

27 July, 2024

Charaideo Moidams

Context: Assam's Charaideo Moidams burial sites have been included in the UNESCO World Heritage Sites list.

➤ Historical Significance:

- Charaideo Moidams are royal burial sites of the Ahom dynasty, which ruled Assam and the North East from 1228 to 1826 AD.
- Located about 30 km from Sivasagar town in eastern Assam, these tumuli are still considered sacred by locals.

➤ What are Moidams?

- A moidam is a tumulus, or earthen mound, raised over the grave of Ahom royalty and aristocracy.
- Charaideo exclusively contains moidams of Ahom royals, while other moidams are found in Eastern Assam between Jorhat and Dibrugarh.
- Each moidam typically features one or more chambers in a vault, topped by a hemispherical mound covered in grass and a pavilion called a chow chali. A low octagonal wall surrounds the mound with a single entrance.
- Ahom burial practices involved burying the deceased with items for the afterlife, including servants, horses, livestock, and sometimes wives. This practice likens the moidams to the "Pyramids of Assam."

➤ Significance of Charaideo:

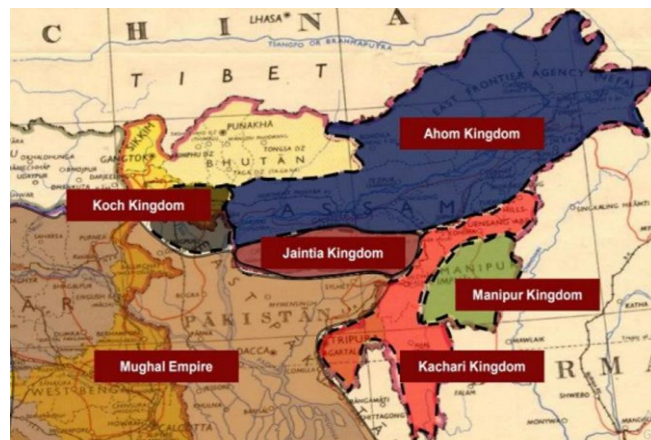
- The name Charaideo comes from Tai Ahom words: "Che" (city or town), "Rai" (to shine), and "Doi" (hill), meaning "a shining town on a hilltop."
- Established as the first capital in 1253 AD by King Sukaphaa, Charaideo remained a symbolic and ritual center of power throughout Ahom rule. After Sukaphaa's burial there in 1856, it continued to be a preferred resting place for subsequent royals.
- The site is now a major tourist attraction with over 150 moidams, though only 30 are protected by the Archaeological Survey of India, and many are in disrepair.

➤ Unique Features:

- The cluster of moidams in Charaideo is distinguished by its scale, concentration, and its location on sacred Tai-Ahom land, unlike similar sites in East and Southeast Asia.

➤ Ahom Kingdom

- Founding:** Established by Chaolung Sukaphaa from Mong Mao in 1228.
- Capital:** Initially at Charaideo, located between the Burhidihing and Dikhau rivers.
- Expansion:** Defended against Bengal rulers and Mughals; expanded to the Manas River.



- Culture:** Initially tribal, later integrated with Hinduism; known for its administrative skills and military prowess.

➤ Economy of the Ahom Kingdom

- Paik System:** Able-bodied males, known as paiks, served the state and formed its militia in return for land.
- Coinage:** Introduced in the 16th century by Suklenmung, while the Paik system remained in place.
- Revenue Systems:** Adapted from those encountered during expansion into Mughal territories.

➤ Administration of the Ahom Kingdom

- Swargadeo:** The king, from the same lineage as the founder Sukaphaa, with succession generally by primogeniture, though election by great Gohains was possible.
- Royal Officers:**
 - Borbaru:** Head of military and judicial matters.
 - Borphukan:** Military commander and viceroy, with Lachit Borphukan being the most renowned.
- Patra Mantris:** The Council of Ministers consisting of five members who advised the king on state matters.
- Paik Officials:** Common subjects were paiks, organized in groups (gots); one paik from each group provided direct service to the king while others managed agricultural duties.
- Decline:** Faced internal rebellion and Burmese invasion in the 1800s; annexed by the British in 1826 under the Treaty of Yandabo.

Private Member's Bill

Context: The introduction of a private member's bill to bind governors to the advice of their council of ministers has caused an uproar in the Rajya Sabha.

➤ Definition and Procedure:

- A Private Member's Bill is introduced by a member of Parliament (MP) who is not a minister.

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- The MP must provide a one-month notice before introducing the bill, allowing the House Secretariat to review it for compliance with constitutional provisions and legislative rules.
- Private Member's Bills are discussed only on Fridays, unlike Government Bills, which can be introduced and discussed on any day.
- If multiple bills are proposed, a ballot system determines the order of introduction.
- The Parliamentary Committee on Private Member's Bills and Resolutions reviews these bills, classifying them based on urgency and importance.

➤ Comparison with Government Bills:

- Government Bills can be introduced and discussed on any day and require no notice. They reflect the government's policies and their failure may impact the government's credibility.
- Private Member's Bills are discussed only on Fridays and require a one-month notice. These bills can be proposed by any MP and do not affect the government's credibility if rejected.

