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HISTORY | CURRENT AFFAIRS

JANUARY 2025 – FEBRUARY 2026 | INDEX OF TOPICS

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HISTORY – CURRENT AFFAIRS (JAN 2025 – FEB 2026)

ANCIENT INDIA

TIGHRANA & MITATHAL – HARAPPAN SITES DECLARED PROTECTED (HARYANA)

The Haryana government has declared two sites of over 4,400-year-old Harappan civilisation – Tighrana and Mitathal in Bhiwani district – as protected monuments and archaeological sites under the Haryana Ancient and Historical Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1964.

News in Brief

- Both sites lie in neighbouring villages in Bhiwani district and date to the Mature Harappan phase (c. 2600–1900 BCE).
- Mitathal was first excavated by Suraj Bhan in 1968 and shows three cultural phases – pre-Harappan, Mature Harappan and Late Harappan.
- Tighrana is a newly notified site that has yielded Harappan pottery, figurines and structural remains in surface surveys.
- With this addition, Haryana's protected Harappan sites include Rakhigarhi, Banawali, Bhirrana, Kunal, Siswal and now Tighrana & Mitathal.
- Notification was issued under the Haryana Ancient and Historical Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1964.

Prelims Connect

Harappan Chronology (Indus–Saraswati Civilisation)

Phase	Approx. Date	Key Features
Early / Pre-Harappan	3300–2600 BCE	Kot Diji, Amri, Sothi-Siswal; mud-brick villages
Mature Harappan	2600–1900 BCE	Urban phase – Mohenjo-daro, Harappa, Dholavira, Lothal, Rakhigarhi
Late Harappan	1900–1300 BCE	De-urbanisation, OCP culture, Cemetery-H

Major Harappan Sites in India

Site	State	Excavator	Famous For
Rakhigarhi	Haryana	A. Nath (1997)	Largest Harappan site in India; aDNA study
Dholavira	Gujarat	R.S. Bisht (1990)	UNESCO WHS 2021; water reservoirs, 10-sign signboard
Lothal	Gujarat	S.R. Rao (1954)	Dockyard; Persian Gulf seal; rice husks
Kalibangan	Rajasthan	B.B. Lal / B.K. Thapar	Ploughed field; fire altars; earthquake evidence
Banawali	Haryana	R.S. Bisht (1974)	Clay plough model; pre- + mature Harappan

Mitathal	Haryana	Suraj Bhan (1968)	3-phase sequence; Ghaggar-Hakra basin
Surkotada	Gujarat	J.P. Joshi (1964)	Horse-bone evidence (contested)
Alamgirpur	Uttar Pradesh	1958	Easternmost Harappan site

Extent – Sutkagendor (Makran, west) to Alamgirpur (UP, east), Manda (J&K, north) to Daimabad (Maharashtra, south) – forming the largest contemporary Bronze Age civilisation (~1.3 million sq km).

Prelims Pointers

- **Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958** regulates monuments >100 years old; administered by ASI.
- **ASI founded in 1861 by Alexander Cunningham** under Lord Canning; motto '**Pratnakirti Apavarini**'.
- Harappan script **remains undeciphered** – pictographic-logosyllabic, written **boustrophedon-style**.
- Standardised weight ratio **1:2:4:8:16:32:64**; basic unit (0.856 g) survives as the **ratti**.
- **Great Bath at Mohenjo-daro** (11.88 × 7.01 m) – earliest public water tank; **Pashupati seal** shows proto-Shiva in yogic posture.
- Mesopotamian texts call the Indus region '**Meluhha**'; Dilmun = Bahrain, Magan = Oman.
- Decline theories – Aryan invasion (Wheeler, rejected), river shift (Ghaggar drying), climate change, Indus floods, ecological degradation.

LOTHAL – INDIA-NETHERLANDS MOU FOR NATIONAL MARITIME HERITAGE COMPLEX

India and the Netherlands signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to strengthen cooperation in maritime heritage, marking a significant step toward development of the National Maritime Heritage Complex (NMHC) at Lothal, Gujara.

News in Brief

- NMHC is being developed by the Ministry of Ports, Shipping & Waterways and will be Asia's largest maritime heritage museum.
- Lothal, discovered by S.R. Rao in 1954, is the earliest known tidal dockyard in the world.
- The MoU with the Netherlands covers joint research, conservation training and exchange of maritime archaeologists.
- Lothal yielded a Persian-Gulf-type seal, bead-making workshops, and rice husk samples – evidence of long-distance trade.
- NMHC will form part of the Sagarmala Project's heritage pillar and house India's first National Maritime Heritage Museum.

Prelims Connect

Indus Valley Maritime & Coastal Sites

Site	Location	Key Evidence
Lothal	Bhal, Gujarat	Brick-lined dockyard (218 × 37 m); Persian Gulf seal
Sutkagendor	Makran coast, Balochistan	Westernmost Harappan site; port on Dasht river
Balakot	Sindh coast	Shell-working industry; coastal trade

Allahdino	Near Karachi	Small agricultural port
Kuntasi	Saurashtra, Gujarat	Ivory, copper, bead workshop; Harappan port
Bhagatrav	Mouth of Narmada	Harappan port on Gulf of Khambhat
Prabhas Patan / Somnath	Gujarat	Harappan harbour near Dwarka

Indus–Mesopotamia Trade – Mesopotamian texts (Sargon of Akkad, c. 2300 BCE) describe ships from 'Meluhha' docking at Agade. Goods exchanged: carnelian beads, timber, cotton, ivory (Indian exports); silver, tin, woollen textiles (imports).

Prelims Pointers

- **Lothal dockyard** is oriented to the **tidal inflow from the Gulf of Cambay** – sluice gates controlled water depth for cargo vessels.
- **Rice husk samples** at Lothal provide the earliest evidence of **rice cultivation in Gujarat** (~2500 BCE).
- Bead-making workshop at Lothal produced **carnelian, agate, jasper and steatite beads** exported across Mesopotamia and the Persian Gulf.
- **Sagarmala Programme** (launched 2015) is India's flagship port-led development initiative under **Ministry of Ports, Shipping & Waterways**.
- '**Meluhha**' = **Indus region**, 'Dilmun' = Bahrain, 'Magan' = Oman – as per cuneiform tablets.
- A Persian Gulf seal found at Lothal establishes **direct maritime contact with Bahrain and Mesopotamia**.

DHOLAVIRA – INDIA'S YOUNGEST MALE ANALOG ASTRONAUT MISSION

Seventeen-year-old Aditya Pandya from Gujarat became India's youngest male analog astronaut after completing an 8-day simulated lunar-habitat mission in Dholavira, Kutch, organized by AAKA Space Studio (February 2026). The choice of Dholavira highlights its UNESCO status and arid landscape resembling extraterrestrial terrain.

News in Brief

- Dholavira – Kutch district, Gujarat – inscribed as UNESCO World Heritage Site in July 2021 (India's 40th WHS, 2nd from Gujarat after Ahmedabad).
- One of the five largest Harappan sites (others: Mohenjo-daro, Harappa, Ganweriwala, Rakhigarhi).
- Three-tier water conservation system – dams, reservoirs, stepwells carved into sandstone – adaptation to the arid Rann.
- Yielded a unique 10-character 'signboard' inscription (largest Harappan inscription), ceremonial ground / stadium, citadel-middle town-lower town division.
- Excavated by R.S. Bisht of ASI (1990–2005); strategically located on Khadir Bet island in the Rann of Kutch.

Prelims Connect

Dholavira – Distinctive Features

Feature	Description
Water management	16 reservoirs covering ~10% of site area; largest reservoir ~73 × 29 m

Signboard inscription	10-character Harappan sign above North Gate – largest known Harappan writing
Stadium / ceremonial ground	Large open area (~283 × 47 m) between castle and middle town
Three-fold division	Citadel (castle + bailey), Middle Town, Lower Town
Chronology	7 cultural stages spanning 3000–1500 BCE – rare continuous occupation

Gujarat Harappan cluster – Lothal (dockyard), Dholavira (water + signboard), Surkotada (horse bones, contested), Rojdi, Prabhas Patan, Rangpur (evolving into 'Late Harappan' Rojdi culture).

Prelims Pointers

- Dholavira is on **Khadir Bet island** surrounded by the salt flats of the Rann of Kutch.
- India's UNESCO Cultural WHS linked to the Harappans – **Dholavira (2021)** is the sole entry; Rakhigarhi is on the **Tentative List**.
- 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).
- **Harappan five 'largest cities'**: Mohenjo-daro, Harappa, Ganweriwala, Rakhigarhi, **Dholavira**.
- Unique to Dholavira – unlike Mohenjo-daro & Harappa (baked brick), Dholavira used **sandstone and limestone blocks** for major construction.
- **R.S. Bisht** of ASI also excavated **Banawali** (Haryana) – both sites established his reputation in Harappan studies.
- India's current UNESCO WHS count: **44 (after Maratha Military Landscapes 2025)** – 36 Cultural + 7 Natural + 1 Mixed (Khangchendzonga).

KEELADI – FACIAL RECONSTRUCTION OF 6TH-CENTURY BCE SANGAM-AGE INDIVIDUALS

Facial reconstructions of two individuals from the 6th-century BCE Keeladi archaeological site in Tamil Nadu were successfully created using DNA analysis and 3D digital reconstruction – a collaboration between Madurai Kamaraj University and Liverpool John Moores University .

News in Brief

- Keeladi – Sivaganga district, on the banks of the Vaigai river; excavated by ASI & TNSDA since 2015.
- AMS carbon dating pushed back the Tamil Sangam Age to at least 6th century BCE, indicating an urban settlement contemporaneous with the 2nd urbanisation of the Gangetic plain.
- Recovered artefacts include Tamil-Brahmi inscribed potsherds (earliest dated Tamil-Brahmi writing), rouletted ware, ivory dice, glass beads, iron/copper tools.
- CT scans of skulls from the nearby Kondagai burial site (2 km away) yielded 3D facial reconstructions.
- DNA analysis suggested mixed ancestry – South Indian, West Eurasian and Austro-Asiatic.

Prelims Connect

The Sangam Age (c. 300 BCE – 300 CE) – Three Dynasties

Dynasty	Capital	Emblem	Major Port
Chera	Vanji (Karur)	Bow	Muziris (Muchiri / Pattanam)

Chola	Uraiyur	Tiger	Kaveripattinam (Puhar)
Pandya	Madurai	Fish	Korkai

Sangam Literature – Three Sangams & Key Works

Work	Type	Author / Note
Tolkappiyam	Grammar / Poetics	Tolkappiyar – oldest extant Tamil work
Ettutogai	Anthology of 8 poetry books	Collective – Ainkurunuru, Narrinai, etc.
Pattupattu	10 idylls	Includes Pattinappalai (on Kaveripattinam port)
Tirukkural	Ethical treatise (1330 couplets)	Tiruvalluvar – post-Sangam
Silappadikaram	Tamil epic	Ilango Adigal – story of Kannagi
Manimekalai	Buddhist epic	Sattanar – sequel to Silappadikaram

Prelims Pointers

- **Keeladi (2015–)** is the most important Sangam-age urban excavation; it proves South India had a contemporaneous **second urbanisation**.
- **Tamil-Brahmi (Tamizhi)** – earliest Tamil script (3rd c. BCE); rock inscriptions found in **Mangulam, Sittanavasal, Arittapatti** (Pandya country).
- **Three Sangams** by tradition: Madurai (submerged), Kapatapuram (submerged), third at Madurai – mentioned in Iraiyanar Agapporul preface.
- **Silappadikaram** by Ilango Adigal is Tamil's first epic – centred on **Kannagi**; followed by Manimekalai (Sattanar, Buddhist).
- **Tirukkural** by **Tiruvalluvar** has 1330 couplets in 3 books – Aram (virtue), Porul (wealth), Inbam (love).
- **Kaveripattinam (Puhar)** described in Pattinappalai as a cosmopolitan port with **Yavana (Greco-Roman) settlements**.
- Chera emblem = bow, Chola = tiger, Pandya = fish – the '**Muvendar**' (**three crowned kings**) of Sangam literature.

THIRUMALAPURAM – IRON AGE EXCAVATIONS IN TAMIL NADU (3RD MILLENNIUM BCE)

Preliminary findings from Thirumalapuram excavations confirm the presence of an Iron Age culture in Tamil Nadu with similarities to Adichanallur; the site, excavated by Tamil Nadu State Department of Archaeology (TNSDA), includes a large burial site with an urn chamber, pottery and metal artefacts dating to the early to mid-third millennium BCE .

News in Brief

- Thirumalapuram is situated near the Western Ghats in Tenkasi district, Tamil Nadu.
- Excavations uncovered urn burials, pottery and iron/copper artefacts, similar to Adichanallur assemblages.

- The findings date the site to the 3rd millennium BCE – suggesting an early iron-using megalithic culture in South India.
- Discovered by TNSDA (Tamil Nadu State Department of Archaeology) as part of its 'Porunai Civilisation' research programme.
- Adds to Tamil Nadu's growing roster of Iron Age sites – Adichanallur, Mayiladumparai, Sivagalai, Kodumanal, Porunthal.

Prelims Connect

South Indian Iron Age & Megalithic Sites

Site	District	Finding / Date
Adichanallur	Thoothukudi	Type-site for urn burials; skeletal remains
Mayiladumparai	Krishnagiri	AMS dated to 2172 BCE – earliest iron-use in India
Sivagalai	Thoothukudi	Iron artefacts; 2953 BCE dating (paddy/iron)
Kodumanal	Erode	Industrial centre; Tamil-Brahmi potsherds
Porunthal	Dindigul	Iron/steel industry; 2nd century BCE
Thirumalapuram	Tenkasi	Iron Age urn chamber, 3rd millennium BCE (new 2025)

Megalithic typology – menhirs (standing stones), dolmens (stone tables), cairn circles, cists, urn burials, sarcophagi – characteristic of c. 1000 BCE – 300 CE peninsular India.

Prelims Pointers

- **Iron Age in South India begins c. 2100 BCE** (pre-Mayiladumparai dating) – significantly earlier than the Gangetic Iron Age.
- **Adichanallur (Thoothukudi)** is the type-site for **South Indian urn burials** – first excavated by Jagor (1876) and Rea (1903).
- **Porunai (Thamirabarani) river valley** is proposed by TNSDA as the **cradle of Tamil civilisation**.
- **Megalithic burials** follow the **Black-and-Red Ware (BRW)** pottery tradition – found across peninsular India.
- The Iron Age is followed by the **Northern Black Polished Ware (NBPW)** phase (c. 700–200 BCE) associated with the **16 Mahajanapadas**.
- **Tamil-Brahmi potsherds at Kodumanal** show iron-working and long-distance trade with the Mediterranean world.

