

CURRENT AFFAIRS

25 SEPTEMBER 2022



TOPIC: ARCHITECTURE

A Jain heritage site in T.N. battles the elements

With much of the art in Sittanavasal either damaged or vandalised, Archaeological Survey of India has undertaken conservation measures and also introduced digital checks to track public access

SPECIAL

Nahla Nainar
TIRUCHI

A small village in Pudukottai district of Tamil Nadu was a major centre of Jain influence for 1,000 years just before the Christian era.

Sittanavasal is the name used synonymously for the hamlet and the hillock that houses the Arivar Kovil (temple of Arihats – Jains who conquered their senses), Ezhadpattam (a cavern with 17 polished rock beds), megalithic burial sites and the Navachunai tam (small mountain lake) with a submerged shrine.

This Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)-administered site, popular with youngsters and school excursion groups, is in need of better upkeep.

"Sittanavasal is the only place in Tamil Nadu where we can see Pandya paintings. At least three-fourths of the art is already damaged, so it is important to protect the site for future generations," R. Kalaikovan, founder of the Tiruchi-based Dr. M. Rajamanikkanar Centre for Historical Research, told *The Hindu*.

The artwork on the ceiling of the sanctum and the ardh mandapam of Arivar Kovil is an early example of post-Ajanta cave paintings of the fourth to sixth centu-



Fading away: The artwork at the Sittanavasal rock cave temple in Pudukottai, Tamil Nadu. M. MOORTHY

ries, done using the fresco-secco technique (a process that dispenses with preparation of the wall with wet plaster).

The ceiling paintings show 'bhavyas' (exalted souls who work to achieve moksha or spiritual liberation) enjoying themselves in a pool, full of lotuses; today much of it is obscured by patchy plastering. Faint outlines linger of dancing girls on the 'ardha mandapam' pillars. The pillars of the verandah (added by the Maharaja of Pudukottai in the 1900s), were brought from Kudumiyanmalai. The colours are a mixture of plant dyes and mineral elements such as lime, lamp black, and clay pigments such as ochre for yellow and terre verte for the greyish-green tints.

Unrestricted public ac-



Sittanavasal is more precious because its paintings will be gone in another 50 years

S. SWAMINATHAN
Author and history enthusiast

cess and general exposure to the elements have led to a gradual fading away of these paintings. At the Ezhadpattam, inscriptions have been vandalised beyond recognition.

CCTV cameras soon
T. Arun Raj, Director, ASI, Tiruchi Circle, told *The Hindu* that periodic maintenance by way of repairs and chemical preservation (for restoring paintings) is being undertaken.

To stem the damage, the

ASI has introduced electronic ticketing that helps track visitor numbers. "The average footfall is around 200-300 a day. We are planning to increase the number of security guards besides installing closed circuit TV cameras soon," said Mr. Raj.

"Though there are many examples of Jain sites in Pudukottai district, Sittanavasal is more precious because its paintings will be gone in another 50 years. Perhaps recreating them outside in separate pavilions and limiting the shrines for research visits would be a better way to preserve them," said S. Swaminathan, a Chennai-based history enthusiast and former IIT professor, who has written a book on important heritage spots in Pudukottai.

✓ Sittanavasal Cave (also, Arivar Koil) is a 2nd-century Tamil Śramaṇa complex of caves in Sittanavasal village in Pudukottai district of Tamil Nadu, India.

✓ Its name is a distorted form of Sit-tan-na-va-yil, a Tamil word which means "the abode of great saints" (Tamil: சித்தன்னவாசல்).

✓ it is called the Arivar Koil, and is a rock cut cave temple of the Arihants. It contains remnants of notable frescoes from the 7th century. The murals have been painted with vegetable and mineral dyes in black, green, yellow, orange, blue, and white. Paintings have been created by applying colours over a thin wet surface of lime plaster.

TOPIC: DEFENCE

At DefExpo 2022, India-Africa defence dialogue on the anvil

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The forthcoming DefExpo 2022, scheduled to be held in Gandhinagar from October 18 to 22, will host the second edition of the India-Africa Defence Dialogue with invites extended to 53 African countries. A separate Indian Ocean Region plus (IOR+) conclave with participation of approximately 40 countries is also on the anvil, the Defence Ministry said on Saturday.

Defence Secretary Ajay Kumar reviewed the preparations of the Expo with Gujarat Chief Secretary Pankaj Kumar.

The Expo, earlier scheduled to be held in March, was postponed due to “logistical challenges” the Ministry had said.