➤ Passing and Success Rate:

- Since 1970, no Private Member's Bill has been passed by Parliament. Historically, 14 Private Member's Bills have been passed, six of which were in 1956.
- During the 16th Lok Sabha, 999 Private Member's Bills were introduced, marking the highest number since 2000.

➤ Drafting and Review:

- The drafting of a Private Member's Bill is the responsibility of the member introducing it. The Rajya Sabha provides assistance to ensure the bill complies with constitutional requirements.
- Before a bill is introduced, it must be examined and possibly amended by the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha.

➤ Examples:

- The Unemployment Allowance Bill seeks to provide financial support to unemployed individuals.
- The Financial Assistance for Unemployed Graduates Bill aims to offer aid to unemployed graduates.
- The Unemployed Youth Bill 2019 addresses employment opportunities and unemployment allowances for the youth.

➤ Committee Function:

- The Committee on Private Member's Bills and Resolutions reviews and justifies bills before they are considered by Parliament.
- It also recommends appropriate times for discussion and other procedural details.

➤ General Facts:

- Both ruling and opposition parties have the right to introduce Private Member's Bills.
- For a Private Member's Bill to become law, it must be approved by both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha and receive the President's assent.
- Private Member Bills generally have a lower success rate compared to Government Bills.

Agnipath Scheme

Context: Prime Minister Narendra Modi defended the military recruitment policy, stating it was designed to rejuvenate and keep the armed forces continuously fit for war.

➤ Overview of the Agnipath Scheme

- **Scheme Description:** The Agnipath Scheme, also known as the Tour of Duty, recruits soldiers on both short-term and long-term bases through an 'All-India All-Class' approach.
- **Objective:** To cut salaries and pensions to reallocate funds for military modernization.
- **Eligibility:** Individuals aged between 17.5 and 21 years are eligible to apply.
- **Educational Requirements:** Candidates must have completed Class 10-12, depending on their service and role.
- **Recruitment Process:** The Centre will recruit Agniveers, with recruitment occurring every six months.
- **Women Recruitment:** Recruitment of women will be based on the needs of their respective services.
- **Training:** Training lasts up to six months, after which Agniveers will serve for the remaining three and a half years.
- **Selection Process:** An online centralised system will manage enrolment, with selection exclusively handled by the armed forces.
- **Permanent Enrolment:** After four years, Agniveers may apply for permanent enrolment. Up to 25% will be selected for regular cadre, serving at least 15 more years.
- **Re-employment:** Adequate opportunities will be provided for the remaining 75% who leave the services.
- **Pension:** No pensionary or gratuity benefits are provided under this scheme.
- **Exemption:** Defence officers are not affected by this scheme; they follow the Short Service Commission (SSC) model.

➤ Benefits for Agniveers

- **Salary:** Agniveers will receive an annual package ranging from Rs. 4.76 lakh in the first year to Rs. 6.92 lakh in the fourth year.

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- **Allowances:** They will receive allowances for travel and uniform in addition to their salary.
- **Honours and Awards:** Agniveers will be eligible for honours and awards as per existing guidelines.
- **Seva Nidhi:** They will contribute 30% of their salaries to a fund, which will be matched by the government. At the end of four years, they will receive Rs. 11.71 lakh as a lump sum tax-free amount, including interest.
- **Leaves:** Agniveers are entitled to 30 days of annual leave, with sick leave based on medical advice.
- **Insurance:** They will receive a non-contributory life insurance cover of Rs. 48 lakh during their service.

➤ Difference from Conscription

- **Conscription:** Involves mandatory military service, as seen in countries like Israel, Norway, North Korea, and Sweden.

- **Tour of Duty:** Not compulsory; it provides an opportunity for Indian youth to experience military life without long-term commitment.

➤ Need for the Scheme

- **Military Exposure:** Provides broader exposure to military life for a larger section of the Indian population.
- **Disciplined Workforce:** Creates a disciplined workforce with diverse skills.
- **Broadened Outlook:** Encourages rule-abiding behavior and reduces regional and sectarian biases, while improving physical fitness.
- **Reservists:** Trained individuals can serve as reservists in national emergencies.
- **Address Personnel Shortage:** Aims to tackle shortages in military personnel, including officers.
- **Employment:** Seeks to generate employment opportunities, with a goal of recruiting 40% of personnel through this scheme.

NEWS IN BETWEEN THE LINES

ASEAN



Recently, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar emphasized that the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is the cornerstone of India's Act East Policy and Indo-Pacific vision.

