Summit (WAVES) 2025** was held from **1st to 4th May 2025** at the **Jio World Convention Centre and Jio World Gardens, Mumbai**. Earlier in March 2025, the **WAVES India: A Bird's Eye View Challenge** was launched – part of the **"Create in India"** challenges – inviting drone pilots and filmmakers to capture India's beauty via aerial cinematography, organised by **BECIL (Broadcast Engineering Consultants India Limited)** under the **Ministry of I&B**.

Prelims Connect – WAVES Summit

Parameter	Detail
Full form	World Audio Visual & Entertainment Summit
First edition	2025
Host ministry	Ministry of Information and Broadcasting
Venue	Jio World Convention Centre, Mumbai
Duration	1-4 May 2025
Purpose	Positioning India as a global content hub; counterpart to Cannes/Berlinale in the entertainment/OTT space
Tagline	"Connecting Creators, Connecting Countries"
Associated body	BECIL (under MIB)
Create in India Challenges	Skills + content creation hackathon umbrella

APARNA SEN – SATYAJIT RAY LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD (JANUARY 2025)

News in Brief

Eminent director **Aparna Sen** was honoured with the **'Satyajit Ray Lifetime Achievement Award'** at the annual award ceremony of the **West Bengal Film Journalists Association (WBFJA)** for her contributions to Indian cinema.

Prelims Connect – Aparna Sen & Satyajit Ray Legacy

Parameter	Detail
Aparna Sen's debut direction	36 Chowringhee Lane (1981) – won National Film Award for Best Direction
Other notable films	Paroma, Mr. and Mrs. Iyer, The Japanese Wife, 15 Park Avenue
Satyajit Ray	1921-1992 ; Bharat Ratna (1992); Oscar for Lifetime Achievement (1992); Legion of Honour (France); Padma Bhushan, Padma Vibhushan
Ray's first film	Pather Panchali (1955) – part of Apu Trilogy; won Best Human Document at Cannes 1956

ILAIYARAJA – PADMAPANI AWARD AT AIFF

News in Brief

Legendary music composer and **Padma Vibhushan** awardee **Ilayaraaja** will be honoured with the prestigious **Padmapani Award** at the **11th Ajanta-Ellora International Film Festival (AIFF)** in January 2026. The award recognises his lifetime contribution to Indian cinema.

Prelims Connect – Ajanta-Ellora International Film Festival (AIFF)

Parameter	Detail
Venue	Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar (Aurangabad), Maharashtra
Organizer	MAHOR (Maharashtra Tourism, Aurangabad) + Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar International Film Festival Society
10th edition (2025)	January 15–19, 2025 – honoured Sai Paranjpye with the Padmapani Lifetime Achievement Award
11th edition (2026)	Padmapani Award to Ilayaraaja
"Padmapani" name	Derived from the famous Ajanta Cave painting of Bodhisattva Padmapani (Cave 1)

Prelims Connect – Ilayaraaja

- Born **3 June 1943**, Pannaipuram, Tamil Nadu
- Composed **7,000+ songs** across **1,500+ films**
- First Asian composer to create a **full symphony with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, London**
- **Padma Bhushan (2010), Padma Vibhushan (2018)**
- **Rajya Sabha MP** (nominated, 2022)

FESTIVALS, FAIRS & MELAS

KANUMA PANDUGA – SOUTH INDIAN HARVEST FESTIVAL

News in Brief

Kanuma Panduga is an important **harvest festival** celebrated in the southern part of India, especially in states along the Malabar coast – **Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and Tamil Nadu**. It is a day to **honour cattle, especially cows and bulls**, and to celebrate the bond between humans, animals, and nature.

Prelims Connect – Kanuma & Sankranti Festival Cluster

Parameter	Detail
Region	Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu (Malabar coast context)
Time	3rd day of Sankranti (mid-January, harvest season)
Significance	Thanksgiving to cattle & plough animals
Linked 4-day festival	Day 1: Bhogi (bonfire, discard old) → Day 2: Makara Sankranti/Pongal (cooking sweet rice) → Day 3: Kanuma (cattle worship) → Day 4: Mukkanuma (feasting)
Parallel in Tamil Nadu	Mattu Pongal (Day 3 of Pongal – cattle worship)
Parallel in Karnataka	Kichchu Haisodu

PANGSAU PASS INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL 2025

News in Brief

Pangsau Pass International Festival 2025 is an annual festival celebrated in **Nampong, Arunachal Pradesh**. It aims to promote **cultural exchange between Northeast India and Myanmar**, celebrate regional diversity, and encourage tourism and cross-border trade. It showcases traditional performances like **Bihu Dance (Assam)**, **Bamboo Dance (Mizo tribe)**, and **Tangsa Rongrand War Dance (Tangsa Naga tribe)**. It also has **Stilwell Road** along the Pangsau Pass with a historical **WWII legacy**.

Prelims Connect – Pangsau Pass & Stilwell Road

Parameter	Detail
Location	Nampong, Changlang district, Arunachal Pradesh
Pass connects	India (Arunachal) ↔ Myanmar (Kachin State)
Elevation	1,136 m
Stilwell Road (formerly Ledo Road)	Built during WWII by Allied forces (named after American General Joseph Stilwell); connected Ledo (Assam) → Kunming (China) via Myanmar – 1,726 km
Bihu Dance	Assam's signature folk dance (Rongali/Bohag Bihu)
Bamboo Dance	Cheraw – Mizo traditional dance
Tangsa Rongrand War Dance	Tangsa Naga community of AP

ALI AI LIGANG – MISING TRIBE SPRING FESTIVAL

News in Brief

The **Mising tribe**, an indigenous community from **Assam**, celebrates the **Ali Ai Ligang festival** – a spring festival associated with **agriculture**, marking the start of the **sowing season**.

Prelims Connect – Mising Tribe & Ali Ai Ligang

Parameter	Detail
Tribe	Mising (also called Miri) – second-largest tribal community of Assam
Language	Mising (Tibeto-Burman, Sino-Tibetan family)
Festival meaning	Ali = root/seed; Ai = fruit; Ligang = to sow
Occasion	Start of sowing season (first Wednesday of Ginmur Polo , February)
Key elements	Ritual sowing of Ahu rice ; Gumrag dance (performed by both men & women)
Duration	5 days
Distribution	Brahmaputra Valley – Dhemaji, Lakhimpur, Jorhat, Sonitpur

BONALU FESTIVAL – TELANGANA

News in Brief

Bonalu Festival: The historic **Golconda Fort** came alive with colour, devotion and festive fervour as the **annual Bonalu celebrations** kicked off on a grand note (June 2025). The month-long festivities began with traditional prayers to **Goddess Jagadambika** at the **Sri Jagadamba Mahankali temple atop the fort**. Bonalu festivities are held in **three phases across the twin cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad**.

Prelims Connect – Bonalu

Parameter	Detail
State	Telangana (official state festival)
Deity	Mahakali / Jagadambika (form of Goddess Durga)
Meaning	" Bonam " = Bhojanam (meal/offering) in Telugu
Month	Ashada Masam (July-August, Hindu calendar)
Duration	Month-long, in 3 phases : (i) Golconda Fort (Jagadamba Mahankali temple); (ii) Secunderabad (Ujjaini Mahankali); (iii) Hyderabad Lal Darwaza (Simhavahini)

Key rituals	Women carry Bonam pots (rice cooked with jaggery, curd) on their heads; Potharaju (male protector) leads processions
State status	Declared state festival by Telangana government in 2014

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF YOGA 2025 – 11TH EDITION (JUNE 21, 2025)

News in Brief

The **11th International Day of Yoga (IDY)** was celebrated on **21st June 2025**, with **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** leading the national event from **Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh**. The theme for IDY 2025 was **"Yoga for One Earth, One Health"**, echoing India's vision of global wellness.

Prelims Connect – International Day of Yoga

Parameter	Detail
Declared by	UN General Assembly Resolution 69/131, 11 December 2014
Proposed by	PM Narendra Modi in UN General Assembly address (September 2014)
First observed	21 June 2015 (1st IDY)
Date significance	June 21 is the longest day (summer solstice) in the Northern Hemisphere ; also Dakshinayana transition
Nodal ministry	Ministry of AYUSH
UNESCO ICH	Yoga inscribed on Representative List in 2016 (cross-reference Topic 2)
2025 theme	"Yoga for One Earth, One Health"
2025 venue	Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh
Previous themes	2024: "Yoga for Self and Society"; 2023: "Yoga for Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam"; 2022: "Yoga for Humanity"

HARELA FESTIVAL – UTTARAKHAND

News in Brief

Harela festival: Uttarakhand planted over **5 lakh saplings** across the state on **16 July 2025** to mark the Harela festival

Prelims Connect – Harela

Parameter	Detail
State	Uttarakhand (Kumaon & Garhwal regions)
Meaning	"Harela" = Day of Green / Greenery
Month	Shravan / Kark Sankranti (July-August)
Duration	10 days (Harela proper observed on Day 10)
Rituals	Planting 5 types of grain (wheat, paddy, maize, urad, sesame) in baskets; offering to Lord Shiva and Parvati
Ecological significance	State-led mass plantation drives; celebrates start of monsoon sowing
Related	Kumaoni New Year symbolism

LADAKH ASTRO TOURISM FESTIVAL

News in Brief

To promote **Astro Tourism** and science-driven tourism, the first-ever **Ladakh Astro Tourism Festival** was organised by the **Tourism Department** in collaboration with the **Indian Institute of Astrophysics, Bangalore**, at **Leh** (July 2025).

Prelims Connect – Ladakh as Astro Tourism Hub

Parameter	Detail
Host UT	Ladakh
Key venue	Hanle – home to Indian Astronomical Observatory (IAO) – world's one of the highest optical-infrared telescopes (4,500 m)
Hanle Dark Sky Reserve	Declared India's first Dark Sky Reserve in 2022
Partner institute	Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA), Bengaluru
Telescope	MACE (Major Atmospheric Cherenkov Experiment) – world's highest gamma-ray telescope, inaugurated Oct 2024
Significance	First festival of its kind in India; positions Ladakh globally for astronomy tourism

AADI THIRUVATHIRAI FESTIVAL – GANGAIKONDA CHOLAPURAM

News in Brief

Prime Minister Narendra Modi participated in the valedictory celebrations of the **Aadi Thiruvathirai festival**, marking the **birth anniversary of the illustrious Chola emperor Rajendra Chola I**, at the historic **Gangaikonda Cholapuram** in Tamil Nadu's **Ariyalur district** (July 2025).