TAMIL-BRAHMI INSCRIPTIONS DISCOVERED IN EGYPT'S VALLEY OF THE KINGS

Around 30 Tamil-Brahmi and Tamil-Prakrit inscriptions dating back 2,000 years have been identified in Egypt's Valley of the Kings, specifically in the tombs of Ramesses IV. Markings such as 'Cikai Korraṇ' prove Tamil traders travelled deep into Egypt, attesting strong Indo-Egyptian trade links during the early centuries CE (February 2026).

News in Brief

- Inscriptions found in tombs of Ramesses IV, Valley of the Kings, Luxor, Egypt.
- Around 30 Tamil-Brahmi / Tamil-Prakrit graffiti identified by Indian epigraphists.
- Names like 'Cikai Korraṇ' suggest Tamil traders who left visitor markings.

- Dating to approximately the 1st–3rd century CE, the peak of Indo-Roman trade.
- Complements earlier Tamil-Brahmi potsherd finds at Red Sea ports Berenike and Quseir al-Qadim.

Prelims Connect

Key Ports in Indo-Roman Sangam-Age Trade

Indian Port	Region	Egyptian Port	Key Goods
Muziris (Pattanam)	Kerala	Berenike / Myos Hormos	Pepper, pearls, ivory, muslin
Tyndis	Kerala	Berenike	Spices, textiles
Nelkynda	Kerala	Berenike	Pepper, precious stones
Bakare	Kerala	Berenike	Spices
Kaveripattinam (Puhar)	Tamil Nadu	Berenike	Cotton, muslin, silk
Korkai	Tamil Nadu	Berenike	Pearls, shells
Arikamedu (Poduke)	Puducherry	Berenike	Rouletted ware, beads

Periplus of the Erythraean Sea (c. 60 CE, anonymous Greek author) is the key classical source listing Indian ports; Pliny the Elder (Natural History) complained Rome was losing 55 million sesterces annually to India.

Prelims Pointers

- **Tamil-Brahmi (Tamizhi)** is the earliest Tamil script; inscriptions found as far west as **Berenike and Quseir al-Qadim** (Egypt's Red Sea coast).
- **Periplus of the Erythraean Sea** (c. 60 CE) – key Greek source for Indian Ocean trade, lists Muziris as 'abounding with ships'.
- **Roman coin hoards** found at Akkanpalle, Kondapur, Poduke (Arikamedu) confirm large-scale Indo-Roman trade.
- **Yavana (Greco-Roman)** settlements at **Kaveripattinam (Puhar)** described in Pattinappalai.
- '**Yavanapriya**' ('beloved of the Yavanas') was the Sanskrit/Tamil term for **black pepper** – Rome's most prized Indian import.
- **Arikamedu (Puducherry)** – Sir Mortimer Wheeler's 1945 excavation – yielded Roman amphorae, Arretine ware and Tamil-Brahmi potsherds.
- **Muziris** is identified with modern **Pattanam (Ernakulam, Kerala)** by recent KCHR excavations.

SATAVAHANA INSCRIPTIONS DISCOVERED IN GUNDARAM FOREST, TELANGANA

Recent discoveries of Satavahana-era inscriptions in Telangana – including those in Gundaram Forest – provide crucial information about the Deccan region during the dynasty's reign.

News in Brief

- Inscriptions belong to the Satavahana dynasty (c. 1st century BCE – 3rd century CE), the first major post-Mauryan polity of the Deccan.
- Gundaram Forest is located in the Jayashankar Bhupalpally district of Telangana.
- The inscriptions are in Prakrit, written in Brahmi script.

- They shed light on Satavahana administrative boundaries, local chieftains and land-grant practices in the Deccan.
- Adds to Telangana's rich Satavahana heritage alongside Kotilingala (mint town) and Dhulikatta (stupa).

Prelims Connect

The Satavahana Dynasty – Key Rulers

Ruler	Reign (approx.)	Significance
Simuka	c. 230–207 BCE	Founder; overthrew the Kanvas
Satakarni I	c. 180 BCE	Performed ashvamedha; expanded into central India
Hala	c. 20–24 CE	Compiled 'Gatha Saptashati' (Sattasai) in Prakrit
Gautamiputra Satakarni	c. 106–130 CE	Greatest ruler; defeated Nahapana (Western Kshatrapa)
Vasisthiputra Pulumavi	c. 130–159 CE	Issued ship-motif coins; expansion in east
Yajna Sri Satakarni	c. 170–199 CE	Last great ruler; revived naval power

Nasik Prashasti – inscription of Gautami Balashri (Gautamiputra's mother) celebrates him as the 'destroyer of Shakas, Yavanas and Pahlavas' – a key Satavahana record.

Prelims Pointers

- Capital cities – **Pratishthana (modern Paithan)** on the Godavari, and **Amaravati** in Andhra Pradesh.
- **Gautamiputra Satakarni** (c. 106–130 CE) defeated **Nahapana** (Kshaharata Western Kshatrapa) and restruck his coins.
- Satavahanas introduced the **land-grant system (agraharas)** to Brahmanas and Buddhist monks – precursor to the early medieval feudal order.
- Patronised **both Brahmanism and Buddhism** – performed ashvamedha sacrifices; patronised Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda stupas.
- '**Gatha Saptashati**' (**Sattasai**) – anthology of 700 Prakrit erotic/lyric verses attributed to King Hala.
- Satavahana coins in **lead, potin, copper, silver**; ship-motif coins (Pulumavi) indicate maritime trade.
- Succeeded by regional kingdoms – **Ikshvakus (Andhra)**, Abhiras (Maharashtra), **Vakatakas (Vidarbha)**.

BORAMANI LABYRINTH – 2,000-YEAR-OLD SATAVAHANA SITE IN SOLAPUR, MAHARASHTRA

India's largest circular stone labyrinth – a 2,000-year-old structure with 15 concentric rings – was unearthed in the Boramani grasslands of Maharashtra's Solapur district, linked to the Satavahana period and potential Indo-Roman trade .

News in Brief

- Located in Boramani grasslands, Solapur district, Maharashtra.
- The structure consists of 15 concentric rings of stone – India's largest known labyrinth.
- Dated to approximately the 1st–2nd century CE, linked to the Satavahana dynasty.
- Interpreted as a ritual / ceremonial or trade-route marker on the Indo-Roman trade network.
- Similar labyrinth motifs exist in Crete (Minoan), Italy, Scandinavia and Halebidu – suggesting shared symbolism.

Prelims Connect

Indo-Roman Trade Routes in the Deccan

Route Type	From	To	Via
Land	Ujjain	Bharuch (Barygaza)	Paithan, Tagara
Land	Paithan	Sopara (Surparaka)	Aurangabad
Sea	Bharuch	Red Sea	Socotra, Arabian Sea
Sea	Muziris	Alexandria	Berenike, Nile
Sea	Arikamedu	Red Sea	Ceylon, Arabian Sea

Deccan Buddhist Cave Monasteries – Karle, Bhaja, Nasik, Junnar, Kanheri, Ajanta Phase I – were funded by Yavana merchants and Satavahana courtiers, reflecting urban-monastic integration.

Prelims Pointers

- **Pliny the Elder** (Natural History, 1st c. CE) complained Rome was losing **55 million sesterces annually** to Indian trade – evidence of huge Indian surplus.
- Key Indian exports – pepper ('yavanapriya'), spices, ivory, pearls, precious stones, silk, muslin cloth, **wootz steel**.
- Key Roman imports – wine, lamps, glassware, coral, tin, lead, topaz.
- **Bharuch (Barygaza)** – greatest Indian port of the Periplus era – at the mouth of the Narmada.
- **Sopara (Surparaka)** – ancient port near Mumbai; site of **Ashokan Rock Edict VIII**.
- Satavahana monasteries at **Karle, Bhaja, Kanheri** received inscribed donations from Yavana merchants (Dhenukakata, Greek names) – the cave donors.

POSON POYA – 2,000-YEAR-OLD BUDDHIST MISSION BY ASHOKA'S SON MAHINDA

Sri Lanka celebrated the sacred Poson Poya festival in June 2025, commemorating the historic arrival of Buddhism on the island over 2,000 years ago. The festival marks the first sermon preached by Arahat Mahinda – son of Emperor Ashoka – to King Devanampiyatissa at Mihintale.

News in Brief

- Poson Poya is observed on the June full moon day (Poson month in Sinhala calendar).
- It commemorates Mahinda's arrival at Mihintale and the conversion of King Devanampiyatissa of Anuradhapura.
- Mihintale is considered the cradle of Sri Lankan Buddhism – site of the first Buddhist sermon on the island.
- Indian High Commission held an exhibition on Indian Buddhist heritage at the National Museum, Colombo.
- Ashoka's daughter Sanghamitta followed with a sapling of the Bodhi tree, planted at Anuradhapura.

Prelims Connect

Ashoka's Buddhist Missions (after the Kalinga War, c. 261 BCE)

Mission Region	Missionary	Modern Region
Sri Lanka	Mahinda & Sanghamitta	Sri Lanka
Suvarnabhumi	Sona & Uttara	Burma / Thailand

Kashmir & Gandhara	Majjhantika	Kashmir / Afghanistan
Himavant (Himalayas)	Majjhima	Nepal Himalayas
Mahishamandala	Mahadeva	Mysore / Karnataka
Vanavasi	Rakkhita	Karnataka coast
Aparantaka	Yona Dhammarakkhita	Gujarat–Maharashtra
Mahratta	Maharakkhita	Maharashtra
Yona country	Maharakkhita	Ionian / Greek regions

Three Major Buddhist Councils (before Kanishka's 4th Council)

Council	Year	Place	Presiding
First	c. 483 BCE	Rajgir (Saptaparni Cave)	Mahakashyapa
Second	c. 383 BCE	Vaishali	Sabbakami
Third	c. 250 BCE	Pataliputra	Moggaliputta Tissa (under Ashoka)

Prelims Pointers

- **Ashoka** (268–232 BCE) embraced Buddhism after the **Kalinga War (c. 261 BCE)** – described in his only autobiographical edict, **Rock Edict XIII**.
- **Ashoka's Rock Edict XIII** is omitted from the Kalinga edicts – reflecting his sensitivity.
- Edicts are in **Prakrit (Brahmi script)** in most of India, **Kharoshthi** in NW, and **Aramaic & Greek** in Afghanistan (Kandahar bilingual).
- Ashokan edicts were first deciphered by **James Prinsep in 1837**.
- **The 3rd Buddhist Council (Pataliputra, c. 250 BCE)** under **Moggaliputta Tissa** compiled the **Abhidhamma Pitaka**.
- **Dhamma** – Ashoka's ethical code: non-violence, tolerance, respect for elders, truthfulness, charity.
- The **Ashoka Chakra** (24 spokes) on India's flag is taken from the **Sarnath Lion Capital** – also India's state emblem.

ANURADHAPURA JAYA SRI MAHA BODHI TEMPLE – PM MODI'S VISIT (SRI LANKA)

Prime Minister Modi visited the Jaya Sri Maha Bodhi temple at the historic city of Anuradhapura during his trip to Sri Lanka; the temple houses the oldest historically documented living plant in the world, grown from a sapling of the original Bodhi tree at Bodh Gaya .

News in Brief

- Jaya Sri Maha Bodhi at Anuradhapura is grown from a sapling of the Bodhi tree at Bodh Gaya, Bihar.
- Planted in 249 BCE by King Devanampiyatissa after Sanghamitta (Ashoka's daughter) brought the sapling from India.
- Considered the oldest historically documented cultivated plant in the world.
- Anuradhapura was the capital of ancient Sri Lanka (4th c. BCE – 11th c. CE); UNESCO WHS.
- PM Modi's visit reinforced India-Sri Lanka Buddhist civilisational ties.

Prelims Connect

Ashtamahasthana – Eight Great Buddhist Pilgrimage Sites

Site	State	Event Associated
Lumbini	Nepal	Birth of the Buddha
Bodh Gaya	Bihar	Enlightenment – Mahabodhi Temple (UNESCO 2002)
Sarnath	Uttar Pradesh	First sermon – Dhammachakkappavattana
Kushinagar	Uttar Pradesh	Mahaparinirvana
Rajgir	Bihar	Taming of Nalagiri elephant; First Council
Shravasti	Uttar Pradesh	Miracle of Twin Miracles
Sankasya	Uttar Pradesh	Descent from Trayastrimsa Heaven
Vaishali	Bihar	Offer of honey by monkey; Second Council

The original Bodhi tree at Bodh Gaya was destroyed by Pushyamitra Sunga (2nd c. BCE) and again by Shashanka of Gauda (7th c. CE). The current tree at Mahabodhi Temple is a descendant of the Anuradhapura sapling – replanted from Sri Lanka\!

Prelims Pointers

- **Bodh Gaya** – site of the Buddha's enlightenment (c. 528 BCE); the **Mahabodhi Temple** is a UNESCO WHS (2002).
- Buddha's life – **Born 563 BCE Lumbini, died 483 BCE Kushinagar** (traditional dates).
- The **Four Noble Truths** (Arya-satyas) form the core of Buddha's teaching: dukkha, samudaya, nirodha, magga.
- The **Eightfold Path (Ashtangika Marga)** – right view, intention, speech, action, livelihood, effort, mindfulness, concentration.
- **Anuradhapura** – UNESCO WHS (1982); ancient Sinhalese capital of Sri Lanka.
- **Anagarika Dharmapala** – Sri Lankan Buddhist revivalist, founded the **Maha Bodhi Society in 1891** to reclaim Bodh Gaya for Buddhists.
- **Dr. B.R. Ambedkar** led a **mass conversion to Buddhism at Nagpur on 14 October 1956** – Dhammachakra Pravartan Day.

BUDDHIST RELICS – INDIAN MUSEUM PUBLIC EXHIBITION AFTER 127 YEARS

Buddhist relics preserved in the Indian Museum (Kolkata) vaults for 127 years are being prepared for their first public exhibition. The collection includes five caskets, a sandstone coffer and numerous jewels, discovered in a 19th-century stupa excavation .

News in Brief

- Indian Museum, Kolkata – oldest and largest multi-purpose museum in India (founded 1814).
- Founded by the Asiatic Society of Bengal (est. 1784 by Sir William Jones).
- The relics include five caskets, a sandstone coffer, and jewels recovered from Buddhist stupas.
- Believed to contain corporeal relics (sharira) attributed to the Buddha and his disciples.

- Scheduled for first public exhibition – previously housed in museum vaults for 127 years.

Prelims Connect

Key Buddhist Stupa Sites – Relics & Associated Museums

Stupa	Location	Key Finding	Current Custodian
Piprahwa	UP (1898)	Relic casket with Brahmi inscription 'Sakiyanam'	Indian Museum, Kolkata
Sanchi	MP (3rd c. BCE)	Relics of Sariputta and Moggallana	Chetiyagiri Vihara, Sanchi
Bharhut	MP	Sculpted gateway & railings	Indian Museum, Kolkata
Amaravati	AP	Sculptures of Buddha's life	Govt. Museum, Chennai
Bhattiprolu	AP	Gold casket with relics	Madras Museum
Sopara	Maharashtra	8 Ashokan Dharmacakra	Prince of Wales Museum
Dharmarajika	Taxila	Relic casket with Buddha's bone	Taxila Museum, Pakistan

Piprahwa Stupa (excavated by W.C. Peppé in 1898, Uttar Pradesh) yielded a Brahmi inscription referencing 'Sakiyanam' (the Sakya clan) – interpreted by some as authentic Buddha relics from the 8-fold distribution after Mahaparinirvana.