For DefExpo 2022, In-

The Expo earlier scheduled to be held in March was postponed due to ‘logistical challenges’

dian companies, Indian subsidiaries of foreign Original Equipment Manufacturers, Division of company registered in India, exhibitor having joint venture with an Indian company will be considered as Indian participants, the Ministry said.

The theme of DefExpo 2022 is ‘Path to Pride’ and the aim is to showcase the might of the domestic defence industry, which is now powering ‘Make in India, Make for the World’ resolve of the Government and the nation at large, the statement said.

TOPIC: VULNERABLE SECTION

Odisha offering cash incentive to PVTGs for marrying after 18

- ✓ Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)
- ✓ In India, tribal population makes up for 8.6% of the total population.
- ✓ PVTGs are more vulnerable among the tribal groups.
- ✓ In 1973, the Dhebar Commission created Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs) as a separate category, who are less developed among the tribal groups.
- ✓ In 2006, the Government of India renamed the PTGs as PVTGs.
- In this context, in 1975, the Government of India initiated to identify the most vulnerable tribal groups as a separate category called PVTGs and declared 52 such groups, while in 1993 an additional 23 groups were added to the category, making it a total of 75 PVTGs out of 705 Scheduled Tribes.
- PVTGs have some basic characteristics – they are mostly homogenous, with a small population, relatively physically isolated, absence of written language, relatively simple technology and a slower rate of change etc.
- Among the 75 listed PVTG's the highest number are found in Odisha.

TOPIC: WILDLIFE PROTECTION

Inert rhinos rise from ashes at Kaziranga

The remains of a stockpile of 2,479 horns burnt in September 2021 were used for building three life-size statues to serve as a memorial to the herbivore and the forest guards that protect it

Kaziranga National Park

- ✓ It is located in the State of Assam.
- ✓ It was declared as a National Park in 1974.
- ✓ It has been declared a tiger reserve since 2007.
- ✓ It was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1985.
- ✓ It is recognized as an Important Bird Area by BirdLife International.

- ✓ It is the home of the world's most one-horned rhinos.
- ✓ Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary has the highest density of one-horned rhinos in the world and second highest number of Rhinos in Assam after Kaziranga National Park.
- ✓ Much of the focus of conservation efforts in Kaziranga are focused on the 'big four' species – Rhino, Elephant, Royal Bengal tiger and Asiatic water buffalo.

Pobitora WLS

- ✓ Its a wildlife sanctuary on the southern bank of the Brahmaputra in Morigaon district in Assam, India.
- ✓ It has the highest concentration of one-horned rhinos in the world and is often called ‘Mini Kaziranga’ due to similar landscape and vegetation.

TOPIC: INDIAN NATIONAL MOVEMENT

Mahatma's ideals inspired Constitution, says Dhankhar

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy of equality of all human beings regardless of caste and creed inspired the Constitution of India, Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar said on Saturday while inaugurating the two-day Sadbhavana Conference in New Delhi, marking the 90th Foundation Day of Harijan Sevak Sangh, which was founded by Mr. Gandhi in 1932.

Mr. Dhankhar said that the Gandhian ideals animated the Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles of the Constitution, adding that the Mahatma's teachings will remain eternally relevant to humanity.

While inaugurating the conference, the Vice-President also paid floral tributes to the Father of the Nation and Acharya Vinoba Bhave.

Harijan Sevak Sangh

- ✓ Its a non-profit organisation founded by Mahatma Gandhi in 1932 to eradicate untouchability in India, working for Harijan or Dalit people and upliftment of the Depressed Class of India.
- ✓ weekly paper, the Harijan.
- ✓ The Sangh helped the depressed classes to access public places such as temples, schools, roads and water resources, also conducted inter dining and inter-caste marriages.

'Upadhyaya was first to bat for nuclear deterrent'

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya was the first to pitch the idea that India should have a credible nuclear deterrent and because of that deterrent, the Indian Army engages with China as an equal force, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said on Saturday.

Praising the philosophy and ideas of Pandit Upadhyaya, Mr. Singh said that apart from various social issues, he had also thought deeply about the defence of the nation.

He believed that the country should be capable of self-defence.