Prelims Connect – Aadi Thiruvathirai & Rajendra Chola I

Parameter	Detail
Festival	Celebrated on Thiruvathirai star in the Tamil month of Aadi (July-August) – Rajendra Chola I's birth asterism
Venue	Gangaikonda Cholapuram, Ariyalur district, Tamil Nadu
Temple	Brihadisvara Temple (Gangaikonda Cholapuram) – built by Rajendra Chola I (c. 1035 CE)
UNESCO status	"Great Living Chola Temples" – UNESCO WHS 1987 (includes Thanjavur, Gangaikonda Cholapuram, Airavatesvara at Darasuram)
Rajendra Chola I	Son of Rajaraja I ; reign 1014–1044 CE ; titles: Gangaikonda, Kadaram Kondan (Conqueror of Kedah) ; naval expeditions to Srivijaya (Indonesia/Malaysia)
Capital shift	Shifted Chola capital from Thanjavur to Gangaikonda Cholapuram
Tanks	Cholagangam – massive artificial tank called "Liquid Pillar of Victory" – brought Ganga water from North India after Rajendra's Gangaikonda expedition

SHAD NONGKREM FESTIVAL – MEGHALAYA

News in Brief

Meghalaya celebrates the **Shad Nongkrem festival** – a **five-day autumn festival for the Khasi tribe** held annually in November at **Smit, near Shillong**. It is observed to thank the Goddess **Ka Blei Synshar** for prosperity, good harvests, and peace, featuring vibrant traditional dances like **Ka Shad Kynthei** (for women) and **Ka Shad Mastieh** (for men) along with cultural rituals.

Prelims Connect – Shad Nongkrem

Parameter	Detail
State	Meghalaya
Tribe	Khasi (matrilineal community)

Venue	Smit (seat of the Syiem of Khyrim) – near Shillong
Duration	5 days (autumn, November)
Deity	Ka Blei Synshar (tribal deity)
Dances	Ka Shad Kynthei (female dance) + Ka Shad Mastieh (male dance)
Central ritual	Pomblang – goat sacrifice offered by Syiem (chieftain) of Khyrim clan
Significance	Thanksgiving for harvest; reaffirms matrilineal tribal governance

RAULANE FESTIVAL – KINNAUR, HIMACHAL PRADESH

News in Brief

Himachal Pradesh's Raulane is a **5,000-year-old Himalayan festival** celebrated in **Kinnaur district**. It honours **Saunis (mountain fairies/spirits)** who protect villagers during winter. It is a tradition so ancient it **predates written history**, involving **masked dancers (Raula & Raulane)**. It symbolizes spiritual union and a farewell to the fairies as spring approaches, keeping ancient oral traditions alive.

Prelims Connect – Raulane

Parameter	Detail
State/District	Himachal Pradesh / Kinnaur
Antiquity	~5,000 years old (predates written history)
Subject	Saunis – mountain fairies/protective spirits
Performers	Masked dancers – Raula (male) & Raulane (female)
Purpose	Farewell ritual to protective winter spirits as spring approaches
Cultural value	Oral tradition preservation; pre-Vedic tribal continuity

KONARK FESTIVAL & INTERNATIONAL SAND ART FESTIVAL – 36TH & 15TH EDITIONS

News in Brief

Odisha's Chief Minister inaugurated the **36th Konark Festival** and the **15th International Sand Art Festival** in December 2025. The **5-day dual festival** was held near the **iconic Konark Sun Temple** and at the nearby **Chandrabhaga Beach**, respectively. The events are organised annually by the **Odisha State Tourism Department** to promote Odisha's rich cultural heritage and attract visitors.

Prelims Connect – Konark Festival

Parameter	Detail
Venue	Open-air amphitheatre near Konark Sun Temple + Chandrabhaga Beach
Edition	36th Konark Festival (established 1989)
Duration	5 days (December)
Content	Classical dance & music performances (Odissi, Bharatanatyam, Kathak, etc.)
Parallel event	15th International Sand Art Festival at Chandrabhaga Beach – inaugurated by sand artists including Padma Shri Sudarsan Pattnaik
Temple context	Konark Sun Temple – Narasimhadeva I (1250 CE) ; Eastern Ganga Dynasty; UNESCO WHS 1984 ; 12 wheels/7 horses representing sun chariot

HORNBILL FESTIVAL & OTHER CULTURAL MARKERS

Prelims Connect – Major Regional Festivals Master Table (India-wide)

Festival	State	Season	Highlight
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Hornbill Festival	Nagaland	Dec 1-10	"Festival of Festivals"; all 17 Naga tribes; Kisama heritage village
Bihu (Rongali/Bohag)	Assam	April	New Year; Bihu dance
Pongal	Tamil Nadu	Jan 14-17	Harvest thanksgiving; 4 days (Bhogi, Thai Pongal, Mattu Pongal, Kaanum Pongal)
Onam	Kerala	Aug-Sep	10-day harvest; Pookalam, Vallam Kali boat race, Sadya
Navratri & Garba	Gujarat	Sep-Oct	UNESCO ICH 2023
Durga Puja	West Bengal	Sep-Oct	UNESCO ICH 2021
Chhath Puja	Bihar	Oct-Nov	Sun worship; 4-day rigorous fasting
Kumbh Mela	Prayagraj/Haridwar/Ujjain/Nashik	Rotational	UNESCO ICH 2017
Losar	Ladakh/Sikkim	Feb-Mar	Tibetan New Year
Hemis Festival	Ladakh	Jun-Jul	Masked dance (Cham) at Hemis Monastery
Nuakhai	Odisha	Aug-Sep	New rice festival
Pushkar Mela	Rajasthan	Nov	Camel fair
Shigmo	Goa	Mar	Hindu spring festival
Kharchi Puja	Tripura	Jul	14 deity worship
Makara Vilakku	Kerala	Jan 14	Sabarimala
Wangala	Meghalaya	Nov	Garo "Hundred Drums Festival"
Thrissur Pooram	Kerala	Apr-May	Elephants, Melam percussion
Saga Dawa	Sikkim	May-Jun	Buddhist Triple Blessed Day

MAHA KUMBH MELA 2025 – PRAYAGRAJ

Prelims Connect – Maha Kumbh 2025 Framework

Parameter	Detail
Location	Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh (Triveni Sangam – confluence of Ganga, Yamuna, and mythological Saraswati)
Dates	13 January 2025 (Paush Purnima) – 26 February 2025 (Maha Shivratri)
Type	Maha (Great) Kumbh – held once every 144 years (some sources: 12 Purna Kumbhs)
Estimated footfall	60+ crore pilgrims (largest religious gathering in human history)
UNESCO ICH	Kumbh Mela inscribed on Representative List in 2017
Six main snan (bathing) days	Paush Purnima (Jan 13), Makar Sankranti (Jan 14), Mauni Amavasya (Jan 29), Basant Panchami (Feb 3), Maghi Purnima (Feb 12), Maha Shivratri (Feb 26)
Akharas	13 major Akharas including Juna, Mahanirvani, Niranjani, Avahan, Agni, and Kinnar Akhara (recognised 2019)
Purna Kumbh cycle	12-year cycle: Haridwar → Prayagraj → Nashik → Ujjain
Ardh Kumbh	6-yearly (only at Prayagraj & Haridwar)

GI TAGS & HANDICRAFTS

SAUDAGARI BLOCK PRINT – GI TAG

News in Brief: The **Saudagari block print**, a traditional textile art form from **Jamalpur, Ahmedabad (Gujarat)**, received the **Geographical Indication (GI) tag** in April 2025.

Prelims Connect – Saudagari Block Print

Parameter	Detail
Craft Type	Hand block-printed textile art
Origin Village	Jamalpur , old-city Ahmedabad, Gujarat
Technique	Hand-carved wooden blocks dipped in natural/vegetable dyes, stamped on cotton/silk
Distinctive Motifs	Mughal-inspired floral, geometric, bird & animal patterns; "Saudagari" = "merchant-style" (so named because 19th-century Gujarati traders exported these prints to the Middle East, East Africa and SE Asia)
Community	Chhipa (printer) community of Ahmedabad – hereditary block-printers
Patronage	Initially flourished under Mughal-era trade; revived by craft cooperatives 20th century
GI Year	2025
GI Act	Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration & Protection) Act, 1999 (in force from 15 Sept 2003)

Prelims Pointers:

- Saudagari block printing is the **merchant-export variant** of Gujarat's block-print tradition – distinct from **Ajrakh** (Kutch), **Bagh** (MP) and **Sanganeri** (Rajasthan), all of which already carry GI tags.
- Jamalpur, in Ahmedabad's walled city, is the craft cluster – linked to India's first UNESCO World Heritage City status for Ahmedabad (2017, cross-ref **Topic 1**).
- "Chhipa" artisans are also concentrated in Bagru (Raj) and Bhuj (Kutch) – same occupational community, different regional prints.

BANARAS SHEHNAI – GI TAG

News in Brief: The **Banaras Shehnai**, the double-reed wind instrument made famous globally by **Ustad Bismillah Khan**, received the **Geographical Indication tag** in April 2025. Only authorised makers residing in **Varanasi (UP)** may now use the trade name "Banaras Shehnai."

Prelims Connect – Banaras Shehnai GI

Feature	Detail
Instrument Family	Double-reed aerophone (woodwind), 7–9 finger-holes
Body Material	Traditionally Sheesham / Shisham (Indian rosewood) with brass or copper flared bell
Cultural Role	Auspicious processional music – weddings, temple rituals, Republic Day (1950 debut by Bismillah Khan from Red Fort)
Associated Maestro	Ustad Bismillah Khan – Bharat Ratna 2001 , Padma Vibhushan, Padma Bhushan, Padma Shri (only Indian musician to hold all 4 Padma awards + Bharat Ratna)
Hub	Varanasi , Uttar Pradesh – artisan families of Sarai Harha & Dalmandi
GI Year	2025 (instrument-category GI)

Prelims Pointers:

- The Banaras Shehnai GI is an **"instrument-as-craft" GI** – a rare category. Similar earlier: **Thanjavur Veena** GI (2013), **Ganjifa cards** (Sawantwadi), **Bobbili Veena** (AP, 2012).
- November 2025: **Lepcha Tungbuk & Pumtong Pulit** (Sikkim) → second and third instrument-as-craft GIs of the year (see 8.4 below).
- Shehnai is one of the **9 instruments of the Hindustani Navagraha ensemble** historically played in temple Naubat Khanas.