Prelims Pointers

- **Indian Museum (1814, Kolkata)** – oldest & largest multi-purpose museum in India and the Asia-Pacific.
- Founded by the **Asiatic Society of Bengal (1784, Sir William Jones)** – itself India's oldest learned society.
- After Buddha's Mahaparinirvana at Kushinagar, his relics were **divided into 8 shares** per the Mahaparinibbana Sutta.
- **Ashoka** is credited with redistributing the relics into **84,000 stupas** across his empire.
- **Sanchi Stupa** (UNESCO WHS 1989) was built by Ashoka and expanded by the Sungas and Satavahanas; gateways (toranas) depict Jatakas.
- **Bharhut Stupa railings** are housed in the Indian Museum, Kolkata – showing rich **Sunga-period narrative art**.
- Key Buddhist philosophical texts in the **Tripitaka (Pali)**: Vinaya, Sutta, Abhidhamma Pitakas – compiled in the First Council.

KUSHAN BRONZE COINS UNEARTHED AT BHIR MOUND, TAXILA (PAKISTAN)

Archaeologists have unearthed rare 2nd-century AD Kushan-dynasty bronze coins and lapis lazuli fragments at the UNESCO-listed Bhir Mound in Taxila, Pakistan. The coins feature Emperor Vasudeva and indicate the site's continued significance during the Kushan period .

News in Brief

- Bhir Mound is the oldest city-mound of Taxila, dating to the Mauryan period.
- Newly discovered bronze coins feature Emperor Vasudeva (c. 190–230 CE), the last great Kushan ruler.
- Lapis lazuli fragments indicate long-distance trade with Badakhshan (Afghanistan).
- Taxila (Takshashila) was a UNESCO World Heritage Site (1980) – ancient centre of learning.
- Reinforces Taxila's continuous occupation across Mauryan → Indo-Greek → Kushan phases.

Prelims Connect

Taxila – Three Successive City-Mounds

Mound	Period	Dynasty	Key Feature
Bhir Mound	6th–2nd c. BCE	Achaemenid / Mauryan	Irregular plan; oldest stratum
Sirkap	2nd c. BCE – 1st c. CE	Indo-Greek / Indo-Scythian	Grid-plan Hellenistic city
Sirsukh	1st–5th c. CE	Kushan	Fortified Kushan city

The Kushan Dynasty (c. 1st–3rd century CE) – Key Rulers

Ruler	Reign	Significance
Kujula Kadphises	c. 30–80 CE	Founder; unified Yuezhi clans
Vima Kadphises	c. 90–100 CE	Introduced gold coinage
Kanishka I	c. 127–150 CE	Greatest Kushan; 4th Buddhist Council; Mahayana
Huvishka	c. 150–190 CE	Vast empire from Central Asia to Bihar
Vasudeva I	c. 190–230 CE	Last great ruler; Shaiva leanings

Gandhara Art (1st–5th c. CE) flourished under Kushans – produced the earliest Buddha images in human form, with Greco-Roman stylistic influences in grey schist stone. Contemporary Mathura School (red sandstone) also produced Buddha imagery.

Prelims Pointers

- **Taxila** was part of the **Gandhara region** and the western terminus of the **Uttarapatha** (royal road to Pataliputra).
- **Chandragupta Maurya** is traditionally said to have studied at Taxila under **Chanakya (Kautilya)**.
- **Kanishka I** (c. 127–150 CE) – greatest Kushan ruler; **convened the 4th Buddhist Council in Kashmir**; patronised Mahayana Buddhism.
- **Kushan era** (78 CE) = **Saka Era** – India's national calendar since 1957.
- **Kushan coinage** depicts a syncretic pantheon – Greek (Helios, Selene), Iranian (Mithra, Ahura Mazda), Hindu (Shiva, Uma) and Buddhist (Buddha in human form).
- Kanishka's capital **Purushapura** = modern **Peshawar**; his summer capital was **Mathura**.
- **Taxila UNESCO WHS 1980** – inscribed for its three successive urban centres and Buddhist monasteries like Dharmarajika and Julian.
- **Nagarjuna** – founder of the **Madhyamika (Shunyavada)** school of Mahayana Buddhism – lived under the Satavahanas in Andhra.

MENHIR AND MEGALITHIC BURIAL SITES – MUDUMAL ON UNESCO TENTATIVE LIST 2025

The Mudumal megalithic menhirs in Telangana's Narayanpet district have been added to UNESCO's tentative list for World Heritage Sites in 2025. Mudumal's menhirs are India's oldest, dating back 3,500–4,000 BP, located near the banks of the Krishna River.

News in Brief

- **Megalith:** A large stone used in prehistoric structures, serving as either a **burial site or a commemorative monument**.
- **Menhirs:** Large, upright stones, often tapered at the top, erected by humans. Mudumal's menhirs are **India's oldest menhirs** – dating back **3,500–4,000 BP**.
- The **Iron Age in South India**, termed the '**Megalithic Culture**', is primarily identified through diverse burial types and accompanying **grave goods**.
- Menhirs are **precisely aligned with solar events like equinoxes and solstices**, with a stone featuring **cup-marks of Ursa Major (Saptarshi Mandal)** – the **earliest known star representation in South Asia**.
- **Different from Hero Stones:** Hero stones (**Veeragallu** in Kannada, **Natukal** in Tamil) – memorials honouring warriors who died in battle; erected between the **1st millennium BCE and 18th century CE**.

Prelims Connect

Types of Megalithic Structures in India

Type	Description	Examples in India
Menhir	Single upright stone; commemorative or marker	Mudumal (Telangana) – India's oldest
Dolmen	Horizontal slab on upright stones; burial chamber	Nilgiris (TN), Kerala, Karnataka
Cairn circle	Ring of stones around burial; often with urn burials	Brahmagiri, Maski (Karnataka)
Urn burial	Pottery vessel containing skeletal remains	Adichanallur (TN), Keeladi
Cist	Stone-lined pit/box grave	Common across South India

Prelims Pointers

- **Megalithic culture** in India is broadly dated from **1500 BCE to 500 CE** – representing the transition from Neolithic to Iron Age in South India.
- **Adichanallur** (Thoothukudi, TN) – Iron Age-Megalithic urn burial site on the banks of the Thamirabarani river; Madras HC recently barred sand mining near it.
- **Keeladi** (Sivaganga, TN) – excavations from 2015 prove an urban civilisation in Sangam Age on banks of the Vaigai river.
- **Ratnagiri** (Jajpur, Odisha) – part of the 'Diamond Triangle' (**Ratnagiri, Udaygiri, Lalitgiri**); Buddhism flourished under the **Bhaumakara dynasty (8th–10th century CE)**.
- **Daojali Hading** (Dima Hasao district, Assam) – major Neolithic site dating back over 2700 years in the Langting-Mupa Reserve Forest.

EARLY MEDIEVAL INDIA

RAJARAJA CHOLA INSCRIPTION DISCOVERED AT MELAVALAVU (MADURAI)

A new inscription pertaining to Rajaraja Chola I has been discovered in the Somagiri hills at Melavalavu, near Melur in Madurai district, Tamil Nadu. The inscription, dating to around 1000 CE, begins with the honorific title 'Raja Raja Keshari-varman'.

News in Brief

- Location – Somagiri hills, Melavalavu village, near Melur, Madurai district.
- Dating – approximately 1000 CE, during the reign of Rajaraja Chola I (985–1014 CE).
- Begins with the honorific 'Raja Raja Keshari-varman' – standard Chola royal title.
- The inscription attests to the extent of Rajaraja's administrative reach into Pandya country.
- Adds to the Chola corpus of over 10,000 inscriptions – the largest of any Indian dynasty.

Prelims Connect

Imperial Cholas – Great Rulers (c. 850–1279 CE)

Ruler	Reign	Achievements
Vijayalaya	c. 850–871	Founder of Imperial Cholas; captured Tanjavur
Aditya I	c. 871–907	Defeated the Pallavas (Aparajita); expanded north
Parantaka I	c. 907–955	Defeated Pandyas & Sri Lanka; lost Thakkolam (949) to Rashtrakutas
Rajaraja I	c. 985–1014	Built Brihadeeswara temple, Tanjavur; conquered Sri Lanka
Rajendra I	c. 1014–1044	Conquered Ganga valley; naval expedition to Srivijaya
Kulottunga I	c. 1070–1122	Abolished tolls; 'Sungam Tavirtta Cholan'
Rajendra III	c. 1246–1279	Last Chola emperor

Great Living Chola Temples (UNESCO WHS 1987, extended 2004)

Temple	Location	Built By	Year
Brihadeeswara (Big Temple)	Thanjavur	Rajaraja I	1010 CE
Gangaikonda Cholapuram	Ariyalur district	Rajendra I	c. 1035 CE
Airavatesvara	Darasuram	Rajaraja II	12th century

Prelims Pointers

- **Rajaraja Chola I (985–1014 CE)** built the **Brihadeeswara (Peruvudaiyar) Temple** at Thanjavur (1010 CE) – granite vimana 66m tall.
- He conquered **Sri Lanka (Anuradhapura)** and renamed it **Mummudi-Cholamandalam**; also Maldives.
- Chola administration – **Ur (ordinary villages)**, **Sabha (Brahmana villages)**, **Nagaram (merchant towns)** – unique local self-government.
- **Uttiramerur inscription (Parantaka I, c. 920 CE)** – details **Kudavolai system** for electing village council (sabha) members.

- Chola standing army had **70 regiments (Kaikkolars)**; a powerful navy conquered the Andaman & Nicobar islands.
- **Brihadeeswara Temple** was part of UNESCO 'Great Living Chola Temples' – originally inscribed 1987, extended to 3 temples in 2004.
- Chola bronze sculptures (especially **Nataraja**) represent the peak of Indian metal casting – **cire perdue (lost-wax)** technique.

RTC THAKKOLAM RENAMED 'RAJADITYA CHOLAN' – HONOURING CHOLA PRINCE

The Recruits Training Centre (RTC) of the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) in Arakkonam has been renamed 'Rajaditya Cholan (RTC), Thakkolam' in memory of the Chola prince who fell in the Battle of Thakkolam (949 CE) – a defining Chola-Rashtrakuta clash .

News in Brief

- RTC Arakkonam (CISF) renamed in honour of Prince Rajaditya Chola, son of Parantaka I.
- Commemorates the Battle of Thakkolam (949 CE) – fought near present-day Tiruvallur district, Tamil Nadu.
- Chola forces under Rajaditya were defeated by Rashtrakuta king Krishna III; Rajaditya was killed in battle.
- The defeat marked a temporary setback for the Cholas; recovery came under Rajaraja I (985 CE).
- Renaming is part of efforts to commemorate regional martyr-princes and decolonise military nomenclature.

Prelims Connect

Rashtrakuta Dynasty (c. 753–982 CE) – Major Rulers

Ruler	Reign	Significance
Dantidurga	c. 735–756	Founder; defeated the Chalukyas of Badami
Krishna I	c. 756–774	Built Kailasa Temple at Ellora (monolithic rock-cut)
Govinda III	c. 793–814	Defeated Gurjara-Pratiharas; established pan-Indian dominance
Amoghavarsha I	c. 814–878	'Indian Ashoka'; authored 'Kavirajamarga' (Kannada)
Krishna III	c. 939–967	Won Battle of Thakkolam (949); defeated Cholas

Tripartite Struggle (8th–9th century) – Rashtrakutas (Deccan), Gurjara-Pratiharas (N/NW India) and Palas (E India) fought for control of Kannauj, the symbolic capital of North India after Harsha's death.

Prelims Pointers

- **Battle of Thakkolam (949 CE)** – Rashtrakuta king **Krishna III** defeated Chola prince **Rajaditya**; fought in modern Tiruvallur district.
- Rashtrakuta capital – **Manyakheta (modern Malkhed, Karnataka)**.
- **Kailasa Temple at Ellora** (Cave 16) – built by **Krishna I**; largest monolithic rock-cut temple in the world.
- **Amoghavarsha I** ('Indian Ashoka') – authored **Kavirajamarga** (earliest Kannada literary work) and **Ratnamalika** (Sanskrit).
- Arab traveller **Al-Masudi** called the Rashtrakuta ruler one of the '**four great kings of the world**'.
- Rashtrakutas were eventually overthrown by the **Chalukyas of Kalyani (Western Chalukyas)** under Tailapa II (973 CE).

- **Central Industrial Security Force (CISF)** – raised in 1969 under the CISF Act, under the Ministry of Home Affairs; protects critical infrastructure.

AADI THIRUVATHIRAI – RAJENDRA CHOLA I'S BIRTH ANNIVERSARY AT GANGAIKONDA CHOLAPURAM

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, held at the historic Gangaikonda Cholapuram in Tamil Nadu's Ariyalur district .

News in Brief

- Aadi Thiruvathirai falls in the Tamil month of Aadi and commemorates Rajendra Chola I's birth star (Thiruvathirai / Arudra).
- Gangaikonda Cholapuram – founded as capital by Rajendra Chola I after his North Indian conquest up to the Ganga (c. 1022 CE).
- The city's Brihadeeswara Temple (different from Thanjavur's) is part of the UNESCO 'Great Living Chola Temples'.
- Rajendra I's reign (1014–1044 CE) marks the apogee of Chola power, stretching from the Ganga to Srivijaya.
- 'Gangaikondan' title – conferred after defeating Mahipala of the Pala dynasty and bringing Ganga water to his capital.

Prelims Connect

Rajendra Chola I – Conquests & Titles

Campaign / Title	Region	Significance
Gangaikonda Cholan	Gangetic plain	Defeated Mahipala (Pala); brought Ganga water for abhisheka
Kadaram Kondan	Kadaram (Kedah, Malay)	Naval expedition against Srivijaya Empire (1025 CE)
Pandita Cholan	-	'Learned Chola' – patron of scholars
Conquest of Sri Lanka	North & South Lanka	Completed his father Rajaraja's conquest
Conquest of Maldives	Indian Ocean	Extended Chola maritime dominance

The Srivijaya expedition (1025 CE) is unique in Indian history – the only known Indian naval expedition to mainland Southeast Asia. Rajendra captured ports including Kadaram, Pannai, Malaiyur, Takkolam, and Nakkavaram.