About ASEAN:

- The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is a **regional grouping** that aims to promote economic and security cooperation among its member countries.
- It includes **ten Southeast Asian countries**, which are Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Brunei, Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar and Cambodia.
- Established on **August 8, 1967**, ASEAN aims to promote political and economic cooperation and regional stability among its members.
- The motto of ASEAN is "**One Vision, One Identity, One Community.**"
- ASEAN Community is comprised of three pillars including **ASEAN Political-Security Community, ASEAN Economic Community and ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community.**
- The organization focuses on accelerating **economic growth, social progress and cultural development**, as well as fostering peace, stability, and collaboration in various fields such as economic, social, cultural, technical, scientific and administrative matters.
- The **ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF)** is a platform for dialogue and cooperation on **political and security issues** among ASEAN member countries and their partners.
- ASEAN originated with the formation of the **Association of Southeast Asia (ASA)** in **1961** by Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand to promote economic, cultural and social cooperation.
- The institutional mechanisms of ASEAN include the **ASEAN Summit, ASEAN Coordinating Council, ASEAN Secretariat, ASEAN Regional Forum** and **decision-making** through consultation and consensus.

Saint Hilarion Monastery



Recently, UNESCO listed the Saint Hilarion Monastery as endangered due to "imminent threats" from the Gaza conflict, following a request from Palestinian authorities.

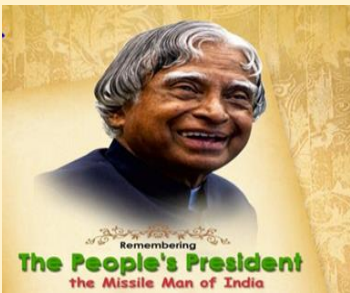
About the Saint Hilarion Monastery:

- The Saint Hilarion Monastery, also known as **Tell Umm Amer**, is a **UNESCO World Heritage Site**.
- This Monastery is one of the **oldest and largest monasteries** in the **Middle East**, dating back to the fourth century.
- The monastery's strategic location at the crossroads of major trade and communication **routes between Asia and Africa** made it a center for religious, cultural, and economic exchanges.
- The monastery was **destroyed by an earthquake in 614 AD** and abandoned, but was uncovered by local **archaeologists in 1999**.

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	- In December, UNESCO granted the monastery "provisional enhanced protection," which is the highest level of immunity under the 1954 Hague Convention. - The monastery faces imminent threats as a result of the war in Gaza, which began with Hamas's attack on Israel on October 7, 2023
Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre 	<i>Recently, India has assumed the Chair of the Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre (ADPC) and Rajendra Singh, a member, of the National Disaster Management Authority took over the Chair of ADPC from China for the year 2024-25 in Bangkok, Thailand.</i> About the Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre: - Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC) is an autonomous international organization for cooperation in and implementation of disaster risk reduction and building climate resilience in Asia and the Pacific. - It was established in 1986 as a regional disaster preparedness center (DMC) in Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) in Bangkok, Thailand. - It works to build the resilience of people and institutions to disasters and climate change impacts in Asia and the Pacific region. - Its portfolio focuses on Disaster risk management (DRM) capacity building, Improving DRM for cities and climate change, Mainstreaming DRM into national and local development, Improving DRM systems and Undertaking disaster risk assessments. - Its international Charter was signed by nine founding member countries including Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Thailand. - The Charter was put into effect in 2018 through the ratification by all the founding members. - Its headquarter is located in Bangkok, Thailand.
Personality in News A. P. J. Abdul Kalam 	<i>The Nation is paying tribute to the country's former president and renowned scientist Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam on his 9th death anniversary today.</i> A. P. J. Abdul Kalam (15 October 1931-27 July 2015) Dr. Avul Pakir Jainulabdeen Abdul Kalam, an esteemed Indian scientist and the 11th President of India was born in Rameswaram, Tamil Nadu. Contributions: - Dr. Kalam worked as a scientist at the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO). - He played a significant role in the development of India's Satellite Launch Vehicle (SLV) and Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV). - In 1982, Kalam oversaw the development of several successful missiles, including the Agni and Prithvi missiles, earning him the title of "Missile Man of India." - He was also a key figure in the country's nuclear tests at Pokhran in 1998, known as Operation Shakti. - He was the first scientist to serve as the President of India, and he held this position without any prior political background. - Dr. Kalam authored several influential books, including "Wings of Fire," "India 2020," and "Ignited Minds." Awards and Honours: - Dr. Kalam received numerous awards, including the Bharat Ratna in 1997. - He was also honoured with the Padma Bhushan in 1981 and the Padma Vibhushan in 1990. Ethical Values: Honesty, Integrity, Compassion, Dedication, etc.

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POINTS TO PONDER

- Which 700-year-old mound-burial system from Assam was recently added to the UNESCO World Heritage List, becoming the 43rd property from India to be included? – **Charaideo Moidams**
- Through which online portal will Rashtrapati Bhavan auction 250 selected gifts from the 5th to the 26th of next month? – **E-Upahaar**
- What is the name of the first of two Advanced Frigates under construction by Goa Shipyard Limited (GSL) for the Indian Navy that was recently launched? – **Tripur**
- Where is Exercise KHAAN QUEST, which the Indian Army contingent is participating in, scheduled to be conducted?
– **Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia**
- What are Japanese researchers trying to achieve by feeding vegetables to sea urchins?
– **Reduce their impact on declining seaweed stocks**

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