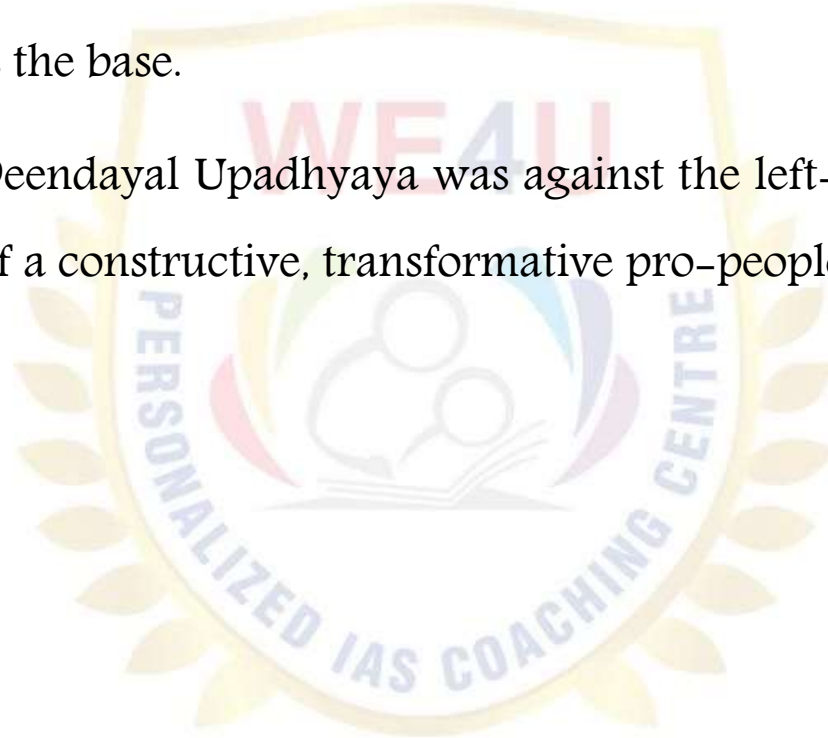
"When China conducted the first nuclear test in 1964, Deendayal ji was in favour of India too carrying out a nuclear test," said Mr. Singh, who added that following the vision of Pandit Upadhyaya, former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee carried out five nuclear tests in Rajasthan in 1998.

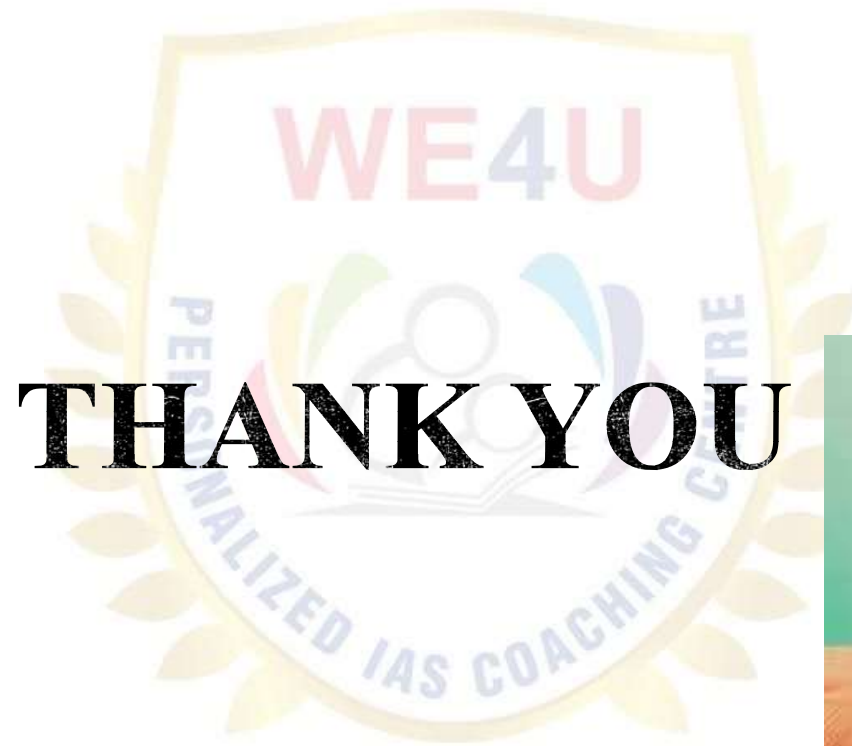
- ✓ Born in Mathura, UP in 1916, Deendayal Upadhyay is an Indian politician.
- ✓ He was one of the most important leaders of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh, the forerunner of the present day Bharatiya Janata Party.

Key Philosophies

- ✓ Integral humanism: Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya defines it as "a classless, casteless and conflict-free social order".
- ✓ The idea of Bharat: Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay believed that western intellectual colonization of Indian intellect has left a roadblock to the growth and expansion of the original Bharatiya.
- ✓ He did welcome modern technology, if, it is to be adapted to suit the Indian requirements.

- ✓ Polity: Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya visualized for India a decentralized polity and self-reliant economy with the village as the base.
- ✓ Welfare of People: Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya was against the left-right division. He believed it is detrimental to the growth of a constructive, transformative pro-people ideology.





THANK YOU