Prelims Pointers

- **Rajendra Chola I (1014–1044 CE)** founded **Gangaikonda Cholapuram** as his new capital after the Ganga expedition.
- **Gangaikonda Cholapuram Brihadeeswara Temple** is part of UNESCO Great Living Chola Temples (extended 2004).
- Chola navy **was unique in medieval India** – conquered Sri Lanka, Maldives, and launched an expedition to Srivijaya.

- **Srivijaya Empire** (7th–13th c. CE) was a maritime Malay polity based in Sumatra; Rajendra's 1025 raid was possibly triggered by trade disputes.
- **Srivijaya** was an important Mahayana Buddhist centre – the Chinese pilgrim **I-Tsing** studied Buddhism at Srivijaya in the 7th century.
- **Rajendra's Tiruvalangadu copper plates** are the longest Chola copper-plate charter, detailing his conquests.
- The **Chola navy** used **Kolandiyah ships (large outriggers)** and was commanded by admirals titled 'Nayak'.

CHOLA GANGAM LAKE REJUVENATION – 1000-YEAR-OLD CHOLA WATER HERITAGE

The Tamil Nadu government is rejuvenating the 1000-year-old Chola Gangam lake in Gangaikonda Cholapuram with a budget of ₹20 crore, as part of a larger initiative to develop heritage tourism and honour the legacy of the Cholas .

News in Brief

- Chola Gangam (also Ponneri lake) – commissioned by Rajendra Chola I after his Gangetic campaign.
- Said to have been filled with water brought from the Ganga, carried by defeated Pala soldiers.
- Located adjacent to Gangaikonda Cholapuram, Ariyalur district, Tamil Nadu.
- Part of Chola hydraulic engineering tradition that fed temple towns & agricultural land via tanks (eri).
- Budget ₹20 crore allocated by Tamil Nadu government for restoration and tourism development.

Prelims Connect

Chola Engineering – Water Management Systems

Feature	Description
Eri (village tank)	Rain-fed tanks feeding agricultural lands; cascade system across villages
Kalingula / Madugu	Sluice and spillway components of Chola tank irrigation
Kallanai / Grand Anicut	Karikala Chola's (2nd c. CE) dam across the Kaveri – oldest functional dam in the world
Chola Gangam (Ponneri)	Rajendra I's man-made lake at Gangaikonda Cholapuram
Temple tanks	Each Chola temple had its own tank for ritual ablutions

Kallanai (Grand Anicut) – built by Karikala Chola across the Kaveri in the 2nd century CE – is the oldest water-diversion structure still in use and regulates irrigation over a vast area of the Kaveri delta.

Prelims Pointers

- **Ponneri / Chola Gangam** – largest artificial lake built by **Rajendra I**; fed by Kollidam river.
- **Kallanai (Grand Anicut)** – oldest water-diversion structure still in use; built by **Karikala Chola (2nd c. CE)** across Kaveri.
- **Chola tank irrigation** used **cascading village tanks (eri)** – a UNESCO-recognised traditional water management system.
- **Gangaikonda Cholapuram** served as Chola capital for ~250 years before declining under Rajendra III.
- **Rajendra Chola's navy** and maritime trade brought **Srivijaya-style water management** techniques to Tamil Nadu.
- Chola inscriptions record '**mudanirvayam**' (tax on wet land) and '**pudanirvayam**' (tax on dry land).

HALLEY'S COMET – FIRST INDIAN EPIGRAPHICAL REFERENCE AT SRISAILAM (1456 CE)

A 15th-century copper plate inscription found in the Mallikarjunaswamy temple in Srisailam, Andhra Pradesh, provides the first known Indian epigraphical reference to Halley's Comet. The inscription, dated 1456 CE, records a land grant made to avert the perceived ill omens of the comet's appearance .

News in Brief

- Mallikarjunaswamy temple, Srisailam – one of the 12 Jyotirlinga shrines of Shiva.
- Copper plate dated 1456 CE corresponds exactly to Halley's Comet's 1456 apparition.
- The grant was made to Brahmins to perform propitiatory rituals against the comet's perceived ill omens.
- First known Indian epigraphical reference to Halley's Comet – a major find in historical astronomy.
- Issued during the reign of Mallikarjuna (son of Devaraya II) of the Sangama dynasty, Vijayanagara Empire.

Prelims Connect

Vijayanagara Empire – Four Dynasties

Dynasty	Reign	Founder / Key Ruler
Sangama	1336-1485	Harihara I & Bukka I (founders)
Saluva	1485-1505	Saluva Narasimha
Tuluva	1505-1570	Krishnadevaraya (greatest)
Aravidu	1570-1646	Ramaraya; post-Talikota decline

Halley's Comet – appears roughly every 76 years; named after Edmund Halley (1705) who predicted its return. Its 1986 appearance was observed from space by Giotto, Vega-1, and Vega-2 probes. Next return: 2061.

Prelims Pointers

- **Srisailam** – one of the **12 Jyotirlingas** and 18 Shakti Peethas; UNESCO 'Srisailam-Nallamala' tiger reserve.
- **Vijayanagara Empire** founded in **1336 CE by Harihara I & Bukka I** under the guidance of saint **Vidyananya**.
- Capital **Hampi** – UNESCO WHS 1986; located on the south bank of the Tungabhadra river.
- **Krishnadevaraya (1509-1529)** – greatest Tuluva ruler; patron of **Ashtadiggajas** (eight court poets).
- **Battle of Talikota (1565)** – joint Deccan sultanates (Ahmadnagar, Bijapur, Golconda, Bidar) crushed Vijayanagara under Aliya Ramaraya.
- **Vijayanagara temples** feature **gopurams, mandapas (1000-pillar halls), rayagopurams** – the distinct Vijayanagara style.

AMIR KHUSRO – 'TUTI-YI-HIND', FATHER OF GANGA-JAMUNI CULTURE

The Prime Minister attended the 25th edition of Jahane-Khusrau, a Sufi music festival. Known as 'Tuti-yi-Hind' (Parrot of India), Amir Khusrau is regarded as a father figure of North India's syncretic Ganga-Jamuni culture.

News in Brief

- Made lasting contributions to **Indian classical music, Sufi qawwali, and Persian literature** – also credited for developing **Hindavi** (early form of Hindi/Urdu).
- Served at least **five Sultans**: Muiz ud din Qaiqabad, Jalaluddin Khalji, Alauddin Khalji, Qutbuddin Mubarak Shah, Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq. **Sultan Jalaluddin Khalji bestowed the title 'Amir'**.
- Most beloved disciple of the **Chishti Sheikh Nizamuddin Auliya**.

- Credited with crafting dozens of ragas, **Khayal music**, and possibly **inventing the sitar and tabla** (though evidence is limited).

Prelims Connect

Amir Khusro's Important Texts

Text	Type	Content
Nuh Sipahr	Historical masnavi	Praises India; describes Indian culture, music, and nature
Tughluq Nama	Historical masnavi	History of Tughluqs
Khamsa (Quintet)	Romantic/ethical poems	Five poems: Matla-ul-Anwar, Shirin Khusrau, Laila Majnun, Aina-e-Sikandari, Hasht Bihisht
Khazain-ul-Futuh	Prose history	History of Alauddin Khalji's campaigns
Ijaz-i-Khusravi	Poetry collection	Diverse contributions to Indo-Persian literature

Prelims Pointers

- **Ganga-Jamuni tehzeeb**: Composite culture of UP/Delhi – blend of Hindu and Muslim traditions, music, language, and art.
- **Qawwali** – devotional Sufi music; Khusrau gave it its present form combining Persian, Arabic, and Indian elements.
- **Nizamuddin Auliya** – founder of the Nizamuddin Dargah in Delhi; **Chishti Sufi Order** (most popular in India); other Chishti saints: Moinuddin Chishti (Ajmer), Fariduddin Ganjshakar (Pakpattan).

7TH-CENTURY BADAMI CHALUKYA INSCRIPTION DISCOVERED AT MADAPURA LAKE, KARNATAKA

A recent discovery at Madapura Lake in Davangere, Karnataka, uncovered a 7th-century inscription from the time of Vikramaditya I of the Badami Chalukya dynasty. The inscription, measuring approximately five feet long, offers fresh insights into Chalukya land-grant practices .

News in Brief

- Location – Madapura Lake, Davangere district, Karnataka.
- Dates to the reign of Vikramaditya I (c. 655–680 CE) of the Chalukyas of Badami.
- Approximately 5 feet long – a substantial and well-preserved stone inscription.
- Adds to our understanding of Chalukya administrative reach into the south Karnataka region.
- Vikramaditya I was the son of Pulakeshin II – restored Chalukya fortunes after his father's defeat by Narasimhavarman Pallava.

Prelims Connect

Chalukyas of Badami (c. 543–753 CE) – Key Rulers

Ruler	Reign	Significance
Pulakeshin I	c. 543–566	Founder; performed ashvamedha
Kirtivarman I	c. 566–598	Annexed Kadambas, Gangas, Mauryas of Konkan
Pulakeshin II	c. 610–642	Defeated Harsha at Narmada; received Persian embassy
Vikramaditya I	c. 655–680	Restored dynasty after Pallava invasion
Vikramaditya II	c. 733–746	Defeated Pallavas three times; captured Kanchi
Kirtivarman II	c. 746–753	Last ruler; overthrown by Rashtrakuta Dantidurga

Dravidian–Nagara–Vesara Temple Styles

Style	Region	Feature
Nagara	North India	Curvilinear shikhara over garbhagriha
Dravidian	South India (Tamil)	Pyramidal vimana with kalasha
Vesara	Deccan (Chalukya / Hoysala)	Hybrid – circular/star-shaped plan

Prelims Pointers

- **Pulakeshin II (610–642 CE)** – greatest Chalukya; defeated **Harshavardhana at the Narmada (c. 630 CE)** – recorded in the Aihole inscription by court poet Ravikirti.
- **Aihole Inscription** (by Ravikirti) – eulogizes Pulakeshin II; dated in the Saka era (634 CE); preserved at **Meguti Jain Temple**.
- **Pulakeshin II** received an embassy from **Khusrau II of Persia (626 CE)**; depicted in Ajanta Cave 1 fresco (possibly).
- Chalukya temples – **Aihole ('cradle of Indian temple architecture')**, **Badami (cave temples)**, **Pattadakal** – Pattadakal is a UNESCO WHS (1987).
- **Pattadakal** (UNESCO 1987) features both **Nagara (Papanatha, Galaganatha)** and **Dravidian (Virupaksha, Mallikarjuna)** temple styles – experimental synthesis.
- **Badami cave temples** – 4 rock-cut temples; Caves 1-3 Hindu (Shiva, Vishnu, Narasimha), Cave 4 Jain.
- Pallavas under **Narasimhavarman I ('Mahamalla')** defeated and killed Pulakeshin II at Vatapi (642 CE) – assumed the title '**Vatapikonda**'.

LATER MEDIEVAL INDIA

DEVARAYA I COPPER PLATES UNEARTHED – EARLIEST VIJAYANAGARA CORONATION RECORD

The unveiling of rare 15th-century copper plates in Bengaluru, related to the reign of Devaraya I of the Sangama Dynasty, provides significant historical insights into the Vijayanagara Empire. These plates, dated to 1406 CE, document a land grant to Brahmins and confirm Devaraya I's coronation date; they are the first known coronation copper plates from the Vijayanagara Empire to surface .

News in Brief

- Plates document a land grant to Brahmins and the coronation date of Devaraya I (1406 CE).

- Inscribed in Sanskrit, Kannada and Nagari scripts – unique trilingual record.
- Feature a Vamana (dwarf incarnation of Vishnu) seal instead of the traditional Varaha (boar) emblem.
- First known coronation-related copper plates from the Vijayanagara Empire.
- Devaraya I (1406–1422 CE) was a Sangama ruler who consolidated Vijayanagara power against the Bahmanis.

Prelims Connect

Vijayanagara Empire – Key Rulers (Sangama to Tuluva)

Ruler	Dynasty	Reign	Significance
Harihara I	Sangama	1336–1356	Co-founder (with Bukka)
Bukka I	Sangama	1356–1377	Patronised Vidyanarya; expanded south
Devaraya I	Sangama	1406–1422	Built dam on Tungabhadra; 1406 plates
Devaraya II	Sangama	1422–1446	'Gajabetekara'; included Muslims in army
Krishnadevaraya	Tuluva	1509–1529	Greatest; patronised Telugu literature
Aliya Ramaraya	Aravidu	1542–1565	Defeated at Talikota (1565)

Devaraya I is credited with building an aqueduct/anicut across the Tungabhadra river to provide water to his capital city (Vijayanagara/Hampi) – an early example of Deccan hydraulic engineering.

Prelims Pointers

- **Vijayanagara** founded **1336 CE** by **Harihara I & Bukka I** under the spiritual guidance of **Vidyanarya** of Sringeri math.
- Capital **Hampi** on the Tungabhadra river – **UNESCO WHS (1986)**; Italian traveller Domingo Paes and Persian Abdur Razzaq left vivid accounts.
- **Abdur Razzaq** (envoy of Shah Rukh, 1443 CE) – praised Vijayanagara as the '**unrivalled city**' and described its bazaars.
- **Varaha emblem** – traditional Vijayanagara seal (boar with sword); **Vamana** on Devaraya I's plates represents a devotional variation.
- **Krishnadevaraya's court** had the **Ashtadiggaja** (eight poets) – including **Allasani Peddana** ('**Andhra Kavita Pitamaha**').
- Vijayanagara's rivalry was with the **Bahmani Sultanate (1347)** and its successor Deccan Sultanates – over the Raichur Doab.
- Hampi temples – **Virupaksha, Vittala (musical pillars), Hazara Rama, Krishna Swamy**; the Stone Chariot at Vittala temple is iconic.

KONDAVEEDU FORT – ₹100 CRORE HERITAGE DEVELOPMENT PROJECT (ANDHRA PRADESH)

The Central Government is planning a ₹100-crore comprehensive development project for the historic Kondaveedu Fort in Andhra Pradesh to boost heritage tourism and regional growth.

News in Brief

- Kondaveedu Fort – in Guntur district, Andhra Pradesh, atop a hill range near Chilakaluripet.
- Associated with the Reddi dynasty (1325–1448 CE) that ruled coastal Andhra from this fort.
- Later captured by Vijayanagara, Gajapatis of Odisha, Bahmani/Quib Shahi sultans, and the British.

- Features 21 structures including temples, granaries and gateways.
- ₹100-crore central project aimed at restoration, tourism infrastructure and UNESCO-tentative-list preparation.

Prelims Connect

Reddi Kingdom of Kondaveedu & Rajahmundry (c. 1325–1448 CE)

Ruler	Capital	Note
Prolaya Vema Reddi	Addanki	Founder; shifted to Kondaveedu (1335)
Anapota Reddi	Kondaveedu	Consolidated the kingdom
Kumaragiri Reddi	Kondaveedu	Patronised poets Srinatha
Pedakomati Vema	Kondaveedu	Patron of Telugu poet Srinatha
Peda Raja	Kondaveedu/Rajamahen dravaram	Last; absorbed by Vijayanagara 1448

Srinatha (1365–1441) – 'Kavi Sarvabhauma', the greatest Telugu poet of the Reddi era; served in the courts of the Reddi kings of Kondaveedu and Rajahmundry; composed Haravilasam, Kashikhandam, Bhimeswara Puranam.