AMBAJI MARBLE – GI TAG

News in Brief: Ambaji Marble from Banaskantha district, Gujarat, received the Geographical Indication tag in November 2025.

Prelims Connect – Ambaji Marble

Feature	Detail
Type	Natural stone / mineral GI (non-agri, non-handicraft)
Location	Ambaji , Banaskantha district, north Gujarat (near Rajasthan border)
Quality	Fine-grained calcitic marble, creamy white with grey/bluish veins – prized for temple idols & flooring
Cultural Context	Ambaji Temple → one of the 51 Shakti Peethas (heart of Sati is believed to have fallen here); major Shakta pilgrimage
Mining Belt	Aravalli foothills (Ambaji–Danta–Abu Road marble belt)
GI Year	2025

Prelims Pointers:

- India has three major marble GI belts: **Makrana (Rajasthan)** – used in Taj Mahal (already GI tagged), **Ambaji (Gujarat)** – new 2025 GI, **Kota stone (Rajasthan)** – not a true marble.
- Shakti Peetha link is exam-relevant: 51 Shakti Peethas, 4 Adi Shakti Peethas = Kamakhya (Assam), Tara Tarini (Odisha), Bimala (Puri), Dakshayani (Tibet).

LEPCHA MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS – TUNGBUK & PUMTONG PULIT GI

News in Brief: The Government of India granted the **GI tag** to two traditional **Lepcha musical instruments** – **Tungbuk and Pumtong Pulit** – giving a cultural boost to the **Lepcha community of Sikkim**.

Prelims Connect – Lepcha GI Instruments

Instrument	Type	Made Of	Use
Tungbuk	Bamboo flute /aerophone	Bamboo, bored with 6-7 finger holes	Folk dance music, harvest festivals
Pumtong Pulit	Bamboo clarinet (single-reed wind)	Bamboo with attached cane reed	Ritual music, accompaniment to Lepcha songs

Lepcha Community At-a-Glance

Parameter	Detail
State	Sikkim (also NE West Bengal – Kalimpong, Darjeeling; small pockets in Nepal & Bhutan)
Self-name	Rongkup / Mutanchi Rongkup Runkup ("Children of the snowy peak")
Language	Lepcha (Róng ríng) – has its own script, Lepcha script / Róng script (created ~17th century by King Phyag-rdor Nam-gyal)
Religion	Mun-Bon (animistic) + Mahayana Buddhism
Status	Considered earliest/autochthonous inhabitants of Sikkim – Primitive Tribal Group (PTG) / Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG)
Classical Literature	Oral tradition; Namthar (religious biographies)

Prelims Pointers:

- Tungbuk + Pumtong Pulit = **third & fourth instrument-as-craft GIs of 2025** (after Banaras Shehnai).
- Lepchas are listed among India's **Scheduled Tribes in Sikkim and West Bengal**.
- Lepcha New Year = **Namsong / Namsong Namgyal** (28 December–30 December annually)

ARUNACHAL PRADESH 'DAO' – GI TAG

News in Brief: The Arunachal Pradesh 'Dao', a traditional handcrafted blade made by several tribal communities, received the **Geographical Indication tag** in November 2025.

Prelims Connect – Arunachal Dao

Feature	Detail
Object	Dao – a heavy, single-edged tribal machete/blade (chopper + weapon + ritual tool)
Craft Type	Handcrafted ironwork + wood handle + woven cane/rattan sheath
Communities	Made by Adi, Apatani, Nyishi, Monpa, Galo, Mishmi and other Arunachali tribes
Uses	Agriculture (jhum cultivation), hunting, ritual dances, warrior regalia, daily household chopping
GI Year	2025

Wider Context – "Dao" across NE India

State	Variant	Notes
Arunachal Pradesh	Arunachal Dao (2025 GI)	Multi-tribe, handcrafted, shorter handle
Nagaland	Naga Dao	Longer curved blade, used in Hornbill Festival dances
Meghalaya	Khasi Dao	Forged by Jaintia/War-Khasi blacksmiths
Mizoram	Mizo Chem	Similar chopper

Prelims Pointers:

- This is the **first pan-tribal "weapon/tool" GI** from Arunachal Pradesh.

J&K GI TAGS – BHADERWAH RAJMA & RAMBAN SULAI HONEY

News in Brief: Jammu & Kashmir's **Bhaderwah Rajma** and **Ramban Sulai Honey** were officially granted the **GI tag** in December 2025.

Prelims Connect – J&K December 2025 GIs

Product	District	Type	Distinctive Feature
Bhaderwah Rajma	Doda district (Bhaderwah valley), J&K	Agricultural GI (legume)	Small reddish-brown kidney bean, thin skin, cooks in <30 min, grown at 1600–2200 m altitude; premium "gourmet rajma"
Ramban Sulai Honey	Ramban district, J&K	Agricultural/forest-produce GI	Harvested from Apis cerana (Asian hive bee) in sulai forest belts of Pir Panjal; dark amber, high-altitude wild honey

Prelims Pointers:

- J&K now has a growing GI portfolio: **Kashmir Pashmina (2008)**, **Kashmir Sozani Craft (2008)**, **Kashmiri Hand-Knotted Carpet (2016)**, **Kashmir Saffron (2020)**, **Kashmir Walnut Wood Carving (2012)**, **Kashmir Paper Machie (2012)**, **Basmati Rice (part of 7-state GI 2016)**, **Mushqbudji Rice (2023)** + the two new 2025 additions.
- Bhaderwah** is also known as "Mini Kashmir" – a hill tourism circuit in Chenab Valley.
- Apis cerana indica** (Indian honey bee) is the native species used – distinguish from European *Apis mellifera*.

TAMIL NADU ADDS 5 NEW GI TAGS – REACHES 74

News in Brief: Tamil Nadu added **five new GI Tag products** in December 2025, taking its state total to **74 Geographical Indication tags** – the highest for any Indian state. The five new additions are **Woraiyur cotton sari**, **Kavindapadi jaggery powder**, **Namakkal soapstone cookware (Makkal Pathirangal)**, **Thooyamalli rice**, and **Ambasamudram wooden toys (Choppu Saman)**.

Prelims Connect – TN December 2025 GI Additions

#	Product	District / Region	Category	Key Feature
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1	Woraiyur Cotton Sari	Tiruchirappalli (Woraiyur)	Handloom textile	Ancient Chola-era weaving town; soft fine-count cotton; muted pastel borders
2	Kavindapadi Jaggery Powder	Erode (Kavindapadi block)	Agricultural processed	Chemical-free powdered jaggery from indigenous sugarcane varieties
3	Namakkal Soapstone Cookware – Makkal Pathirangal / Kal Chatti	Namakkal	Handicraft (stone)	Carved from locally-mined soft soapstone; retains heat, seasons food naturally
4	Thooyamalli Rice	Tamil Nadu (traditional paddy belt)	Agricultural (rice)	Aromatic heirloom red-rice variety; low glycemic index, fragrant like jasmine
5	Ambasamudram Wooden Toys – Choppu Saman	Tirunelveli (Ambasamudram)	Handicraft (wood)	Miniature traditional kitchen play-set; hand-turned from Vaagai/Pungai wood

TN GI Milestone Box

Metric	Value
TN Total GI Count (post-Dec 2025)	74 – highest in India
Previous Rank #1	Uttar Pradesh (~69)
India's Total GI Count (approx.)	~740+ registered products (cumulative since 2004)
First GI in India	Darjeeling Tea (2004) – West Bengal
Nodal Body	Geographical Indications Registry, Chennai (under Controller General of Patents, Designs & Trade Marks / DPIIT, Ministry of Commerce)
Governing Act	GI of Goods (Registration & Protection) Act, 1999 – in force 15 September 2003
India joined TRIPS	1995 (GI Act flows from TRIPS Articles 22–24)

Prelims Pointers:

- **Woraiyur** = ancient Chola capital before Thanjavur.
- **Thooyamalli** means "sacred jasmine" – one of several traditional red/heirloom rice varieties of TN being revived (alongside Mappillai Samba, Karuppu Kavuni, Kichili Samba).
- **Soapstone cookware** is one of India's oldest ceramic-alternative traditions; parallel GI = **Karaikudi Chettinad Kottan / Athangudi tiles**.
- Record watch: TN became the **first Indian state to cross 70 GI tags** (earlier milestone) and is now on track to 75+.

SHILP GURU & NATIONAL HANDICRAFTS AWARDS 2023–24

News in Brief: President Droupadi Murmu conferred the **2023–24 Shilp Guru and National Handicrafts Awards**, organised by the **Ministry of Textiles (MoT)**, in December 2025.

Prelims Connect – Shilp Guru / National Handicrafts Awards Framework

Parameter	Detail
Instituted	Shilp Guru Award – 2002 (to mark 50 years of Republic)
National Handicrafts Award	Instituted 1965 (one of India's oldest crafts awards)
Awarding Ministry	Ministry of Textiles , Office of the Development Commissioner (Handicrafts)
Shilp Guru – Significance	Highest national honour for master artisans of India

Shilp Guru Benefits	₹2 lakh cash + gold coin + shawl + tamrapatra (copper plaque) + lifetime pension
Eligibility	Artisan above 50, minimum 30 years in craft, previously received National Award
National Handicrafts Award Benefits	₹1 lakh + tamrapatra + shawl
Number Awarded	Usually 10 Shilp Gurus + 30 National Awardees annually

2023 Awardees – Highlights

Category	Awardee	State	Type
Shilp Guru – Hand-painted Textiles	Ajit Kumar Das	West Bengal	Hand-painted natural-dye textiles (Santiniketan/Kala Bhavana tradition)
Shilp Guru – Leather Puppetry	D. Sivamma	Andhra Pradesh	Tholu Bommalata (shadow-leather puppet)
National Award – Metal Craft	Hirabai Jhareka Baghel	Chhattisgarh	Dhokra / bell-metal tribal craft
National Award – Handmade Carpet	Imtiyaz Ahamad	Uttar Pradesh	Bhadohi/Mirzapur carpet belt
National Award – Artistic Textiles	Roshan Chhipa	Rajasthan	Bagru/Sanganer block-print textiles

2024 Awardees – Highlights

Category	Awardee	State	Type
Shilp Guru – Metal Craft	Subhash Arora	Haryana	Brass/metal craft
Shilp Guru – Wood Carving	Mohammad Dilshad	Uttar Pradesh	Saharanpur wood carving tradition
National Award – Stone Carving	T. Baskaran	Tamil Nadu	Mamallapuram/Kancheepuram stone sculpture school
National Award – Painting	Rupban Chitrakar	West Bengal	Patachitra / Medinipur scroll painting
National Award – Tribal Artisan Category	Baldev Baghmare	Madhya Pradesh	Bhil/Gond tribal art

Prelims Pointers:

- **Ajit Kumar Das** is linked to Santiniketan's Kala Bhavana school
- **D. Sivamma** won for **Tholu Bommalata** – Andhra Pradesh's UNESCO-recognition-awaited leather shadow puppetry form (distinct from Karnataka's Togalu Gombeyaata).
- **Rupban Chitrakar** – **Patachitra scroll** artist, female tribal Chitrakar lineage of Medinipur (Naya village cluster), West Bengal.
- The awards are administered by the **Office of Development Commissioner (Handicrafts)**, not ICCR or Lalit Kala Akademi.
- **Tamrapatra** (copper plaque) is the signature citation medium – same as used for Padma awards.

