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Megalith: Assam

- Recently, archaeologists have identified 65 large sandstone urns (megaliths) believed to be used for rituals at four sites in Hasao district of Assam.
- Earlier in the year 2020, the State Department of Archaeology, Chennai had identified 250 Cairn-Circles from the Kodumanal excavation site in Erode district of Tamil Nadu.

Megaliths of Assam:

- Some jars are long and cylindrical, while others are partially or completely buried in the ground.
- Some of them were up to three meters high and two meters wide. Some of the urns have carvings for decoration, while others are plain.

History of Megaliths in Assam:

- For the first time in Assam in 1929 by British civil servants James Philip Mills and John Henry Hutton at six sites in Dima Hasao, Dorebor (now Hojai Dobongling), Kobak, Kartong, Molongpa (now Melange Puram), Ndunglo and Bolasan (now Nuchubanglo). The vase was seen.
- Two more sites were discovered in the year 2016. In the year 2020, four more sites were discovered by the Department of History and Archeology at North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong, Meghalaya.
- 546 urns were found at one site, Nuchubanglo, which was the largest such site in the world.

Significance of the findings:

- Although the 'Jars' are yet to be dated scientifically, researchers said that the stone 'Kalash' found in Laos and Indonesia can be seen together.
- There are typological and morphological similarities between the 'Kalash' found at all three sites.
- It has not been observed anywhere else in India except in the Northeast, pointing to the fact that at one time a group of people with similar cultural practices dominated the same geographical area between Laos and Northeast India.
- Analysis done at the Laos site shows that 'Kalash' sites were located at the end of the second millennium BC.
- Researchers in Laos said there was a "strong connection" between stone 'urns' and mortuary practices, in which human skeletal remains were found buried around 'urns'.
- The function of the 'urn' in Indonesia is unclear, although some scholars suggest a similar role for the morgue.
- More research is needed to understand the 'potential cultural link' between Assam and Laos and Indonesia.

Megaliths / Megaliths:

- A megalith or 'megalith' is a large prehistoric stone that has been used either alone or in combination with other stones to build structures or monuments.
- Megaliths were built as burial sites or memorial sites.
- Formerly sites with actual burial remains such as dolmenoid cists (box-shaped stone burial chambers), cairn circles (stone circles with defined perimeters) and capstones (distinctive mushroom-shaped burials found mainly in Kerala).
- The urn or coffin containing mortal remains was usually made of terracotta and megaliths include monuments such as menhirs.
- Archaeologists in India have unearthed most of the megaliths in the Iron Age (1500 BC to 500 BC), although some sites date back to 2000 BC before the Iron Age.
- Megaliths are spread across the Indian subcontinent. Most of the megalithic sites are found in peninsular India, concentrated in the states of Maharashtra (mainly in Vidarbha), Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

Lalit Kala Academy and Sangeet Natak Academy

- The Vice President has presented Sangeet Natak Academy Fellowship and Sangeet Natak Puraskar for the year 2018 to 43 eminent artistes of the country (4 fellows and 40 awardees).
- He also presented Lalit Kala Academy Fellowships and National Awards to 23 people (3 Fellows and 20 National Awards) in the year 2021.

Sangeet Natak Academy Fellowship (Academy Ratna) and Awards:

Sangeet Natak Academy Fellowship:

- Sangeet Natak Academy Fellowship is the highest honor conferred by Sangeet Natak Academy without distinction of nationality, race, caste, religion, creed or gender.
- Fellowship of the Academy is the most prestigious and rarest honour, which can be given to a maximum of 40 people at a time.
- The honor of the Academy Fellow consists of a cash prize of Rs.3,00,000/- along with a Tamrapatra and Angavastram.

Sangeet Natak Academy Awards:

- Awards are given to artists in the field of overall contribution/scholarship in music, dance, theatre, traditional/folk/tribal music/dance/theatre, puppetry and performing arts etc.
- The Academy Award consists of a cash prize of Rs. 1,00,000/- along with Tamrapatra and Angavastram.

What is Lalit Kala Academy Award?

- National Lalit Kala Academy Awards are given to honor individuals for outstanding work in the field of art. The awardees are selected by an esteemed panel of judges/adjudicators nominated by the Academy.

What is Sangeet Natak Academy?

- Sangeet Natak Academy is India's national academy for music, dance and drama.
- In 1952 by a resolution of the (then) Ministry of Education, Government of India, Dr. P.V. Rajamannar as its first president.
- It is presently an autonomous body of the Ministry of Culture, Government of India and is fully funded by the Government for the implementation of its schemes and programmes.
- The Academy establishes and maintains institutions and projects of national importance in the field of performing arts. Some important ones are:
- National School of Drama, New Delhi was established in 1959.
- Jawaharlal Nehru Manipur Dance Academy at Imphal – 1954.
- Kathak Kendra (National Institute of Kathak Dance) New Delhi – in 1964.
- National projects to support Kutiyattam (Sanskrit theater of Kerala), Chhau dance of Eastern India, Sattriya tradition of Assam etc.

What is Lalit Kala Academy?

- The Academy was inaugurated on 5th August, 1954 by the then Honorable Education Minister Maulana Abul Kalam Azad.
- The Academy was given statutory powers in the year 1957 under the Societies Registration Act, 1860.
- Since its inception, it has been serving the entire nation by promoting the creative endeavors of Indian artists and making their arts accessible to a large number of people, thus defining and defining the sensitivity of the entire culture that falls within the purview of the visual arts playing an important role in redefining.
- Its headquarter is in New Delhi.

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