Prelims Pointers

- **Reddi dynasty (1325–1448)** – rose after the fall of the **Kakatiyas of Warangal** to the Delhi Sultanate (Ulugh Khan's 1323 invasion).
- **Kondaveedu Fort** has 21 structures – temples, granaries, gateways – across rugged hilly terrain.
- Under **Krishnadevaraya**, Kondaveedu was besieged and captured from the Gajapati Prataparudra in his **Kalinga campaign (1515)**.
- **Kakatiya dynasty (Warangal, 12th–14th c.)** – built the **Ramappa temple (UNESCO WHS 2021)**; fell to Malik Kafur's invasions (1309, 1310).
- **Prataparudra II** – last Kakatiya ruler; his defeat brought the **Koh-i-Noor diamond** (allegedly from Kollur mines, Andhra) to the Delhi Sultanate.
- **Gajapati dynasty of Odisha (15th–16th c.)** – Kapilendra, Purushottama, Prataparudra; eventually defeated by Krishnadevaraya.

RAJON KI BAOLI – 16TH CENTURY LODI STEPWELL RESTORED AT MEHRAULI

The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), in collaboration with World Monuments Fund India (WMFI) and TCS Foundation, has successfully restored the 16th-century Rajon ki Baoli stepwell located in Delhi's Mehrauli Archaeological Park (May 2025).

News in Brief

- Rajon ki Baoli – three-storey stepwell built during the Lodi dynasty (c. 1516 CE).
- Located in Mehrauli Archaeological Park, south Delhi – alongside Qutb Minar complex.
- Built during the reign of Sikandar Lodi (1489–1517); commissioned by Daulat Khan.
- Name 'Rajon' refers to masons (raj) who reportedly used it for shelter.
- Restoration led by ASI with World Monuments Fund India and TCS Foundation support.

Prelims Connect

Delhi Sultanate – Five Dynasties (1206–1526 CE)

Dynasty	Dates	Founder	Notable Ruler
Mamluk (Slave)	1206–1290	Qutbuddin Aibak	Iltutmish, Razia, Balban
Khilji	1290–1320	Jalaluddin Khilji	Alauddin Khilji (market reforms)
Tughlaq	1320–1414	Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq	Muhammad bin Tughlaq, Firoz Shah
Sayyid	1414–1451	Khizr Khan	-
Lodi	1451–1526	Bahlul Lodi	Sikandar Lodi, Ibrahim Lodi

The Lodis were the first and only Afghan (Pashtun) dynasty of the Delhi Sultanate. Ibrahim Lodi was defeated and killed by Babur at the First Battle of Panipat (21 April 1526) – ending the Sultanate and starting Mughal rule.

Prelims Pointers

- **Mehrauli Archaeological Park** houses the **Qutb Minar (UNESCO WHS 1993)**, Iltutmish's tomb, Alai Darwaza, Jamali Kamali and the Iron Pillar of Delhi (Gupta era).
- **Iron Pillar** – 7.2m wrought-iron column, originally Gupta-era (attributed to Chandragupta II 'Vikramaditya'); moved to Delhi by Anangpal Tomar.
- **Qutb Minar (73m)** – begun by **Qutbuddin Aibak (1193)** and completed by Iltutmish (1220); damaged by lightning in 1326 and 1368.
- **Sikandar Lodi (1489–1517)** – moved the capital from Delhi to **Agra (1504)**; patronised architecture and water works.
- **Baoli / Vav / Stepwell** – traditional Indian water-harvesting structure; UNESCO WHS at **Rani ki Vav, Patan, Gujarat (1063 CE, Chalukya)**.
- **First Battle of Panipat (1526)** – Babur's 12,000-strong army defeated Ibrahim Lodi's 100,000 with **field artillery (matchlocks) and tulughma (flanking)**.
- **Lodi Garden, Delhi** contains the tombs of Mohammed Shah (Sayyid), Sikandar Lodi, Bara Gumbad and Sheesh Gumbad.

MAHARAJ PRITHU – 13TH C. KAMRUPA KING HONOURED IN GUWAHATI

The Assam government decided to name Guwahati's GNB Flyover as 'Maharaj Prithu Flyover' after King Prithu, the 13th-century raja of Kamrupa. He is known for leading a coalition of Bodo, Koch Rajbongshi and Keot people to victory against Bakhtiyar Khilji's Tibet expedition .

News in Brief

- Prithu was the first king of the Khen / Sutiya-era Kamrupa polity in present-day Assam.
- He defeated the invading army of Bakhtiyar Khilji in 1206 CE, who was returning from an ill-fated Tibet expedition.
- The victory is considered one of the earliest successful resistances to the Delhi Sultanate's expansion.
- Prithu is remembered as a symbol of Assamese resistance to foreign invasion.
- Renaming of GNB Flyover is part of honouring regional historical figures from India's North-East.

Prelims Connect

Bakhtiyar Khilji's Campaigns (1193–1206 CE)

Year	Campaign	Outcome
1193	Invasion of Bihar	Destroyed Nalanda, Vikramshila, Odantapuri universities
1193	Fall of Nalanda	Ended ancient centre of learning (Kumaragupta I, 5th c.)
1203	Invasion of Bengal	Overthrew Lakshmana Sena (Sena dynasty)
1206	Tibet expedition	Catastrophic failure in Brahmaputra valley
1206	Battle against Prithu	Defeated in Kamrupa; Bakhtiyar died soon after

Nalanda University (founded by Kumaragupta I, c. 5th c. CE, UNESCO WHS 2016) was the world's first residential university. Its destruction by Bakhtiyar Khilji in 1193 CE is a pivotal date in Indian intellectual history.

Prelims Pointers

- **Bakhtiyar Khilji** – Turkish slave commander under Qutbuddin Aibak; captured Bihar and Bengal in 1193–1203.
- **Destruction of Nalanda (1193 CE)** – Persian chronicler **Minhaj-us-Siraj** (Tabaqat-i-Nasiri) describes the library burning for months.
- **Nalanda** – founded by **Kumaragupta I of the Gupta dynasty** (5th c. CE); UNESCO WHS 2016; modern revival as Nalanda University (2014).
- **Vikramshila** – founded by Dharmapala (Pala dynasty) in the 8th c. CE; centre for Tantric Buddhism; also destroyed by Bakhtiyar.
- **Kamrupa** – ancient name for Assam; mentioned in Allahabad Pillar Inscription (Samudragupta) as a frontier kingdom.
- **Xuan Zang (Hiuen Tsang)** – Chinese pilgrim; visited **Kamrupa king Bhaskaravarman** (ally of Harsha) in 643 CE.
- **Ahom dynasty (1228–1826)** – Shan-Tai immigrants under **Sukaphaa**; successfully resisted the Mughals in the Battle of Saraighat (1671, under Lachit Borphukan).

MARATHAS, SIKHS & REGIONAL KINGDOMS

FORT WILLIAM IN KOLKATA RENAMED 'VIJAY DURG' AFTER SHIVAJI'S NAVAL FORT

The Indian Army's Eastern Command headquarters, Fort William in Kolkata – built by the British East India Company in 1781 and long a symbol of colonial rule – has been officially renamed Vijay Durg, after the invincible coastal fortress of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's Maratha navy on the Konkan coast. The rechristening is part of the wider move to shed colonial military nomenclature and honour indigenous martial heritage.

News in Brief

- Fort William, built by the East India Company after the 1756 Siraj-ud-Daulah conflict and completed in 1781, was named after King William III of England; it housed the British Bengal Presidency's military command.
- Vijay Durg (literally 'Fort of Victory') in Sindhudurg district of Maharashtra was fortified by Shivaji in 1653 and served as the principal base of the Maratha navy for over a century.
- The fort was considered impregnable from the sea because of its triple rampart, underwater rock barrier, and a secret escape tunnel reportedly connecting it to Dhulap House 3 km inland.
- The Southern and Western Commands had already renamed buildings after Maratha naval hero Kanhoji Angre and Shivaji; the Eastern Command's move completes the trio.

Prelims Connect

Shivaji's Maratha Navy – Quick Reference

Element	Details
Founder of navy	Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj (mid-17th cent.) – often called 'Father of the Indian Navy'
Main admirals (Sarkhel)	Maynak Bhandari, Daulat Khan, Kanhoji Angre (1669–1729)
Major naval forts	Sindhudurg, Vijay Durg, Suvarnadurg, Jaigad, Padmadurg, Kolaba
Ship types	Ghurabs (gunboats), Gallivats (scout boats), Pals (three-masted)
Adversaries	Siddis of Janjira, Portuguese at Goa, British & Dutch East India Cos.

Kanhoji Angre, who succeeded as fleet commander under Shahu, dominated the western coast from 1698–1729 and was never defeated by any European power in his lifetime.

Prelims Pointers

- Vijay Durg is located on the **Konkan coast in Sindhudurg district** of Maharashtra; it originally belonged to the
- Shilahara dynasty (c. 1193–1205) and was **strengthened and fortified by Shivaji in 1653**.
- Fort William was built during the reign of **Warren Hastings** (completed 1781); its design is a **star-shaped bastion fort**.
- Shivaji's coronation (Rajyabhisheka) took place at **Raigad Fort in 1674**; he took the title '**Chhatrapati**'.
- Kanhoji Angre ruled the western coast from **Kolaba Fort**; the British called him a 'pirate' but Marathas titled him **Sarkhel (Admiral)**.

SHIVAJI MAHARAJ MEMORIAL TO BE BUILT NEAR AGRA'S DIWAN-I-KHAS

The Uttar Pradesh government has approved the construction of a Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj memorial within the Agra Fort premises, at the site where Shivaji was presented before Aurangzeb on 12 May 1666. The proposal commemorates the famed audience in which Shivaji, placed behind a row of minor Mughal courtiers, walked out in protest – an incident that preceded his legendary escape from house arrest hidden in sweet baskets.

News in Brief

- Shivaji travelled to Agra in 1666 under the Treaty of Purandar (1665) signed with Mirza Raja Jai Singh of Amber, which had ceded 23 forts to the Mughals.
- During the audience at Agra's Diwan-i-Khas, Shivaji was stationed among the mansabdars of the third rank – an insult that led him to storm out, after which Aurangzeb placed him under house arrest at Phool Mahal.
- On 17 August 1666 Shivaji escaped Agra, reportedly concealed inside baskets of sweets (mithai/peshkash) sent to Brahmins and holy men, accompanied by his son Sambhaji.
- The memorial will be located near Diwan-i-Khas; the UP Cabinet cleared the proposal in March 2025.

Prelims Connect

Treaty of Purandar (1665) – Key Provisions

Clause	Provision

Signed between	Shivaji and Mirza Raja Jai Singh I of Amber (Mughal commander of Aurangzeb)
Forts surrendered	23 forts out of 35 were ceded to the Mughals; Shivaji retained 12 forts
Jagir	Shivaji's son Sambhaji was granted a mansab of 5,000 and a jagir in Berar
Tribute	Shivaji agreed to pay tribute and assist Mughals in the Deccan war against Bijapur

The escape from Agra (17 Aug 1666) is considered one of the most daring episodes of medieval Indian history and paved the way for Shivaji's second rise and formal coronation in 1674.

Prelims Pointers

- Agra Fort was built by **Akbar in 1565–73**; Diwan-i-Khas was added by **Shah Jahan** for private audiences.
- Shivaji was born on **19 February 1630 at Shivneri Fort** near Pune, to Shahji Bhonsle and Jijabai.
- His political guru and guardian was **Dadoji Konddeo**; his spiritual guru was **Samarth Ramdas**.
- Shivaji's coronation at Raigad (1674) was conducted by **Gaga Bhatt of Varanasi**; he adopted titles like **Kshatriya Kulawatansa and Haindava Dharmoddharak**.
- Aurangzeb's Deccan policy in the years after the escape led to the **execution of Sambhaji in 1689** and the start of the 27-year Mughal–Maratha war.

FIRST-EVER TEMPLE DEDICATED TO CHHATRAPATI SHIVAJI INAUGURATED AT BHIWANDI

India's first temple dedicated to Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj has been inaugurated at Bhiwandi near Mumbai. Conceived as a site of devotional remembrance rather than mere statuary, the temple enshrines a murti of Shivaji in his coronation attire, flanked by images of his mother Jijabai and his spiritual guru Samarth Ramdas.

News in Brief

- The temple marks a symbolic shift: Shivaji is now worshipped as a 'lokdevta' (people's deity) and not merely honoured through statues and forts.
- Shivaji was formally crowned Chhatrapati at Raigad Fort on 6 June 1674 in a Vedic coronation (Rajyabhisheka) conducted by Gaga Bhatt of Kashi.
- He assumed the title 'Kshatriya Kulawatansa Shri Raja Shiv Chhatrapati' and established Hindavi Swarajya as a sovereign Maratha state.
- The Bhiwandi temple's inauguration coincides with the 395th Shiv Jayanti year celebrations (2025).

Prelims Connect

Shivaji's Ashtapradhan (Council of Eight Ministers)

Post	Portfolio
Peshwa (Prime Minister)	General administration, head of council
Amatya (Majumdar)	Finance and revenue
Sachiv (Shuru Nawis)	Royal correspondence and records
Mantri (Waqia Nawis)	Personal security of the king
Senapati (Sar-i-Naubat)	Commander-in-chief of the army

Sumant (Dabir)	Foreign affairs
Nyayadhish	Chief Justice
Panditrao (Danadhyaksha)	Religious affairs and charities

The Ashtapradhan system was a remarkable administrative innovation; except Panditrao and Nyayadhish, all ministers also commanded troops in the field.

Prelims Pointers

- Shivaji was the **first Maratha ruler to adopt Sanskrit court language**; his rajya-vyavahara-kosha (lexicon) was prepared to replace Persian terms.
- His two key taxes were **Chauth (1/4 of revenue) and Sardeshmukhi (1/10)** levied on neighbouring territories.
- Shivaji's standing army was **paid in cash** – a departure from the jagirdari system; forts were classified as **Giri-durg, Jal-durg, Sthala-durg, Van-durg**.
- Samarth Ramdas, Shivaji's spiritual guru, authored '**Dasabodha**' in Marathi and founded the **Samartha Sampradaya** of bhakti.

RARE SHAKA-ERA ASTROLABE (YANTRARAJ) DISCOVERED AT RAIGAD FORT

Archaeologists have reported the discovery of a rare brass astrolabe – referred to in Sanskrit as Yantraraj ('king of instruments') – at Raigad Fort in Maharashtra. The find throws fresh light on the scientific ecosystem of the Maratha capital under Shivaji and on the transmission of Islamic-Arabic astronomical instruments into Sanskrit scholarly traditions during the medieval period.