TRIBAL CULTURE, COMMUNITIES & SCHEDULED LANGUAGES

PM-JANMAN SCHEME & PVTG FRAMEWORK

News in Brief: PM-JANMAN (Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan) was back in focus in February 2025, marking progress toward 100% saturation of welfare schemes across **Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG)** habitations.

Prelims Connect – PM-JANMAN

Parameter	Detail
Full Form	Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan
Launched By	PM Narendra Modi
Launch Date	15 November 2023
Launch Venue	Khunti District, Jharkhand – at Janjatiya Gaurav Diwas celebrations
Why Khunti?	Birthplace of Birsa Munda (15 Nov 1875) – tribal freedom fighter
Target Beneficiaries	75 PVTGs across 18 States + UT Andaman & Nicobar
Target Timeline	3 years – 100% saturation of basic schemes
Nodal Ministry	Ministry of Tribal Affairs (9 line ministries involved)
Goal	Housing (PMAY-Gramin), piped water (Jal Jeevan), roads (PMGSY), mobile medical units, Anganwadis, skill training, electricity

PVTG Framework – At A Glance

Parameter	Detail
Earlier Name	Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs) – renamed to PVTGs in 2006
Total PVTGs in India	75 (across 18 States + A&N)
Identifying Criteria (Dhebar Commission 1960–61)	(i) Pre-agricultural level of technology, (ii) Stagnant/declining population, (iii) Extremely low literacy, (iv) Subsistence-level economy
First Identified	52 PVTGs in 1975 (5th Five Year Plan) – 23 more added in 1993
States with Highest PVTGs	Odisha (13) – highest; followed by Andhra Pradesh (12), Bihar/Jharkhand (9)
Only State with No PVTGs	(Mostly northeastern states excluding Tripura/AN)

Famous PVTGs for Prelims

PVTG	State	Note
Jarawa, Onge, Sentinelese, Shompen, Great Andamanese	Andaman & Nicobar	Andaman tribal groups
Toda	Tamil Nadu (Nilgiris)	Buffalo-pastoralists
Kattunayakan, Paniya, Kurumba	Kerala/TN	Western Ghats
Chenchu	Andhra Pradesh/Telangana	Nallamala forests
Birhor, Asur, Mal Paharia	Jharkhand	Chota Nagpur plateau
Bonda, Juang, Didayi, Dongaria Kondh	Odisha	Eastern Ghats
Saharia	MP/Rajasthan	Only PVTG of Rajasthan
Cholanaickan	Kerala	Known as "cavemen of Kerala"
Siddi	Gujarat/Karnataka	African-origin , cross-ref 9.5 below
Lepcha	Sikkim/WB	Cross-ref Topic 8.4

Prelims Pointers:

- **Janjatiya Gaurav Diwas** (Tribal Pride Day) = **15 November**, marking Birsa Munda's birth anniversary. Declared in **2021**.
- **Birsa Munda** led the **Ulgulan (Great Tumult)** movement against British and dikus in 1899–1900. Cross-ref **Topic 10**.
- **Scheduled Tribes (ST) List** is notified under **Article 342** of the Constitution.
- **Tribal Affairs Ministry** was created in **1999** (earlier part of Social Justice Ministry).

BATHOU RELIGION RECOGNISED – BODO COMMUNITY

News in Brief: The Ministry of Home Affairs assigned a **separate census code for the Bathou religion of the Bodo community** in Assam in October 2025, officially recognising it as a distinct faith for Census purposes.

Prelims Connect – Bathou Religion & Bodo Community

Parameter	Detail
Religion Name	<i>Bathou / Bathouism (from ba = five + thou = deep thoughts)</i>
Supreme Deity	Bathou Bwrai / Bathoubwrai ("Five Elements" – earth, water, air, fire, ether)
Sacred Symbol	<i>Sijou tree (Euphorbia splendens), surrounded by 5 pairs of bamboo fencing and 18 bamboo sticks</i>
Community	Bodo – largest plains tribe of Assam (Kokrajhan, Udalguri, Chirang, Baksa – the BTR region)
Language	Bodo – Scheduled language since 92nd Constitutional Amendment, 2003
Script	Devanagari (official), earlier written in Roman/Assamese scripts
Literary Body	Bodo Sahitya Sabha (founded 1952)

Bodo Autonomous Arrangements

Year	Event
1993	Bodoland Autonomous Council (BAC) – 1st accord
2003	Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) under Sixth Schedule – 2nd accord
2020	3rd Bodo Accord – created Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) ; NDFB factions laid down arms

Prelims Pointers:

- Bathou is now among a small set of officially recognised "**other religions**" in Census – similar to **Sarna** (demanded by Jharkhand tribals) and **Donyi-Polo** (Arunachal Pradesh).
- **Sixth Schedule** (Art 244(2)) applies to tribal areas of **Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, Mizoram** – grants Autonomous District Councils. BTR is under this schedule.
- Bodo is one of the **22 Eighth Schedule languages**.

LEPCHA COMMUNITY & INSTRUMENTS

News in Brief: GI tag granted to Lepcha instruments **Tungbuk & Pumtong Pulit**

Prelims Connect – Lepcha Community

Parameter	Detail
State	Sikkim (core), North WB (Kalimpong–Darjeeling), small groups in Nepal & Bhutan
Self-name	Rongkup / Mutanchi Rongkup Rumkup ("Children of the Snowy Peak")
Language	Lepcha (Róng ríng)
Script	Lepcha / Róng script – created ~17th century by King Phyag-rdor Namgyal (Chador Namgyal, 3rd Chogyal of Sikkim)
Religion	Mun-Bon (animistic) + Mahayana Buddhism
Legal Status	Primitive Tribal Community of Sikkim ; Scheduled Tribe in Sikkim & WB

Key Festival	Namsoong / Namsoong Namgyal (New Year, 27–30 Dec)
Priest Class	Bungthing (male shaman) + Mun (female priestess)

Prelims Pointers:

- Lepchas are considered the **autochthonous (earliest) inhabitants of Sikkim**, pre-dating Bhutia migration.
- Sikkim was merged with India in 1975 (36th Constitutional Amendment)** – became 22nd state.
- Lepcha mythology traces origin to **Mt. Kanchenjunga** (*Kong-chen Kong-chu* – "Great Five-Peaked Abode").

ARUNACHAL PRADESH TRIBES – VIA 'DAO' GI

News in Brief: The **Arunachal Dao GI** tag recognises tribal craftsmanship of multiple AP communities

Prelims Connect – Major Arunachal Pradesh Tribes

Tribe	Region/District	Key Feature	Main Festival
Adi	East & West Siang, Upper Siang	Largest tribe; Donyi-Polo faith	Solung (Sep)
Apatani	Ziro valley (Lower Subansiri)	Wet-rice cultivation on terraced valleys; UNESCO Tentative World Heritage List for cultural landscape	Dree (Jul)
Nyishi	Papum Pare, Kurung Kumey	Largest community; hornbill beak headgear (now replaced with fibreglass for conservation)	Nyokum (Feb)
Monpa	Tawang, West Kameng	Mahayana Buddhist; Tawang Monastery (largest monastery in India)	Losar (Feb)
Galo	West & East Siang	Related to Adi; Donyi-Polo	Mopin (Apr)
Mishmi	Lower Dibang Valley, Lohit	Sub-tribes: Idu, Digaru (Taraon), Miju (Kaman)	Reh (Feb)
Wancho	Longding	Tattooed face, head-hunter tradition (now ended)	Oriah
Nocte	Tirap	Bodhi Buddhist influence	Loku
Tagin	Upper Subansiri	Donyi-Polo	Si-Donyi (Jan)

Arunachal Framework Box

Parameter	Detail
Total STs in AP	~26 major tribes + 100+ sub-tribes
Dominant Religion	Donyi-Polo (Sun-Moon worship, animistic) – for non-Buddhist tribes
Buddhist Tribes	Monpa, Sherdukpen, Khamba, Membas (Mahayana); Khamti, Singpho, Tai Phake (Theravada)
Script	Donyi-Polo script / Tani script – developed 2001 for Tani-family languages
Language Family	Tibeto-Burman (all AP tribes)

Prelims Pointers:

- Arunachal Pradesh is India's **highest tribal-percentage state** in NE (~68% ST population).
- Apatani cultural landscape** in Ziro valley is on **UNESCO World Heritage Tentative List** (not yet inscribed). Cross-ref **Topic 1**.
- Pangsau Pass International Festival**
- Tawang Monastery** is the **2nd largest Buddhist monastery in the world** (after Potala, Lhasa) and **largest in India**.

SIDDI COMMUNITY – AFRICAN-ORIGIN PVTG

News in Brief: President Droupadi Murmu interacted with members of the **Siddi community** – a primitive tribal group with African roots – in **Junagadh district, Gujarat**, in October 2025. The Siddi community has achieved a **literacy rate of over 72%**.