News in Brief

- An astrolabe is a classical instrument used for telling time, finding latitude, measuring altitudes of celestial bodies, and determining prayer directions – known as Yantraraj in Indian astronomical Sanskrit texts.
- Raigad Fort, located in the Sahyadri range of Raigad district, served as the capital of the Maratha Empire from Shivaji's coronation in 1674 until his death in 1680.
- The 14th-century Jain scholar Mahendra Suri wrote the first Sanskrit treatise on the astrolabe, 'Yantraraja' (1370 CE), under Firoz Shah Tughlaq's court – fusing Arabic instrumental knowledge with Sanskrit siddhantic astronomy.
- Such finds are rare in fort contexts and suggest that Maratha rulers actively patronised astronomy and navigational science (critical for the Maratha navy).

Prelims Connect

Raigad Fort – At a Glance

Feature	Details
Location	Sahyadri range, Raigad district, Maharashtra (c. 820 m above sea level)
Original name	Rairi; captured by Shivaji from Chandrarao More in 1656
Architect	Hiroji Indulkar, Shivaji's chief engineer
Key structures	Maha Darwaja, Hathi Talav, Raj Bhavan, Takmak Tok cliff, Jagadishwar Temple, Shivaji's samadhi

Historical events	Shivaji's coronation (1674); his death (3 April 1680)
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The fort was later captured by the British in 1818 during the Third Anglo-Maratha War and looted; ASI protects it today.

Prelims Pointers

- Astrolabes reached India through **Arab and Persian astronomers**; Firoz Shah Tughlaq's court astronomer **Mahendra Suri** authored the first Sanskrit text on it in 1370 CE.
- Sawai Jai Singh II of Jaipur built five **Jantar Mantar observatories** (Delhi, Jaipur, Ujjain, Mathura, Varanasi) in the early 18th century – the Jaipur one is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- Raigad Fort was declared the capital by Shivaji in **1674**; he styled it the '**Gibraltar of the East**' as per British observers.
- Other important Maratha capitals: **Pune (Peshwa era from 1714)**, **Satara (Chhatrapati's seat)**, **Kolhapur** (Tarabai's branch).

MARATHA MILITARY LANDSCAPES OF INDIA INSCRIBED AS 44TH UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE

At the 47th session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee held in Paris in July 2025, the 'Maratha Military Landscapes of India' – a serial nomination of twelve historic forts – were inscribed on the World Heritage List, becoming India's 44th World Heritage property and the sixth cultural site from Maharashtra. The inscription celebrates the unique fort-based sovereignty engineered by Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and sustained by his successors.

News in Brief

- The nominated series consists of 12 forts built or adapted between the 17th and 19th centuries that illustrate the extraordinary fortification system developed by the Marathas.
- Eleven forts are in Maharashtra and one (Gingee Fort) is in Tamil Nadu, reflecting the geographical spread of Maratha military power.
- The forts are classified by the Marathas into four types: Giri-durg (hill), Vana-durg (forest), Sthala-durg (plain), and Jala-durg (naval/island).
- The property is protected jointly by the ASI and the Government of Maharashtra; it was on the UNESCO Tentative List since 2021.

Prelims Connect

The 12 Forts of the Maratha Military Landscapes (2025 Inscription)

Fort	Type & State
Salher	Hill fort, Maharashtra (Nashik)
Shivneri	Hill fort, Maharashtra (birthplace of Shivaji)
Lohgad	Hill fort, Maharashtra (Pune)
Khanderi	Island fort, Maharashtra (Raigad)
Raigad	Hill fort, Maharashtra (Maratha capital, 1674)

Rajgad	Hill fort, Maharashtra (first Maratha capital)
Pratapgad	Hill fort, Maharashtra (Afzal Khan episode, 1659)
Suvarnadurg	Sea fort, Maharashtra (Ratnagiri)
Panhala	Hill fort, Maharashtra (Kolhapur)
Vijaydurg	Sea fort, Maharashtra (Sindhudurg)
Sindhudurg	Sea fort, Maharashtra (Malvan)
Gingee	Hill fort, Tamil Nadu (Villupuram)

India now has 44 World Heritage Sites (34 cultural + 7 natural + 3 mixed); Maharashtra alone accounts for 6 cultural sites.

Prelims Pointers

- The inscription was made under **Criterion (iv) and (vi)** – for being an outstanding example of fort typology and for its direct association with Shivaji and the Maratha kingdom.
- Gingee Fort in Tamil Nadu was captured by **Rajaram, son of Shivaji, in 1690** and served as the Maratha capital-in-exile during Aurangzeb's Deccan campaign.
- Salher was the site of the first pitched battle where Marathas defeated the Mughals (**Battle of Salher, 1672**).
- Pratapgad is associated with the **killing of Afzal Khan of Bijapur by Shivaji (10 Nov 1659)** using the wagh-nakh (tiger claw).
- India's 43rd WHS was '**Moidams – the Mound-Burial System of the Ahom Dynasty**' (2024); the 44th is Maratha Military Landscapes (2025).

MODERN INDIA

BIJU PATNAIK HONOURED WITH PLAQUE AT STALINGRAD ON 80TH VICTORY DAY

On the 80th anniversary of Victory Day marking the defeat of Nazi Germany in World War II, Russia honoured former Odisha Chief Minister and freedom fighter Biju Patnaik with a commemorative plaque at Volgograd (the former Stalingrad). Patnaik is remembered not only as a pioneer aviator of the freedom struggle era but also as a friend of the Soviet Union whose aerial daring during the Indonesian independence movement earned him international acclaim.

News in Brief

- Biju Patnaik (1916–1997) was an aviator-turned-politician who piloted daring rescue missions during the Indonesian struggle for independence (1947), flying PM Sjahrir out of Java under Dutch blockade.
- As a tribute, Indonesia awarded him the 'Bhoomi Putra' (Son of the Soil) honour and the title 'Bintang Jasa Utama', its highest civilian award for a foreigner.
- During WWII, Patnaik flew aircraft for the Royal Indian Air Force and later assisted the Allies; he had long-standing goodwill with Soviet leadership.
- He served as Chief Minister of Odisha twice (1961–63 and 1990–95) and founded the Biju Janata Dal legacy carried forward by his son Naveen Patnaik.

Prelims Connect

Biju Patnaik – Key Milestones

Year	Event
1916	Born in Cuttack, Odisha
1943	Arrested during Quit India Movement for over two years
1947	Flew Indonesian PM Sutan Sjahrir out of Java; rescued VP Hatta
1961–63	First term as Chief Minister of Odisha
1996	Received Indonesia's 'Bintang Jasa Utama' award
1997	Passed away; Bhubaneswar airport named after him

The Biju Patnaik International Airport in Bhubaneswar and Biju Patnaik University of Technology (BPUT) in Odisha carry his name.

Prelims Pointers

- The Battle of Stalingrad (**Aug 1942 – Feb 1943**) is considered the **turning point of WWII on the Eastern Front** – Volgograd was renamed Stalingrad in 1925 and back to Volgograd in 1961.
- India joined WWII automatically on 3 Sept 1939 when Britain declared war; the **Indian National Congress opposed it without consultation**, leading to the Quit India resolution.
- The **Indonesian National Revolution (1945–49)** led to independence from the Netherlands; India convened the **Inter-Asian Relations Conference (1947)** in Delhi in solidarity.

BIRSA MUNDA 150TH BIRTH ANNIVERSARY – JANJATIYA GAURAV DIVAS CELEBRATIONS

The year-long celebrations marking the 150th birth anniversary of Bhagwan Birsa Munda (15 November 1875 – 9 June 1900) culminated in August 2025 with nationwide programmes under the Janjatiya Gaurav Divas banner. Birsa, revered as 'Dharti Aba' (Father of the Earth), led the Ulgulan (Great Tumult) against British rule and oppressive landlords in the Chotanagpur plateau and became a founding icon of tribal resistance in colonial India.

News in Brief

- Birsa Munda was born in Ulihatu village of present-day Khunti district, Jharkhand, into the Munda tribe.
- He started the Birsait faith and launched the 'Ulgulan' movement (1899–1900) against British land policies, Christian missionaries and the dikus (outsiders).
- His movement led directly to the Chotanagpur Tenancy Act of 1908, which protected tribal land from being transferred to non-tribals.
- He died in Ranchi Jail on 9 June 1900 under suspicious circumstances (officially of cholera); he was just 25 years old.
- 15 November – Birsa Munda's birth anniversary – has been observed as Janjatiya Gaurav Divas since 2021.

Prelims Connect

Major Tribal Revolts in Colonial India

Revolt	Year	Region	Leader
Halba Rebellion	1774–79	Bastar (Chhattisgarh)	Ajmer Singh

Chuar Uprising	1766–1816	Midnapore	Durjan Singh
Kol Revolt	1831–32	Chotanagpur	Budhu Bhagat
Santhal Hul	1855–56	Rajmahal Hills	Sidhu & Kanhu Murmu
Munda Ulgulan	1899–1900	Chotanagpur	Birsa Munda
Rampa Rebellion	1922–24	Andhra (E. Godavari)	Alluri Sitarama Raju

The Chotanagpur Tenancy Act (1908) and the Santhal Pargana Tenancy Act (1876) remain the two principal tribal-land protection statutes in eastern India.

Prelims Pointers

- Birsa Munda was born on **15 November 1875** at Ulihatu village, Khunti district, Jharkhand.
- His statue was installed in the **Central Hall of Parliament in 1989**; in 2024, a 150 ft statue is being built at Ulihatu.
- The **Pradhan Mantri Janjatiya Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (PM-JANMAN)** was launched on 15 Nov 2023 targeting 75 Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs).
- Birsa's key slogan was '**Abua raj ete jana, Maharani raj tundu jana**' (Let the kingdom of the Queen end and our kingdom be established).

SARDAR VALLABHBHAI PATEL 150TH BIRTH ANNIVERSARY (RASHTRIYA EKTA VARSH)

The year-long commemoration of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's 150th birth anniversary (31 October 2024 – 31 October 2025) was observed across India as 'Rashtriya Ekta Varsh' (National Unity Year). Rashtriya Ekta Diwas was observed with the biggest ever Run for Unity at the Statue of Unity, Kevadia, underscoring Patel's legacy as the architect of the integration of 565 princely states into the Indian Union.

News in Brief

- Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel (31 Oct 1875 – 15 Dec 1950) was India's first Deputy PM and first Home Minister, and chaired the States Department that integrated the princely states.
- He earned the title 'Sardar' during the 1928 Bardoli Satyagraha against revenue hike, a movement he led successfully.
- The Rashtriya Ekta Diwas (National Unity Day) has been observed on 31 October since 2014 to commemorate his birth anniversary.
- The 182-m Statue of Unity at Kevadia, Gujarat (inaugurated 31 Oct 2018) is the world's tallest statue.

Prelims Connect

Integration of Princely States – Key Facts

Aspect	Details
States integrated	565 princely states merged through the 'Instrument of Accession'
Principal architect	Sardar Patel, assisted by V.P. Menon, Secretary of States Dept.
Junagadh	Annexed through plebiscite after Nawab fled to Pakistan (1948)
Hyderabad	Police action 'Operation Polo' (Sept 1948) ended Nizam's rule

Kashmir	Maharaja Hari Singh signed Instrument of Accession on 26 Oct 1947
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V.P. Menon's book 'The Story of the Integration of the Indian States' (1956) remains the classic account of Patel's integration strategy.

Prelims Pointers

- Patel was born on **31 October 1875 at Nadiad, Gujarat**; his birth anniversary is **Rashtriya Ekta Diwas**.
- He was India's first **Home Minister and Deputy Prime Minister (1947–1950)** under Nehru's cabinet.
- He was chosen as Chairman of the **Constituent Assembly's Provincial Constitution Committee and Advisory Committee on Fundamental Rights & Minorities**.
- Statue of Unity, the world's tallest statue at **182 metres**, was inaugurated on **31 Oct 2018 at Kevadia**, Gujarat; designed by sculptor Ram V. Sutar.
- The Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel National Police Academy (SVPNPA) is located at **Hyderabad**; founded in 1948, originally at Mount Abu.

SAVITRIBAI PHULE REGIONAL CENTRE INAUGURATED AT RANCHI

The Ministry of Women and Child Development inaugurated the Savitribai Phule Regional Centre of the National Commission for Women (NCW) at Ranchi in July 2025. Named after India's first woman teacher and pioneering 19th-century social reformer, the centre will focus on women's education, legal literacy and empowerment programmes for tribal women in the Jharkhand–Odisha–West Bengal belt.

News in Brief

- Savitribai Phule (3 January 1831 – 10 March 1897) is widely regarded as India's first woman teacher and a pioneer of girls' education in modern India.
- Along with her husband Jyotirao Phule, she founded the first girls' school in India at Bhidewada, Pune on 1 January 1848.
- She wrote the poetry collection 'Kavya Phule' (1854) and 'Bavan Kashi Subodh Ratnakar' (1892) and was a leader of the Satyashodhak Samaj (1873).
- She died on 10 March 1897 nursing plague patients during the Pune plague epidemic.

Prelims Connect

Savitribai & Jyotirao Phule – Timeline of Firsts

Year	Milestone
1848	First school for girls at Bhidewada, Pune
1851	School for Dalit children at Vetal Peth, Pune
1852	Mahila Seva Mandal (Women's Service Society) founded
1863	Balhatya Pratibandhak Griha (home for widows and their infants)
1873	Satyashodhak Samaj founded by Jyotirao Phule
1877	Drought relief work in Maharashtra; famine kitchens

Jyotirao Phule's classic work 'Gulamgiri' (1873) was dedicated to the anti-slavery movement in America; he received the title 'Mahatma' in 1888.

Prelims Pointers

- Savitribai Phule University, Pune (formerly University of Pune) was renamed in 2014; she is the '**First Lady Teacher of India**'.
- Jyotirao Phule founded the **Satyashodhak Samaj on 24 September 1873 at Pune** – a movement for social equality against caste and patriarchy.
- The first girls' school was at **Bhidewada, Pune (1 January 1848)**; Savitribai taught despite facing stones and cow-dung attacks.
- Jyotirao Phule's most famous works: '**Gulamgiri (1873)**', '**Shetkaryacha Asud (1881)**', '**Sarvajanik Satyadharma Pustak (1891)**'.

G.G. PARIKH – LAST OF THE GANDHIANS OF QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT PASSES AWAY

Dr Ghanshyam Gangaram Parikh, the 100-year-old Gandhian and one of the last surviving activists of the Quit India Movement of 1942, passed away in October 2025. Parikh, a freedom fighter, physician and socialist, was imprisoned in the same Nashik jail where Yusuf Meherally, Ashok Mehta and other socialist leaders were held during the August Kranti.