Prelims Connect – Siddi Community

Parameter	Detail
Origin	East African Bantu descent – brought to India between 12th–19th century CE as sailors, soldiers, merchants, and slaves by Arab, Portuguese, Dutch & British traders
Present Distribution	Gujarat (Junagadh, Gir), Karnataka (Uttara Kannada), Hyderabad (Telangana), Maharashtra
Population	~50,000–70,000 nationally
Religion	Majority Muslim (some Hindu, few Catholic Christian)
Language	Gujarati, Kannada, Urdu, Konkani – depending on region
Status	Scheduled Tribe in Karnataka (since 2003), Gujarat (listed among PVTGs of Gujarat)
Cultural Practice	Goma/Dhamal dance – features African-derived drumming & acrobatics, performed at Sufi shrines
Famous Historical Figure	Malik Ambar (1548–1626) – Ethiopian-origin regent of Ahmadnagar Sultanate; defeated multiple Mughal invasions; founded Aurangabad (original name Khirki/Fatehnagar)
Literacy (Gujarat)	Over 72% (Presidential speech, Oct 2025)

Prelims Pointers:

- The **Siddis of Gujarat** are one of Gujarat's **5 PVTGs**: Siddi, Kolgha, Kathodi, Kotwalia, Padhar.
- Siddi neighbourhoods in Junagadh are near **Gir National Park** – the only home of Asiatic lion.
- **Goma dance** is derived from Swahili word *ngoma* (drum/dance), preserving African-diaspora cultural memory.

MISING TRIBE & ALI AI LIGANG FESTIVAL

News in Brief: The **Mising tribe**, an indigenous community of Assam, celebrated the **Ali Ai Ligang festival**

Prelims Connect – Mising Tribe

Parameter	Detail
Earlier Name	Miri (term now considered pejorative; renamed Mising in 1995)
State	Assam (mainly Dhemaji, Dhakuakhana, North Lakhimpur, Jorhat, Sonitpur) + small pockets in Arunachal
Language	Mising – Tibeto-Burman family (related to Adi of Arunachal)
Religion	Donyi-Polo (sun-moon worship) + Vaishnavism (many follow Srimanta Sankardeva's Ekasarana Dharma)
Population	~6.8 lakh – 2nd largest plains tribe of Assam (after Bodos)
Settlement Pattern	Chang-Ghar – bamboo stilt houses on riverine flood-plains
Key Festival	Ali Ai Ligang (spring sowing, Feb–Mar) + Porag (post-harvest)
Autonomous Body	Mising Autonomous Council (1995)

Festival Meaning

- **Ali** = root/seed; **Ai** = fruit/grain; **Ligang** = to sow.
- The festival kicks off jhum/paddy sowing cycle; features **Gumrag dance** accompanied by drum, cymbal & bamboo flute.

Prelims Pointers:

- The Mising tribe is ethnically related to **Adi of Arunachal Pradesh** (both Tibeto-Burman Tani sub-family) – they migrated down to Assam plains several centuries ago.
- Mising is **not** yet a Scheduled language of the Eighth Schedule.

KHASI TRIBE & SHAD NONGKREM

News in Brief: Meghalaya celebrated the **Shad Nongkrem festival** – a five-day autumn festival of the **Khasi tribe** – held at **Smit, near Shillong**, in November 2025 (cross-ref Topic 7.11).

Prelims Connect – Khasi Tribe

Parameter	Detail
State	Meghalaya (East & West Khasi Hills, Ri-Bhoi, South Khasi Hills)
Population	~14 lakh (Meghalaya's largest community, ~48%)
Language	Khasi – UNIQUE: the only Austroasiatic language in NE India (same family as Santhali, Mundari, Mon-Khmer, Vietnamese)
Script	Khasi script = written in Latin/Roman (since 19th c., introduced by Welsh Presbyterian missionaries)
Religion	Majority Christianity (post-British); traditional Niam Khasi / Niam Tre (animistic)
Social System	MATRILINEAL – children take mother's clan name; youngest daughter (Ka Khadduh) inherits ancestral property
Governance	Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council under Sixth Schedule

Shad Nongkrem Festival Specifics

Detail	Content
Location	Smit (near Shillong) – seat of Syiem of Hima Khyrim
Duration	5 days , held in November annually
Purpose	Thanksgiving to Goddess Ka Blei Synshar for prosperity, good harvests & peace
Ritual	Pomblang / goat sacrifice ceremony by the Syiem
Key Dances	Ka Shad Kynthei (women's dance) + Ka Shad Mastieh (men's warrior dance)
Instruments	Tangmuri (oboe), Ksing Padiah (drum), Duitara (4-string lute)

Prelims Pointers:

- **Matrilineal tribes** of Meghalaya: **Khasi, Jaintia (Pnar), Garo**. Garo inheritance slightly differs (through *nokna* chosen daughter, not necessarily youngest).
- Khasi is one of the **few Austroasiatic languages still actively spoken** in Northeast India.
- **Syiem** = traditional Khasi chief; **Hima** = Khasi state/chiefdom (there are 25+ Himas).
- Meghalaya has **3 Autonomous District Councils: Khasi Hills, Jaintia Hills, Garo Hills** – all under **Sixth Schedule**.

3RD INTERNATIONAL BHARATIYA LANGUAGES CONFERENCE 2026

News in Brief: The **3rd International Bharatiya Languages Conference 2026** was inaugurated in **New Delhi** by **Vice-President C. P. Radhakrishnan** at the **Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA)**. It was jointly organised by the **Ministry of Culture, Antarashtriya Sahyog Parishad, Vaishwik Hindi Parivar, and the University of Delhi**. The conference emphasised the role of **technology, AI-based translation and digital archives** in preserving languages.

Prelims Connect – IGNCA

Parameter	Detail
Full Form	Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts
Founded	1987
HQ	Janpath, New Delhi
Ministry	Ministry of Culture
Purpose	Research & preservation of India's arts, heritage & intangible traditions
Kalanidhi Division	National database of arts & cultural archives
Cross-reference	Cross-linked with National Mission on Manuscripts (NAMAMI) 2003

Prelims Pointers:

- India recognises **22 Scheduled Languages** under **Eighth Schedule** + **11 Classical Languages** + **Central Hindi Directorate/Ministry of Education** language promotion schemes.
- **BHASHA Project / Bharat Vani / Bhashini** are AI-translation initiatives parallel to this effort.

Scripts Used by Scheduled Languages

Script	Languages
Devanagari	Hindi, Sanskrit, Marathi, Nepali, Bodo, Dogri, Maithili, Konkani
Tamil	Tamil
Bengali-Assamese	Bengali, Assamese, Manipuri (also Meitei Mayek script)
Gurmukhi	Punjabi
Perso-Arabic	Urdu, Kashmiri, Sindhi
Ol Chiki	Santali (script created by Raghunath Murmu , 1925)
Kannada	Kannada
Odia	Odia
Malayalam	Malayalam
Telugu	Telugu
Gujarati	Gujarati

Prelims Pointers:

- **Article 344(1) + Article 351** refer to the Eighth Schedule.
- **Hindi** is the **Official Language of the Union** under **Article 343**, NOT a "national language" (India has no national language).
- **Sanskrit** is the only Scheduled Language that is also a Classical Language without being a modern mother tongue for any major population.
- **Santali's Ol Chiki** script was developed by **Raghunath Murmu**

TAMIL-BRAHMI & TAMIL-PRAKRIT INSCRIPTIONS IN EGYPT

News in Brief: Around **30 Tamil-Brahmi and Tamil-Prakrit inscriptions**, dating back **~2,000 years**, were identified in **Egypt's Valley of the Kings**, specifically in **tombs of Ramesses IV**. Markings like "**Cikai Korran**" prove that **Tamil traders travelled deep into Egypt**, confirming strong trade links between early **Tamilakam and Egypt**.

Prelims Connect – Tamil-Brahmi & Ancient Indo-Egyptian Trade

Parameter	Detail
Script	Tamil-Brahmi – earliest script for Old Tamil, c. 3rd century BCE–4th century CE
Parallel Script	Brahmi (parent script of all Indic scripts) – oldest evidence from Ashokan inscriptions, 3rd century BCE
Location of New Finds	Valley of the Kings, Egypt – tombs of Pharaoh Ramesses IV (Twentieth Dynasty, c. 1150 BCE)
Significance	Confirms maritime trade links between Tamilakam (early Tamil country) and the Red Sea / Egypt via the Indian Ocean route
Key Name Read	"Cikai Korran" – likely a trader's mark
Other Evidence	Periplus of the Erythraean Sea (1st century CE Greek text) describes Muziris, Nelcynda, Tyndis as key Tamilakam ports
Cross-reference	Muziris Heritage Project / Spice Route Initiative – Kerala (October 2025)

Ancient Tamil Port-Cities (Sangam Era)

Port	Modern Location	Significance
Muziris / Muchiri	Kodungallur, Kerala	Chera kingdom, largest Indo-Roman trade port
Puhar / Kaveripattinam	TN	Early Chola capital
Korkai	Thoothukudi	Early Pandyan port (pearl fishery)
Arikamedu	near Puducherry	Roman trading post (Podouké in Periplus)

Prelims Pointers:

- The **three Tamil Sangam era kingdoms** = Chera, Chola, Pandya (Mu-ventar).
- **Roman coins** in Tamil Nadu (at Arikamedu, Karur) confirmed Indo-Roman trade; the new Egyptian inscriptions complement this.
- **Tamil-Brahmi** is distinct from **Damili/Tamili** (used as interchangeable terms in some scholarship).

Indo-Mediterranean Trade Evidence Master List

Evidence	Location	Significance
Periplus of the Erythraean Sea (1st c. CE)	Greco-Roman text	Describes Muziris, Nelcynda, Tyndis, Podouké
Roman coin hoards	Madurai, Karur, Arikamedu, Kottayam (TN/Kerala)	Aureus & denarii of Augustus/Tiberius/Claudius – mass import
Muziris (Pattanam, Kerala)	Kodungallur region	Indo-Roman amphorae, Red-Slipped Ware, glass beads
Arikamedu (Pondicherry)	Roman trading post	Amphorae, Arretine ware, "Podouké" of Periplus
New Egyptian inscriptions (2026)	Luxor/Valley of Kings	First Tamil-Brahmi evidence on African soil confirming reciprocal Tamil mercantile travel

Prelims Pointers:

- **Brahmi script** (c. 3rd century BCE – Ashokan inscriptions) is the **mother script** of all Indian & SE Asian scripts (Devanagari, Tamil, Sinhala, Thai, Burmese, Khmer, Javanese all descend from Brahmi).
- **Tamil-Brahmi** is a regional variant used for Old Tamil, best known from **cave inscriptions at Mangulam, Kilavalavu, Muttupatti** (Madurai region) – earliest dated to c. 3rd century BCE.
- **Ashokan Brahmi** was first deciphered by **James Prinsep in 1837**.
- **Sangam literature** (Tolkappiyam, Ettuthokai, Pattupattu) is the textual parallel to this archaeological evidence.