News in Brief

- G.G. Parikh (1924–2025) joined the Quit India Movement at age 18 along with Yusuf Meherally, Ashok Mehta, Aruna Asaf Ali and other Congress Socialist Party leaders.
- He was a founding member of the Yusuf Meherally Centre (established 1961) at Tara village, Raigad district, which continues Gandhian rural development work.
- A doctor by profession, he continued to run free clinics in Mumbai slums into his nineties.
- The Quit India Movement was launched by Gandhi on 8 August 1942 from Gowalia Tank Maidan, Mumbai, with the slogan 'Do or Die'.

Prelims Connect

Quit India Movement (1942) – Key Facts

Aspect	Details
Launched on	8 August 1942 at Gowalia Tank Maidan, Bombay (now August Kranti Maidan)
Slogan	'Karo ya Maro' (Do or Die) – coined by Gandhi
Name coined by	Yusuf Meherally
Immediate cause	Failure of the Cripps Mission (March 1942)
CWC resolution	Wardha Resolution (14 July 1942); AICC resolution (8 Aug 1942)
Underground leaders	Jayaprakash Narayan, Ram Manohar Lohia, Aruna Asaf Ali, Usha Mehta
Parallel governments	Ballia (U.P.), Tamluk (Bengal), Satara (Maharashtra)

Usha Mehta operated the secret Congress Radio (1942) transmitting the movement's messages until her arrest in November 1942.

Prelims Pointers

- The 'Quit India' slogan was coined by **Yusuf Meherally** at the Bombay session of the AICC on 8 August 1942.
- Aruna Asaf Ali unfurled the **Congress flag at Gowalia Tank Maidan on 9 Aug 1942** after all top leaders were arrested.
- The Satara parallel government (1943–45) was led by **Nana Patil**; Tamluk by Satish Samanta; Ballia by Chittu Pandey.
- The Yusuf Meherally Centre at **Tara village (Raigad, Maharashtra)** was established in 1961 as a Gandhian rural development institution.

SWAHID KANAKLATA BARUA UNIVERSITY ESTABLISHED IN ASSAM

The Assam government inaugurated the Swahid Kanaklata Barua University at Gohpur, Sonitpur district in November 2025 – named after the 17-year-old martyr who was shot dead by British police while trying to hoist the Tricolour at Gohpur police station on 20 September 1942 during the Quit India Movement. Kanaklata Barua is among the youngest female martyrs of India's freedom struggle.

News in Brief

- Kanaklata Barua (22 December 1924 – 20 September 1942), affectionately called 'Birbala', was a member of the Mrityu Bahini (Death Squad) of the Quit India Movement.
- On 20 September 1942 she led a procession of nationalists to unfurl the Tricolour at Gohpur police station; British-led police opened fire and she was killed holding the flag.
- She is among India's youngest female martyrs (aged 17 years and 9 months); Mukunda Kakoti, who picked up the flag after her, was also shot dead.
- The Indian Coast Guard vessel ICGS Kanaklata Barua (Inshore Patrol Vessel, commissioned 2020) is named in her honour.

Prelims Connect

Women Martyrs of the Quit India Movement

Name	Age	State	Circumstance
Matangini Hazra	72	West Bengal (Tamluk)	Shot leading procession, 29 Sept 1942; died chanting 'Vande Mataram'
Kanaklata Barua	17	Assam (Gohpur)	Shot while hoisting flag at police station, 20 Sept 1942
Bhogeswari Phukanani	58	Assam (Nagaon)	Martyred leading procession, 18 Sept 1942
Kushal Konwar	37	Assam (Sarupathar)	Hanged on 15 June 1943 for derailing a troop train

Assam saw intense Quit India activity; Gohpur, Dhekiajuli and Berhampur were the epicentres of 'Mrityu Bahini' processions.

Prelims Pointers

- Kanaklata Barua was born on **22 December 1924** at **Barangabari village, Gohpur, Sonitpur district**.
- She was a member of the **Mrityu Bahini (Death Squad)** of the Quit India Movement organised by the Congress in Assam.
- Matangini Hazra, 72, was shot dead at **Tamluk in Midnapore on 29 Sept 1942**; her last cry was 'Vande Mataram'.

- Bharat Ratna has been awarded posthumously to **Gandhi was never awarded Bharat Ratna; Subhas Chandra Bose was proposed in 1992 but withdrawn.**

GLASS BRIDGE OPENED LINKING VIVEKANANDA ROCK MEMORIAL AND THIRUVALLUVAR STATUE

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin inaugurated a 77-metre-long glass bridge connecting the Vivekananda Rock Memorial and the Thiruvalluvar Statue at Kanyakumari on 30 December 2024. The pedestrian bridge, the first of its kind in India over open sea, eliminates the need for ferry crossings between the two iconic monuments at India's southern tip.

News in Brief

- The bridge is 77 metres long, 10 metres wide, supported by 4 steel piers rising 7 metres above high tide; it cost ₹37 crore.
- The Vivekananda Rock Memorial was built in 1970 by the Vivekananda Kendra founder Eknath Ranade; Swami Vivekananda meditated here in December 1892 before attending the Chicago Parliament of Religions (1893).
- The 41 m Thiruvalluvar Statue (total 133 ft including pedestal) was inaugurated on 1 January 2000 by Tamil Nadu CM M. Karunanidhi; it was designed by sculptor V. Ganapati Sthapati.
- The statue's height of 133 feet symbolises the 133 chapters of the Thirukkural.

Prelims Connect

Swami Vivekananda – Quick Reference

Event	Details
Birth	12 January 1863, Kolkata (original name Narendranath Datta)
Guru	Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa (met 1881)
Kanyakumari meditation	24–26 December 1892, on the rock
Parliament of Religions	Chicago, 11 September 1893 – 'Sisters and Brothers of America' speech
Ramakrishna Mission	Founded 1 May 1897 at Belur Math
Death	4 July 1902 at Belur Math, West Bengal

National Youth Day is observed on 12 January every year – Vivekananda's birthday – since 1984.

Prelims Pointers

- Thiruvalluvar is the author of the **Thirukkural**, a classical Tamil text on ethics comprising **1,330 couplets in 133 chapters**.
- The Thirukkural is divided into three sections: **Aram (virtue), Porul (wealth/polity), Inbam (love)**.
- Kanyakumari marks the confluence of **the Arabian Sea, Bay of Bengal, and the Indian Ocean** – a cultural and geographical landmark.
- The **Vivekananda Rock Memorial** was built in 1970 by **Eknath Ranade** and Vivekananda Kendra.

POTTI SRIRAMULU STATUE UNVEILED – 72 YEARS OF LINGUISTIC REORGANISATION

A statue of Potti Sriramulu – the Gandhian whose 58-day fast unto death in 1952 forced the creation of Andhra State and triggered the reorganisation of Indian states along linguistic lines – was unveiled in March 2025, marking 72 years of linguistic reorganisation. Sriramulu's sacrifice is commemorated as a landmark in post-independence Indian federalism.

News in Brief

- Potti Sriramulu (16 March 1901 – 15 December 1952) began his fast unto death on 19 October 1952 at Madras demanding a separate Telugu-speaking state of Andhra.
- He died on the 58th day of his fast (15 December 1952) without any response from PM Nehru's government; riots followed across the Andhra districts.
- Within three days, on 19 December 1952, PM Nehru announced the formation of Andhra State, which came into being on 1 October 1953 – the first state carved out on linguistic basis.
- This led to the appointment of the States Reorganisation Commission (SRC) in 1953 under Fazl Ali with K.M. Panikkar and H.N. Kunzru as members.

Prelims Connect

States Reorganisation Commission (1953) & Linguistic States

Milestone	Year	Details
Fast by Potti Sriramulu	Oct–Dec 1952	58-day fast; died 15 Dec 1952
Andhra State formed	1 Oct 1953	First linguistic state, carved from Madras Presidency
SRC appointed	Dec 1953	Under Justice Fazl Ali
SRC report submitted	30 Sept 1955	Recommended 14 states + 6 UTs
States Reorganisation Act	1 Nov 1956	Created 14 linguistic states
Telangana separation	2 June 2014	29th state, bifurcated from Andhra Pradesh

Mahatma Gandhi had called Potti Sriramulu 'such a pure, selfless and determined worker that if he undertakes a fast, he must die'.

Prelims Pointers

- Potti Sriramulu began his fast on **19 October 1952 at Madras**; he died on the **58th day (15 December 1952)**.
- Andhra State came into existence on **1 October 1953** with Kurnool as capital; **Tanguturi Prakasam Pantulu** became the first CM.
- The Dhar Commission (1948) headed by **S.K. Dhar** had initially opposed linguistic states; the **JVP Committee (Jan 1949)** – Nehru, Patel, Pattabhi Sitaramayya – also advised caution.
- The **States Reorganisation Act, 1956** created **14 states and 6 Union Territories**; the SRC was chaired by Justice Fazl Ali.

150 YEARS OF VANDE MATARAM (1875–2025)

2025 marks 150 years of Vande Mataram, India's National Song. Composed by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, first published in Bangadarshan on 7th November 1875 and later included in Anandamath (1882). The first two verses were adopted as India's National Song in 1937.

News in Brief

- **1896:** Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore sang Vande Mataram at the **Kolkata session of the Indian National Congress**.
- **1905 (Varanasi session of INC):** Vande Mataram adopted for **all-India occasions**.
- **Bande Mataram Sampradaya (October 1905):** Members held **Prabhat Pheris every Sunday** in North Calcutta.
- **August 1906:** English daily **Bande Mataram** started under **Bipin Chandra Pal**; **Sri Aurobindo** later joined as joint editor.
- **7th August 1905:** First used as political slogan at **Calcutta Town Hall** – sparking the **Swadeshi and Anti-Partition movement**.
- **1907: Madam Bhikaji Cama** raised the tricolour flag outside India in Stuttgart, Berlin – the words **Vande Mataram were written on the flag**.
- **Madan Lal Dhingra** (August 1909, hanged in England): Last words – '**Bande Mataram**'.
- **National Song Status:** First two verses adopted in **1937** by the **Congress Working Committee**.
- **24th January 1950:** Dr. Rajendra Prasad announced **Jana Gana Mana** = National Anthem; **Vande Mataram** = National Song (equally honoured).
- **India's Constitution does NOT explicitly mention a national song.** Article 51A(a) asks citizens to respect the Constitution, National Flag and National Anthem.
- **Vande Mataram Movement of Gulbarga (1938):** British banned the song; students from **Osmania University and Gulbarga University** defiantly sang it.

Prelims Connect

Bankim Chandra Chatterjee – Key Works

Work	Year	Significance
Rajmohan's Wife	1864	First novel in English by an Indian
Durgeshnandini	1865	First Bengali romance novel
Bangadarshan	1872	Monthly literary journal; first published Vande Mataram (1875)
Anandamath	1882	Contains Vande Mataram; set around Sannyasi Rebellion (1770s) + Bengal Famine
Devi Chaudhurani	1884	Female-led revolutionary story; advocates women's empowerment
Krishnacharitra	1886-92	Analyses Krishna as a historical hero – important for nationalist philosophy

Prelims Pointers

- **Anandamath (1882)** – set around the **Sannyasi Rebellion of 1770s** + Bengal Famine; promoted ascetic nationalism. Mother India depicted in three forms: **past glory, present suffering, future rise**.
- **Partition of Bengal (1905)** – Lord Curzon's decision; triggered the **Swadeshi Movement**; Curzon ordered police to **arrest anyone who sang Vande Mataram**.
- At **Lucknow on 15 October 1937**, **Muhammad Ali Jinnah** denounced the song – argued it contained references to Hindu goddesses Durga and Lakshmi.

CENTENARY OF KAKORI TRAIN ACTION (1925–2025)

The Kakori Train Action took place on 9th August 1925, when Hindustan Republican Association (HRA) revolutionaries looted the British Government Treasury from a train near Kakori, Uttar Pradesh. PM Modi paid tributes on its 100th anniversary.

News in Brief

- HRA revolutionaries stopped the **Number 8 Down Train near Kakori (UP)** – objective: **fund the HRA** with British-taxed Indian money and protest British taxation.
- **10 revolutionaries directly involved: Ram Prasad Bismil** (hatched the plan), Ashfaqullah Khan, Rajendra Lahiri, **Chandrashekhar Azad**, Sachindra Nath Bakshi, Keshab Chakravarty, Manmathnath Gupta, Murari Sharma, Mukundi Lal, Banwari Lal.
- **Death sentences: Ram Prasad Bismil, Roshan Singh, Rajendra Nath Lahiri, Ashfaqullah Khan.** Lahiri – Gonda jail (Dec 17, 1927); Ashfaqullah – Faizabad jail; Roshan – Naini jail; Bismil – Gorakhpur jail (all Dec 19, 1927).
- **Chandrashekhar Azad** evaded arrest – later killed at **Allahabad's Alfred Park (now Azad Park)**.

Prelims Connect

Hindustan Republican Association (HRA) – Key Facts

Aspect	Detail
Founded	October 1924, Kanpur by Ram Prasad Bismil, Jogesh Chandra Chatterjee, Sachindra Nath Sanyal
Reason for founding	Disillusionment after Gandhi suspended Non-Cooperation Movement (1922) post-Chauri Chaura incident
Objective	Establish a Federated Republic of United States of India by armed revolution
Manifesto	Written by Sachindra Nath Sanyal (1925) – proposed abolition of exploitation, nationalization of railways
Renamed to HSRA	At Feroz Shah Kotla, Delhi (September 1928) – 'Socialist' added; reorganised by Bhagat Singh and Chandrashekhar Azad

Prelims Pointers

- **HRA born in 1924** – out of disillusionment after the **Chauri Chaura incident (February 1922)** caused Gandhi to suspend the Non-Cooperation Movement.
- **August 9 (Kakori day)** is symbolically significant – also the date of **Quit India Movement (1942)** and **Nagasaki atomic bomb (1945)**.
- **HSRA (1928)** reorganised by **Bhagat Singh and Chandrashekhar Azad** at Feroz Shah Kotla, Delhi.
- He was a highly talented writer who wrote powerful patriotic poetry under the pen names '**Bismil**', '**Ram**', and '**Agyat**'.

150 YEARS OF ARYA SAMAJ – DAYANAND SARASWATI'S 200TH BIRTH ANNIVERSARY

PM addressed the International Arya Mahasammelan 2025, marking the 150th foundation year of the Arya Samaj (founded 1875, Bombay) and the 200th birth anniversary of Maharshi Dayanand Saraswati.

News in Brief

- Arya Samaj – a **revivalist movement** aiming to bring religious and social reforms in Hinduism. Motto: 'Krinvanto Vishvam Aryam' – **Make This World Noble**.
- Upheld **Vedic teachings** while rejecting **idol worship, elaborate rituals, animal sacrifices, social evils, and superstitions**.
- **Social Reforms**: Advocated women's education, inter-caste marriages, widow remarriage; led the **Shuddhi Movement** (reconversion to Hinduism).
- **Hindi promotion**: Newspapers – **Arya Darpan (1878), Arya Samachar (1878), Bharat Sudasha Pravartak (1879), Desh Hiteshi (1882)**.
- **Arya Samaj Split (1893)**: **College Party** (Lala Hansraj, Lala Lajpat Rai) – Western education; **Mahatma Party/Gurukul** (Swami Shraddhanand) – Vedic education.

Prelims Connect

Dayanand Saraswati – Key Contributions

Area	Contribution
Religious Reform	'Back to the Vedas'; Satyarth Prakash (1875) called for Vedic revivalism
Social Reform	Hoisted Pakhand Khandini Pataka at 1867 Haridwar Kumbh Mela to oppose social evils
Cow Protection	Published 'Gokarunanidhi' (1881); established first Gaurakshini Sabha in Punjab (1882)
Education	Founded DAV schools/colleges; Gurukul system based on Vedic education
Women's rights	Championed women's education and right to read Vedas

Prelims Pointers

- **Dayanand Saraswati** (born 1824, **Morbi, Kathiawar, Gujarat**; real name **Mula Shankara**) – guru was **Swami Virjanand Saraswati**.
- **DAV (Dayanand Anglo-Vedic)** schools and colleges – established by the College Party faction; today India's largest private educational network.
- **Gurukul Kangri (1902, Haridwar)** – established by Swami Shraddhanand on Vedic gurukul lines.

100 YEARS OF THE SELF-RESPECT MOVEMENT (1925–2025) – PERIYAR

2025 marked the centenary of the Self-Respect Movement, launched by EV Ramasamy (Periyar) in 1925 in Tamil Nadu, advocating rationalism, social equality, and anti-caste ideology.

News in Brief

- Periyar later established the **Dravidar Kazhagam** and started the Tamil weekly **Kudi Arasu (Republic)**.
- Influenced by **Jyotirao Phule and BR Ambedkar**; participated in the **Vaikom Satyagraha (1924–25)** – called 'Vaikom Veerar'.
- **Objectives**: Eradicate the caste system, reject Brahminical dominance, promote rational thinking – as outlined in pamphlets **Namathu Kurikkol and Tiravitak Kalaka Lateiyam**.

- **Pioneered Self-Respect Marriages** – simple priest-less ceremonies that were legally recognised.
- **Meenambal bestowed the title 'Periyar' on EV Ramaswamy** – referred to as 'my sister Meena' by BR Ambedkar.

Prelims Connect

Key Anti-Caste and Social Reform Movements

Movement / Organisation	Year	Founder	Key Focus
Satyashodhak Samaj	1873	Jyotirao Phule (Maharashtra)	Fight Brahminical domination; education for lower castes and women
Shree Narayana Dharma Paripalana	1903	Narayan Guru (Kerala)	'One Caste, One Religion, One God'; fought caste discrimination among Ezhavas
Self-Respect Movement	1925	E.V. Ramasamy Periyar (Tamil Nadu)	Eradicate caste, rational thinking, anti-Brahminical dominance
Bahishkrit Hitkarini Sabha	1924	Dr. B.R. Ambedkar	Education, social, cultural advancement of Dalits
All India Anti-Untouchability League	1932	Mahatma Gandhi	Eradication of untouchability
All India Depressed Classes Congress	1930	Dr. B.R. Ambedkar	Political rights of Scheduled Castes

Prelims Pointers

- **Vaikom Satyagraha (1924-25, Kerala):** Protest for the right of lower castes to use roads near Vaikom Temple – one of the first organised struggles against untouchability in Kerala.
- **Dravidar Kazhagam (1944)** gave birth to **DMK (1949, C.N. Annadurai)** and **AIADMK (1972, MGR)**.
- **All India Depressed Class Association (1926):** MC Rajah; **All India Depressed Class League (1935):** Babu Jagjivan Ram.

100 YEARS OF COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA (CPI) – FOUNDED 1925

CPI, founded in Kanpur on 26 December 1925, was the first concerted effort on Indian soil toward forming an all-India Communist party. First President: Singaravelu Chettiar.

News in Brief

- In 1920: M.N. Roy, Mohammad Ali, M.P.T. Acharya, Mohammad Shafiq met in Tashkent and formed the CPI in exile.
- **Three famous trials (1920-29):**
 - (a) Peshawar Conspiracy Case (1922-27);
 - (b) Kanpur Bolshevik Case (1924);
 - (c) **Meerut Conspiracy Case (1929-33)** – arrested Muzaffar Ahmed, S.A. Dange, Philip Spratt, Ben Bradley.
- **Publications:** **Ganavani** (Bengali), **Mehnatkash** (Urdu from Lahore), **Kranti** (Marathi from Bombay).
- CPI mobilised workers through **AITUC** and peasants through **All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS)**.
- After 1945: Communists led the **Tebhaga movement in Bengal** and the **Telangana struggle** in Hyderabad.

Prelims Pointers

- **M. Singaravelu (1860-1946):** Organised India's **first-ever May Day** on **May 1, 1923, in Madras**; also formed **Madras Labour Union (1918)** – the first organised trade union in India.
- **Meerut Conspiracy Case (1929-33):** Generated international solidarity for Indian Communists.
- **CPI's demand for Poorna Swaraj** was first made in INC manifestos in **1921 and 1922** – later adopted at **Lahore INC session in 1929**.

YOUNG BENGAL MOVEMENT – DEROZIO AND INDIA'S FIRST RADICALS

The Young Bengal Movement was an intellectual and social reform movement in Bengal during the early 19th century (1820s-1830s), described by historian Rosinka Chaudhuri as India's 'First Radicals.'

News in Brief

- **Ideals:** Advocated rationalism, women's rights, freedom of thought; opposed caste, superstition, idolatry.
- In 1828, **Derozio founded the 'Academic Association'** – organised debates on various subjects.
- **Derozio:** Called the **first national poet of modern India**; pioneer of Anglo-Indian poetry. Became lecturer at **Hindu College, Calcutta in 1826 at just 17**.
- Influenced by **Enlightenment ideals and the French Revolution**. Key writings: **Poems (1827)**, **The Fakeer of Jungheera (1828)**, **'To India – My Native Land'** (first modern patriotic poem in English).
- Themes: India's decline with images of a **caged eagle and a broken instrument**; advocated freedom and abolition of slavery.
- **Dismissed from Hindu College in 1831** on charges of spreading atheism.

Prelims Pointers

- **Hindu College, Calcutta (est. 1817)** – later renamed **Presidency College** – centre of Western education in Bengal.
- **Derozio** died at age **22** in 1831 – same year he was dismissed from Hindu College.
- Young Bengal movement was contemporaneous with the **Bengal Renaissance** – social, intellectual and artistic renaissance in Bengal in the 19th century.

PAIKA REBELLION (1817) – ODISHA'S FIRST WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

Former Odisha CM Naveen Patnaik called the omission of the Paika Rebellion from NCERT's Class VIII book a 'huge dishonour.' The Paika Rebellion of 1817 is considered by many as India's First War of Independence, predating the 1857 revolt by 40 years.

News in Brief

- **Paikas** (literally 'foot soldiers') – a hereditary warrior class under the **Gajapati rulers of Odisha** since the 16th century; rendered military service in return for **rent-free land (nish-kar jagirs)**.
- **British annexation of Odisha in 1803** ended their privileges through land revenue reforms.
- **Leader: Bakshi Jagabandhu Bidyadhar** – military chief under King Mukunda Dev II of Khurda; led Paikas, joined by **tribal Kondhs** and others.
- **Causes:** Loss of land rights, oppressive taxation, and marginalisation under British rule.

Prelims Pointers

- The **Paika Rebellion (1817)** predates the **1857 Revolt** by 40 years – some historians argue it was the **real 'First War of Independence'**.
- **Gajapati dynasty** ruled Odisha from 1434-1541 CE; great patrons of Jagannath temple at Puri.
- **Kondh tribe** (Odisha) – famous for Meriah sacrifice traditions; classified as a PVTG.

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).

200TH BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF DADABHAI NAOROJI (1825–1917)

India celebrated the 200th birth anniversary of Dadabhai Naoroji – the 'Grand Old Man of India', a founding member and thrice president of the Indian National Congress (1886, 1893, and 1906).

News in Brief

- **Drain of Wealth Theory:** British policies drained India's wealth through taxation, salaries, pensions, and remittances. Works: '**Poverty of India**' (1876) and '**Poverty and Un-British Rule in India**' (1901).
- **Founded:** **London Indian Society (1865)** and the **East India Association (1866)**.
- **First Indian MP in British Parliament:** Elected for the **Liberal Party in Finsbury Central** at the 1892 general election.
- **Declared Swaraj (self-government)** as concrete political goal of INC in 1906.

- **Social Reform:** Co-founded **Rahnumai Mazdayasan Sabha (1851)** to reform Parsi society. Founded **Rast Goftar** newspaper.
- **Mentorship:** Mentored **Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, and Mahatma Gandhi.**

Prelims Pointers

- **Dadabhai Naoroji** coined the term '**Drain of Wealth**' – estimated annual drain at approximately **Rs. 200 crore** per year.
- **Moderate leader** – advocated constitutional and peaceful methods like petitions, prayers, and protests.
- '**Grand Old Man of India**' – epithet similar to '**Grand Old Man of England**' (William Gladstone).

C. SANKARAN NAIR – JALLIANWALA BAGH PROTEST & FILM 'KESARI CHAPTER 2'

The recent film 'Kesari Chapter 2: The Untold Story of Jallianwala Bagh' is based on Sir C. Sankaran Nair – a liberal constitutionalist who resigned from Viceroy's Executive Council in protest against the Jallianwala Bagh massacre.

News in Brief

- Author of '**Gandhi and Anarchy (1922)**' – a critique of Gandhi's non-cooperation and Khilafat movement.
- Participated in the **1920 deputation to the Southborough Committee** with Herabai Tata and Mithan Lam to advocate for **female suffrage in India.**
- **First Malayali and the only Keralite to preside over the INC** (Amaravati Session, 1897).
- Among the **first Indian members of the Viceroy's Executive Council** – overseeing education and health.
- **Resigned from Viceroy's Executive Council in protest against the Jallianwala Bagh massacre (April 13, 1919).**

Prelims Pointers

- **Jallianwala Bagh massacre (April 13, 1919):** Brigadier-General **Reginald Dyer** ordered troops to fire on unarmed crowd in Amritsar – killed 379+ (official British estimate; actual higher).
- **Rabindranath Tagore** renounced his **knighthood** in protest – wrote to the Viceroy: 'the time has come when badges of honour make our shame glaring.'
- **Southborough Committee (1919)** – set up to advise on franchise for Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms.

BATUKESHWAR DUTT – FORGOTTEN COMRADE OF BHAGAT SINGH

Batukeshwar Dutt (born November 18, 1910, Khandaghosh village, Burdwan, West Bengal) is most known for throwing bombs in the Central Legislative Assembly alongside Bhagat Singh on April 8, 1929.

News in Brief

- Joined the **Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA)** and the **Naujawan Bharat Sabha** inspired by Bhagat Singh.
- On **8th April 1929**, Dutt and Bhagat Singh threw two homemade bombs into the **empty space of the Central Legislative Assembly** to protest the **Public Safety Bill and Trade Disputes Bill** – not to harm anyone.
- Raised slogans '**Inquilab Zindabad**', distributed leaflets stating '**If the deaf are to hear, the sound has to be very loud**', and surrendered willingly.
- Spent nine years in prisons – **Multan, Jhelum, Trichinopoly, Salem, and the Andamans**; twice fasted for over a month.
- **Released in 1938**; rearrested during **Quit India Movement (1942)** and spent another four years in jail.

Prelims Pointers

- **April 8, 1929:** Central Legislative Assembly bomb incident – the **Public Safety Bill** was being debated; Bhagat Singh and Dutt wanted to make a political statement, not cause casualties.
- **'If the deaf are to hear...'** – inspired by French anarchist Auguste Vaillant's statement (1893); became the rallying motto of the HSRA.
- **Naujawan Bharat Sabha (1926):** Founded by Bhagat Singh – aimed to unite young Indians against colonialism.

BENGALI WOMEN REVOLUTIONARIES – UNTOLD STORIES OF FREEDOM STRUGGLE

Several Bengali women revolutionaries played pivotal but largely unacknowledged roles in India's freedom struggle.

Revolutionary	Key Act / Contribution
Bina Das	Attempted to assassinate Stanley Jackson (Governor of Bengal) in 1932 at Convocation Hall, University of Calcutta
Pritilata Waddedar	Led the Pahartali European Club attack (1932); consumed cyanide to avoid capture
Kalpana Datta	Took part in the Chittagong Armoury Raid; documented women's equal role in revolution
Kamala Das Gupta	Supported movement by hiding fugitives, carrying messages, smuggling arms; established schools for Muslim girls
Begum Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain	Pioneering feminist; wrote 'Sultana's Dream'; founded Sakhawat Memorial Girls' School
Matangini Hazra (Gandhi Buri)	Led Quit India protests; shot while holding the tricolour and chanting 'Vande Mataram'

Prelims Pointers

- **Chittagong Armoury Raid (April 18, 1930):** Led by **Surya Sen (Masterda)** – involved Kalpana Datta, Pritilata Waddedar.
- **Surya Sen (1894-1934):** Key figure in Bengal's revolutionary network; **Harigopal Bal (1915-1930)** killed by British forces in Jalalabad encounter.
- **Begum Rokeya's 'Sultana's Dream' (1905)** – landmark feminist utopian fiction where women rule and men are kept in 'mardana' (men's quarters).

DURAND LINE – PAKISTAN-AFGHANISTAN BORDER CONFLICT

Conflict resurfaced along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, with the Taliban accusing Pakistan of conducting air strikes near the Durand Line – the 2,600 km border established in 1893 between British India and the Emirate of Afghanistan.

News in Brief

- Spans **2,600 km** from the border with Iran in the west to China's border in the east – named after **Sir Henry Mortimer Durand**, former foreign secretary of the British government of India.
- **Anglo-Afghan Wars**: First (1839) – British pushed back; Second (1878) – **Treaty of Gandamak (1879)** giving control over Afghanistan's foreign policy; Third (1919) – **Treaty of Rawalpindi** restoring Afghanistan's foreign affairs control.
- The Durand Line **split Pashtun tribal areas**, placed Balochistan under British India, and established the **Wakhan Corridor** as a buffer between Russia and Britain.
- Afghanistan has **never officially recognised** the Durand Line as an international border.

Prelims Pointers

- **Wakhan Corridor** – narrow strip in northeastern Afghanistan connecting it to China; created as a buffer zone between Russian and British empires (the 'Great Game').
- **Great Game**: Strategic rivalry between the British Empire (India) and Russian Empire for influence in Central Asia (19th-early 20th century).
- **Pashtunistan issue**: The Durand Line divided the Pashtun ethnic group – root cause of ongoing Pakistan-Afghanistan tensions.