ARCHAEOLOGY, INSCRIPTIONS, ANCIENT SITES & HISTORICAL FIGURES

THIRUMALAPURAM EXCAVATIONS – IRON AGE TAMIL NADU

News in Brief: Preliminary findings from the **Thirumalapuram excavations** confirmed the presence of an **Iron Age culture in Tamil Nadu**, with similarities to **Adichanallur**. The site was excavated by the **Tamil Nadu State Department of Archaeology (TNSDA)**, lies near the **Western Ghats**, and features a **large burial site with an urn chamber, pottery, and metal artifacts**, dating to the **early-to-mid third millennium BCE**.

Prelims Connect – Thirumalapuram Site

Parameter	Detail
Location	Near Western Ghats , Tamil Nadu
Excavator	Tamil Nadu State Department of Archaeology (TNSDA)
Dating	Early-to-mid third millennium BCE (~2800–2500 BCE)
Find Type	Iron Age megalithic burial – urn chamber, pottery, metal artifacts
Parallel Site	Adichanallur (Thoothukudi, TN)

Significance	Pushes back the antiquity of Iron Age in TN / peninsular India; reinforces "Early Historic + Iron Age" Sangam culture
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Tamil Nadu's Iron Age / Early Historic Sites

Site	District	Key Finds	Dating
Adichanallur	Thoothukudi	Urn burials, gold diadem, copper tools, bronze articles, Tamil-Brahmi ownership marks	1000 BCE–600 BCE (revised pushbacks: 2500 BCE)
Keeladi	Sivagangai	Sangam-era urban settlement, graffiti pottery, Tamil-Brahmi; dated to 6th century BCE onwards	Sangam/Early Historic
Sivagalai	Thoothukudi	Paddy in burial urn → carbon dated to 1155 BCE (oldest rice evidence from peninsular India)	1155 BCE
Mayiladumparai	Krishnagiri	Iron tools dated to ~4200 years ago (2172 BCE) via AMS – among oldest Iron Age evidence in India	2172 BCE
Kodumanal	Erode	Trade centre, megalithic, early Tamil-Brahmi, iron-smelting	5th century BCE
Porunthal	Dindigul	Graffiti potsherds, Tamil-Brahmi	490 BCE (AMS dated)
Thirumalapuram	TN (Western Ghats foothills)	2025 find – urn chamber, Iron Age burial	Early–mid 3rd mill. BCE

Prelims Pointers:

- **Adichanallur** discovered in **1876** by **Dr. Jagor** (German); revisited by ASI 2004–2005 and again post-2021.
- **Keeladi** excavation led by **K. Amarnath Ramakrishna (ASI)** from 2015; the 2019 report pushed Sangam age back.
- **Sivagalai paddy** (1155 BCE) + **Mayiladumparai iron** (2172 BCE) were key "Iron Age in TN" findings announced in **Jan 2023** by CM MK Stalin.
- The **Iron Age in peninsular India** is now proposed as older than the Iron Age in the Gangetic plains (traditionally dated 1500–1200 BCE at Hastinapur, Atranjikhhera).
- TNSDA is a **state archaeological body** (not ASI) – conducts parallel excavations independently.

HARAPPAN SITES PROTECTED – TIGHRANA & MITATHAL

News in Brief: The Haryana government declared two sites of over **4,400-year-old Harappan civilisation** in **Bhiwani district** as **protected monuments and archaeological sites**. The two sites are **Tighrana** and **Mitathal** villages. The notification was issued under the **Haryana Ancient and Historical Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1964**.

Prelims Connect – Tighrana & Mitathal

Parameter	Detail
Location	Bhiwani district, Haryana
Villages	Tighrana & Mitathal (neighbouring)
Age	~4,400 years old (c. 2400–2000 BCE – Mature Harappan phase)
Status	Protected Monument under Haryana state law (1964 Act)
Mitathal's Earlier Fame	Excavated in 1968 by Suraj Bhan (Punjab University); yielded Harappan pottery, beads, terracotta figurines + post-Harappan " Mitathal II " sub-phase
Significance	Adds to Haryana's dense Harappan cluster – Rakhigarhi, Banawali, Bhirrana, Farmana, Kunal, Mitathal

Harappan Sites in India (Post-Partition) – Master List

Site	State	Distinction
Rakhigarhi	Haryana (Hisar)	Largest Harappan site in India ; 550 ha; DNA study of "Rakhigarhi woman" (2019) showed Iran-Neolithic + AASI ancestry, no steppe
Dholavira	Gujarat (Kutch)	UNESCO WHS 2021 ; reservoirs, stadium, signboard
Lothal	Gujarat (Saurashtra)	World's oldest known dockyard ; site of upcoming National Maritime Heritage Complex
Kalibangan	Rajasthan (Hanumangarh)	Evidence of world's earliest ploughed field ; fire altars
Banawali	Haryana (Fatehabad)	Barley, radish seeds; apsidal fire altar
Bhirrana	Haryana (Fatehabad)	Claimed to be the oldest Harappan site – 7570 BCE (Hakra phase)
Kunal	Haryana (Fatehabad)	Pre-Harappan silver crowns
Farmana	Haryana (Rohtak)	Earliest curry evidence (ginger, turmeric residue, 4500 BP)
Mitathal/Tighrana	Haryana (Bhiwani)	2025 protection notification
Sanauli	UP (Baghpat)	Chariots, swords – Late Harappan or Post-Harappan OCP-era ~2000 BCE
Alamgirpur	UP (Meerut)	Easternmost Harappan site
Mandi	UP (Muzaffarnagar)	Late Harappan hoard
Daimabad	Maharashtra (Ahmednagar)	Southernmost Harappan site; bronze chariot, rhinoceros, elephant
Manda	J&K (Jammu)	Northernmost Harappan site

Prelims Pointers:

- **IVC Phases:** Early (3300–2600 BCE) → Mature/Urban (2600–1900 BCE) → Late (1900–1300 BCE).
- **Total Harappan sites:** ~1400+; **2/3 in India**, rest in Pakistan.
- **Indus Script remains undeciphered;** written right-to-left (boustrophedon sometimes); 400+ signs.
- **3 UNESCO WHS Harappan sites** (India) = Dholavira (2021). Pakistan: Mohenjo-daro (1980), Harappa (not yet WHS).
- **Haryana ASAR Act, 1964** is separate from the **Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958** (central – governs ASI-protected monuments).

AADI THIRUVATHIRAI & RAJENDRA CHOLA I

News in Brief: PM Narendra Modi participated in the valedictory celebrations of Aadi Thiruvathirai festival, marking the birth anniversary of Rajendra Chola I at Gangaikonda Cholapuram, Ariyalur district, Tamil Nadu, in July 2025. (Cross-ref Topic 7.10.)

Prelims Connect – Rajendra Chola I

Parameter	Detail
Reign	1014–1044 CE
Father	Rajaraja Chola I (reigned 985–1014 CE, builder of Brihadeeswara Temple, Thanjavur)
Epithets	Gangaikonda Chola ("Chola who captured Ganga"), Kadaram Kondan ("Conqueror of Kadaram/Kedah")
Northern Expedition (1019–1022 CE)	Reached Ganga, defeated Mahipala of Pala dynasty in Bengal, brought sacred Ganga water
Southeast Asian Conquest (1025 CE)	Naval expedition against Srivijaya Empire (modern Sumatra/Malay peninsula) – captured Kadaram (Kedah), Pannai, Malaiyur, Lankasoka
Capital	Gangaikonda Cholapuram (Ariyalur dt, TN) – founded c. 1025 CE
Temple	Gangaikonda Cholapuram Brihadeeswara Temple (a.k.a. Gangaikondacholisvaram) – UNESCO WHS 2004 as part of "Great Living Chola Temples"

Death	1044 CE
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Chola Naval Legacy

- Rajendra's 1025 Srivijaya expedition is the **only recorded large-scale Indian naval invasion** of Southeast Asia.
- Part of the **"Greater Chola" cultural projection** in SE Asia – inscriptions, temples, Tamil merchant guilds (Ainnurruvar, Manigramam, Anjuvannam) flourished in Sumatra, Java, Thailand.

"Great Living Chola Temples" (UNESCO WHS 2004)

Temple	Builder	Location
Brihadeeswara Temple, Thanjavur	Rajaraja Chola I (1010 CE)	Thanjavur
Gangaikonda Cholapuram Temple	Rajendra Chola I (c. 1035 CE)	Ariyalur
Airavatesvara Temple, Darasuram	Rajaraja Chola II (12th c.)	Kumbakonam

Aadi Thiruvathirai Festival

- Held in the Tamil month of **Aadi (July–August)**.
- Commemorates **Rajendra Chola's birth star Thiruvathirai (Ardra in Sanskrit)**.
- Revived in 2025 at Gangaikonda Cholapuram as a major cultural festival with PM's participation.

Prelims Pointers:

- Kadaram Kondan** title is derived from **Kedah** (modern Malaysia), not a mythical place.
- Srivijaya** = Buddhist maritime empire based in Palembang (Sumatra), 7th–13th century CE.
- Pala King Mahipala I** was defeated on Rajendra's Ganga expedition – not to be confused with later Sena dynasty.

BHORAMDEV CORRIDOR – KHAJURAO OF CHHATTISGARH

News in Brief: The **Bhoramdev Corridor Project** – a **₹146 crore project** – was launched in **Kabirdham district, Chhattisgarh**. It aims to develop the **1,000-year-old Bhoramdev Temple** (known as the **"Khajuraho of Chhattisgarh"**) under the **Swadesh Darshan 2.0** scheme, modelled after the **Kashi Vishwanath Corridor**.

Prelims Connect – Bhoramdev Temple

Parameter	Detail
Location	Kabirdham (Kawardha) district, Chhattisgarh
Age	~1,000 years old (built c. 11th century CE by the Nagavanshi dynasty)
Deity	Lord Shiva
Architectural Style	Nagara (North Indian) style, Kalchuri-Chandela influence
Nickname	"Khajuraho of Chhattisgarh" – for its erotic/figurative sculptural panels
Named After	"Bhoramdev" – local tribal deity identified with Shiva by Baiga/Gond tribes
Nagavanshi Builders	King Gopal Deo , per inscription

Project Details

Parameter	Detail
Cost	₹146 crore
Model	Based on Kashi Vishwanath Corridor (Varanasi)
Scheme	Swadesh Darshan 2.0 – Ministry of Tourism, Govt of India
Goal	Pilgrimage + heritage tourism development

Prelims Pointers:

- Swadesh Darshan 2.0** was launched in **2022** – a revamp of the original Swadesh Darshan (2015). Focus: destination-based tourism, sustainability, **"Vocal for Local"**.
- Kashi Vishwanath Corridor** was inaugurated in **December 2021** – connecting Kashi Vishwanath Temple (one of 12 Jyotirlingas) to Ganga ghats.

- Other Khajuraho "echoes" in India: **Khajuraho itself** (MP, 10th c. Chandela, UNESCO WHS 1986), **Modhera Sun Temple** (Gujarat, Solanki, UNESCO Tentative), **Konark Sun Temple** (Odisha, 13th c. Ganga, UNESCO WHS 1984).

RAM VANJI SUTAR — SCULPTOR OF STATUE OF UNITY

News in Brief: Renowned Indian sculptor **Ram Vanji Sutar**, who designed the world's tallest statue – the **Statue of Unity (Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, 182 m)** – passed away at the age of **100** in December 2025 due to age-related illness.

Prelims Connect — Ram V. Sutar

Parameter	Detail
Lifespan	1925–2025 (age 100)
Education	Gold medalist from JJ School of Art, Mumbai
Awards	Padma Shri, Padma Bhushan, Maharashtra Bhushan
Magnum Opus	Statue of Unity (Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel) – 182 m – world's tallest statue , inaugurated 31 October 2018 at Kevadia, Gujarat
Other Notable Works	Statue of Shivaji Maharaj (planned Arabian Sea memorial), Gandhi busts across world capitals (200+), statues of political leaders in Parliament (Govind Ballabh Pant, etc.), Shivaji equestrian statues
Style	Realism – monumental public sculptures
Significance	Spanned the post-Independence era of nation-building through public art

Statue of Unity — Quick Facts

Parameter	Detail
Height	182 m (597 ft)
Location	Sadhu Bet island, near Kevadia, Narmada district, Gujarat – on the Narmada river facing Sardar Sarovar Dam
Inaugurated	31 October 2018 (Sardar Patel's 143rd birth anniversary, Rashtriya Ekta Diwas)
Sculptor	Ram V. Sutar
Built By	Larsen & Toubro (L&T)
Material	Bronze cladding over reinforced concrete core
Rank	World's tallest statue – taller than Spring Temple Buddha (China, 153 m), Statue of Liberty (USA, 93 m)

Prelims Pointers:

- Rashtriya Ekta Diwas (National Unity Day) = 31 October** – marks Sardar Patel's birth anniversary.
- Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel (1875–1950)** = India's **first Deputy PM and first Home Minister**; integrated 560+ princely states into Indian Union; known as **"Iron Man of India"** and **"Bismarck of India"**.
- Maharashtra Bhushan** is the **highest civilian award of the state of Maharashtra** (instituted 1995); previous recipients include PL Deshpande, Lata Mangeshkar, Vijay Bhatkar, Asha Bhosle.

OPEN-AIR ART WALL MUSEUM AT MAUSAM BHAWAN — IMD 150 YEARS

News in Brief: Dr. Jitendra Singh, Union MoS for Science & Technology, inaugurated **India's first Open Air Art Wall Museum** at **Mausam Bhawan, New Delhi**, in February 2025, marking the **150th anniversary of the India Meteorological Department (IMD)**.

Prelims Connect — IMD 150 Years

Parameter	Detail
IMD Founded	15 January 1875 (in Calcutta under British India)
Current HQ	Mausam Bhawan, Lodhi Road, New Delhi
Parent Ministry	Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES)

150th Anniversary	2025 ("Sesquicentennial")
Art Wall Museum	India's first Open-Air Art Wall Museum at Mausam Bhawan – depicts climate, weather, cultural impacts

Prelims Pointers:

- IMD is a **scientific department** but its art wall links **science + culture** → relevant for both GS-III and Art & Culture.
- Cross-ref with "**Mission Mausam**" (2024) – launched to upgrade IMD's forecasting infrastructure.
- **Ministry of Earth Sciences** also houses INCOIS, NCPOR, IITM, NCMRWF.

KOKBORAK LANGUAGE ROW – TRIPURIS & BOROK PEOPLE

News in Brief: The Twipra Students Federation (TSF) staged a protest in January 2025 against the Tripura Board of Secondary Education (TBSE) decision to not allow tribal students appearing for **Kokborak** language papers to write answers in the **Roman script**.

Prelims Connect – Kokborak

Parameter	Detail
Language Family	Tibeto-Burman (Sino-Tibetan macrofamily)
Speakers	Borok / Tripuri people – main indigenous community of Tripura (also small groups in Bangladesh, Mizoram, Assam)
Alternative Name	Tripuri
Script Debate	Traditionally written in Roman (Latin) script + Bengali-Assamese script ; no unique Kokborak-specific script yet
Status	Official language of Tripura (since 1979) alongside Bengali and English
Literary Body	Kokborak Sahitya Sabha
Eighth Schedule	NOT yet included – long-pending demand

Prelims Pointers:

- Kokborak is among languages **demanding Eighth Schedule status** (cross-ref **Topic 9.10**).
- Tripura has a **Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council (TTAADC)** under the **Sixth Schedule**.
- The **Borok community** includes sub-tribes: **Debbarma, Jamatia, Reang/Bru, Noatia, Koloi, Murasing, Tripura (Tipperah)**.
- **Roman script vs Bengali script** debate reflects broader identity politics – Borok activists prefer Roman script (to distinguish from Bengali linguistic dominance); TBSE initially mandated Bengali script.

SIDDI COMMUNITY & MALIK AMBAR

News in Brief: President Murmu interacted with **Siddi community** members in October 2025

Prelims Connect – Malik Ambar

Parameter	Detail
Lifespan	1548-1626
Origin	Ethiopia (Harar region) – sold as slave, brought to Arabia, then Deccan
Role	Regent (Peshwa) of the Ahmadnagar Sultanate
Military Innovation	Developed guerrilla warfare (Bargi-giri) against Mughals – later adopted by Shivaji's Marathas

Political Legacy	Held off Jahangir & Shah Jahan's Mughal invasions; protected Ahmadnagar Nizam Shahi sovereignty
Urban Legacy	Founded Khirki (1610 CE) → later renamed Fatehnagar , then Aurangabad by Aurangzeb, and today's Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar (2022)
Revenue System	Introduced Zabt-like land revenue system based on crop yields, predating Shivaji's reforms
Community Heritage	Remembered as India's most famous Afro-Indian historical figure

Prelims Pointers:

- **Aurangabad** → **Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar** was the 2022 rename by Maharashtra government.
- **Ahmadnagar Sultanate** = one of **5 Deccan Sultanates** that emerged from the breakup of Bahmani Sultanate (1490): Ahmadnagar (Nizam Shahi), Bijapur (Adil Shahi), Golconda (Qutb Shahi), Bidar (Barid Shahi), Berar (Imad Shahi).
- **Battle of Talikota (1565)** – combined Deccan Sultanates defeated Vijayanagara.
- **Malik Ambar's Bargi-giri** (hit-and-run cavalry tactics) is the **direct ancestor** of Shivaji's **Ganimi Kava** guerrilla methodology.

BIHAR ENERGY MUSEUM

News in Brief: The Bihar Museum announced India's **first power-focused museum** – and only the **fourth of its kind worldwide** – in December 2025. It aims to preserve **Bihar's energy heritage**, promote tourism, and act as a centre for **industrial and educational research**.

Prelims Connect – Bihar Museum

Parameter	Detail
Location	Patna, Bihar
Opened	2015 (main Bihar Museum)
Designer	Maki & Associates (Japan) – architect Fumihiko Maki (Pritzker Prize 1993)
New 2025 Addition	Energy / Power Museum – 1st in India, 4th globally
Purpose	Documents Bihar's thermal, hydroelectric & industrial heritage; interactive exhibits
Theme	Energy transition, sustainability, cultural heritage of power generation

Prelims Pointers:

- **Bihar Museum** (Patna) and **National Museum** (New Delhi) are two major heritage museum projects – the National Museum is being relocated to the **North Block / Rajpath Yuge Yugeen Bharat National Museum** (largest museum in the world, under development).
- The other three "power museums" worldwide are typically cited in Europe/USA/Japan (Electropolis Museum France, MIT Museum parts, etc.).

MANKI-MUNDA SYSTEM AND HO TRIBE – KOLHAN REGION, JHARKHAND

Adivasis from the Ho tribe in Jharkhand's Kolhan region protested against alleged administrative interference in the Manki-Munda system – a centuries-old self-governance framework of the Ho adivasi community.

News in Brief

- **Each village led by a hereditary Munda**; a group of **8–15 villages (pidh)** overseen by a **Manki**. The system is **decentralised and purely socio-political** – no role in revenue collection.
- **Permanent Settlement Act (1793)** triggered **Ho revolt (1821–22)** and **Kol revolt (1831)**.
- **Captain Thomas Wilkinson (1833)** codified the system in **Wilkinson's Rules** – introduced **private property and pattas**, transforming collective landholding.
- **Mora Ho vs State of Bihar (2000)**: Patna HC clarified Wilkinson's Rules are **customs, not formal law**, but allowed continued practice.

Prelims Pointers

- **Ho tribe** (Jharkhand, Odisha, WB) – speak **Ho language** (Austro-Asiatic family, Mundari branch); Scheduled Tribe.
- **PESA Act, 1996** (Panchayats Extension to Scheduled Areas) – provides constitutional recognition to traditional governance institutions of tribal communities.
- Other tribal self-governance: **Gram Sabha** under PESA; **Gonong** (Mizo); **Dorbar Shnong** (Khasi); **Angh** (Naga villages).

SOLIGA TRIBE & BRT TIGER RESERVE

News in Brief: PM Modi in the 119th Mann Ki Baat referenced the **Soliga tribe** of BRT (**Biligiri Rangana Hills**) **Tiger Reserve, Karnataka**, who have played a crucial role in tiger conservation, contributing to a tiger population rise from **8-10** to **~50**.

Prelims Connect – Soliga Tribe

Parameter	Detail
State	Karnataka (BRT Tiger Reserve, Chamarajanagar district)
Meaning	<i>Soliga</i> = "bamboo people" (from <i>Sholegaru</i>)
Population	~40,000
Language	Soliga Nudi – Dravidian family
Religion	Worship of Madeshwara (local deity) + Biligiri Rangaswamy (Vishnu-Venkateshwara form)
Historical Milestone	First tribe in India to receive legal rights to reside inside a tiger reserve (2011) under the Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006
Conservation Role	Traditional ecological knowledge; tiger population in BRT rose 8-10 → ~50

BRT Tiger Reserve Facts

Parameter	Detail
Full Name	Biligiri Ranganatha Temple Tiger Reserve
State	Karnataka (Chamarajanagar dt)
Declared Tiger Reserve	2011 (India's 39th TR)
Distinction	Sits at the meeting point of Western and Eastern Ghats – biogeographic bridge
Flora	Transition zone (deciduous to evergreen)
Namesake	Biligiri Ranganatha Swamy Temple (Vishnu) atop the hill – major pilgrimage

Prelims Pointers:

- **Forest Rights Act, 2006** = Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act → gives individual & community forest rights.
- Soligas became a **symbol of harmonious tribal-wildlife coexistence**.

OTHERS

PARASNATH HILL – SACRED TO JAINS AND SANTALS, JHARKHAND

The Jharkhand High Court directed enforcement of a ban on meat, alcohol, and intoxicants on Parasnath Hill – a site sacred to both Jains (as Sammed Shikhar) and the Santal Adivasi community (as Marang Buru).

News in Brief

- **For Jains:** Known as **Sammed Shikhar** – the site where **20 of 24 Tirthankaras, including Parshvanatha, attained nirvana**.
- **For Santals:** Known as **Marang Buru ('the Great Mountain')** – the supreme animist deity and seat of justice. The **Jug Jaher Than (sacred grove)** is the most sacred **dhorom garh (religious site)**.
- The **Santal Hul of 1855**, led by **Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu**, was a major tribal uprising launched from Marang Buru.

- Major flashpoint: the **Sendra festival** — a traditional ritual hunt held by Santals on the hill.
- Parasnath Hill / **Sammed Shikhar** is the **highest peak in Jharkhand**.

Prelims Pointers

- **24 Tirthankaras of Jainism:** Rishabhanatha (Adinatha) is the 1st, Parshvanatha is the 23rd, Mahavira is the 24th (last).
- **Santal Hul (1855-56):** Led by Sidhu, Kanhu, Chand, and Bhairav Murmu — one of India's largest tribal uprisings against British rule; outcome: **Santhal Pargana Act (1876)**.
- **Santal tribe** — one of India's largest tribal communities; speak **Santali** (Austro-Asiatic, Munda family); concentrated in **Jharkhand, West Bengal, Odisha, and Assam**.

SOMNATH TEMPLE — SOMNATH SWABHIMAN PARV (1026-2026), 1000 YEARS

2026 marks 1,000 years since the first attack on Somnath Temple by Mahmud of Ghazni in 1026 AD. The Somnath Temple is located at Prabhas Patan on Gujarat's coast and is the first Jyotirling among the 12 holy Shiva Jyotirlingas.

News in Brief

- **First major attack in 1026 AD by Mahmud of Ghazni** — documented by Persian scholar **Al-Biruni**.
- Temple looted and destroyed multiple times — **1026, 1297, 1394, and 1706 CE (Aurangzeb)**.
- **King Bhimdev I (Bhima I) of the Solanki dynasty** rebuilt the temple in stone after Mahmud of Ghazni's 1026 attack.
- **7th existing temple** rebuilt post-independence. **Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel** initiated reconstruction in **1947**. **Pran-Pratistha by President Dr. Rajendra Prasad on 11th May, 1951**.
- **Architectural style: Kailas Mahameru Prasad style;** includes Garbhgruh, Sabhamandap, Nrityamandap; **155-foot-high Shikhar**. Broader **Nagara school** with regional **Chalukya/Solanki (Maru-Gurjara) elements**.

Prelims Pointers

- **12 Jyotirlingas:** Somnath (Gujarat), Mallikarjuna (AP), Mahakaleshwar (MP), Omkareshwar (MP), Kedarnath (UK), Bhimashankar (MH), Vishwanath (UP), Trimbakeshwar (MH), Baidyanath (Jharkhand), Nageshwar, Rameshwaram (TN), Grishneshwar (MH).
- **Mahmud of Ghazni** — made **17 raids into India (1000-1027 CE)**; each raid aimed at looting temple wealth; **Al-Biruni's 'Kitab-ul-Hind'** documents India during this period.
- **Solanki/Chalukya dynasty (Gujarat, 941-1244 CE):** Built **Modhera Sun Temple** and **Rani-ki-Vav** (UNESCO WHS, Patan).
- **Maru-Gurjara architecture:** Regional style in Rajasthan and Gujarat; characterises temples at Khajuraho, Modhera, Dilwara (Mt. Abu), and Somnath.

PUNJAB'S 3 NEW HOLY CITIES — AMRITSAR, ANANDPUR SAHIB, TALWANDI SABO

The Punjab government granted 'Holy City' status to Amritsar, Anandpur Sahib, and Talwandi Sabo. The cities host three of the five Sikh Takhts. Holy City status leads to a ban on liquor, tobacco, cigarettes, and meat within notified areas.

Prelims Connect

The Five Sikh Takhts

Takht	Location	Key Significance
Akal Takht (Supreme)	Amritsar, Punjab	Established 1606 by Guru Hargobind; union of miri (temporal) and piri (spiritual) power

Takht Sri Keshgarh Sahib	Anandpur Sahib, Punjab	Site where Khalsa was created in 1699 by Guru Gobind Singh
Takht Sri Damdama Sahib	Talwandi Sabo, Punjab	Where Guru Gobind Singh finalised the Guru Granth Sahib
Takhat Sri Harimandir Ji Patna Sahib	Patna, Bihar	Birthplace of Guru Gobind Singh (the tenth Guru)
Takhat Sachkhand Sri Hazoor Sahib	Nanded, Maharashtra	Site of Guru Gobind Singh's final days and cremation in 1708

Prelims Pointers

- **Guru Tegh Bahadur (9th Guru)**: Martyred by Aurangzeb for defending the religious freedom of **Kashmiri Pandits** – earned the title '**Hind di Chadar**' (Shield of India).
- **Khalsa (1699)**: Created by Guru Gobind Singh at **Anandpur Sahib** on **Baisakhi day** – instituted the **Panj Kakars (Five Ks)**: Kesh, Kangha, Kara, Kachera, Kirpan.
- **Guru Granth Sahib** – compiled by **Guru Arjan Dev (5th Guru, 1604)**; revised and finalised by **Guru Gobind Singh** at Damdama Sahib – it is the eternal Guru of the Sikhs.

PIPRAHWA RELICS – LORD BUDDHA'S RELICS ON DISPLAY FOR FIRST TIME IN 130 YEARS

The Ministry of Culture organised an exhibition at Qila Rai Pithora, Mehrauli, South Delhi, featuring Lord Buddha's Piprahwa relics – for the first time since their excavation over 130 years ago.

News in Brief

- Excavated in **1898** by **William Claxton Peppé** from a Buddhist stupa at **Piprahwa (Siddharthnagar district, UP)**, near the India-Nepal border.
- Relics include: **349 gemstones (pearls, rubies, sapphires, topaz, gold sheets)**, bone fragments and ash believed to be of **Lord Buddha**, and **reliquaries, sandstone coffers, soapstone and crystal caskets**.
- **Qila Rai Pithora (Lal Kot)** – earliest fort of Delhi; built by **Ananga Pala of the Tomara dynasty** (c. 8th century CE).

Prelims Pointers

- **Three types of Buddhist relics**: (a) **Dhatu/Sharira** – corporeal relics (bone, teeth, hair); (b) **Paribhogika** – objects used by Buddha; (c) **Uddesika** – commemorative objects (statues, stupas).
- **Ashoka** distributed the Buddha's relics to **84,000 stupas** across his empire – the **Dhatu Vibhajana** (distribution of relics).
- India transported Lord Buddha's relics from the **National Museum (New Delhi)** to **Bhutan** for the **Global Peace Prayer Festival (GPPF) 2025** in Thimphu.

500TH BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF GOSWAMI TULSIDAS – RAMCHARITMANAS

The 500th birth anniversary of Goswami Tulsidas was celebrated in Chitrakoot. His real name was Rambola Dubey; he was a contemporary of Akbar. He is most celebrated for writing the Ramcharitmanas in the Awadhi dialect of Hindi.

News in Brief

- **Ramcharitmanas** written on the banks of the **Ganga at Assi, Varanasi**, in the **Awadhi dialect**. Included in **UNESCO's Memory of the World Asia-Pacific Regional Register**.
- Composed **Vinay Patrika** and **Kavitavali** in the **Braj dialect** of Hindi.
- Other major works: **Gitavali, Dohavali, Janaki Mangal, Parvati Mangal, Hanuman Chalisa**.

- Tulsidas was a **Vaishnava Hindu saint and poet of the Saguna Bhakti tradition** – devoted to **Lord Rama**.
- From the **Ramanandi Sampradaya** in the lineage of Jagadguru Ramanandacharya.
- **Saguna-Nirguna**: He believed they are not opposed – **they complement each other**.

Prelims Pointers

- **Ramcharitmanas** written in 7 Kandas (books) – a vernacular rendering of Valmiki's Sanskrit Ramayana accessible to common people.
- **Ramanandi Sampradaya** – founded by **Ramananda (14th-15th century)** – one of the largest Vaishnava sampradayas in India; includes both high and lower castes.
- **Saguna-Nirguna debate** in Bhakti – **Saguna (Tulsidas, Surdas, Mirabai)** vs **Nirguna (Kabir, Guru Nanak, Ravidas)**.

