



**TATHASTU**  
Institute of Civil Services

# DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS



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S.NO.	TOPIC
1.	ARCHAEOLOGIST FINDS FIRST EVIDENCE OF ROCK ART IN FORM OF FOOTPRINTS IN MANGALURU CITY
2.	STAY INVESTED
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## ARCHAEOLOGIST FINDS FIRST EVIDENCE OF ROCK ART IN FORM OF FOOTPRINTS IN MANGALURU CITY

- ❖ Rock Arts are ancient, humanmade markings/ paintings/ sculptures made on natural stone.
- ❖ Rock art consists of paintings, drawings, engravings, stencils, prints, bas-relief carvings and figures in rock shelters and caves, on boulders and platforms.
- ❖ Kordabba, also known as Daivaraja Babbu Swami, became a legend in Tulu Nadu, admired and revered by all. His story was passed down from generation to generation, reminding the people of the power of forgiveness and the importance of recognizing the worth of all beings, no matter how small or insignificant they may seem
- ❖ During the kola dance, one artist assumes the persona of Kordabba, wearing male attire, while the other portrays Thannimaaniga in female attire. The artist portraying Kordabba symbolically taps his head with a sword. Kordabba and Thannimaaniga are revered as sibling spirits during the ceremony.

# Archaeologist finds first evidence of rock art in form of footprints in Mangaluru city

(K14)

**The Hindu Bureau**  
MANGALURU

The first evidence of rock art in Mangaluru city has been found near Bolloor Panne Koteda Babbu Swamy shrine, according to T. Murugeshi, retired Associate Professor, Ancient History and Archaeology, MSRS College, Shirva.

Mr. Murugeshi said the rock art is in the form of a pair of human footprints, found on a natural stone boulder near the shrine. These footprints might have been created in the first or second century A.D.

“This will make us rethink about the origin of Babbu Swamy, a revered le-



Rock art in the form of a pair of human footprints was found in Mangaluru. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

gend of the region,” he said.

This discovery, Mr. Murugeshi said, is part of the work of recreating history of Babbu Swamy, taken up in association with Minchi-

nabavi Kordabba Trust, Padubidri, Udupi district. “This discovery gives a clue to search for similar art forms near other shrines of Babbu Swamy,” he told *The Hindu*.

Rock art, he said, is referred to paintings and rock paintings, which were unquestionable cognitive evidences of illiterate societies.

He discovered a rock site in Buddhanajeddu in Udupi district in 2009, which, he said, was an important rock art site of coastal Karnataka. In this site, he found more than 20 footprints on laterite surface, and it belonged to the first or second century A.D. There was evidence of pottery and stone tools of neolithic period at the Buddhanajeddu site.

The rock art form discovered near Babbu Swamy shrine in Bolloor does not have any relative evidence.



### About Bhoota Kola:

- ❖ Bhoota Kola is an annual ritual performance where local spirits or deities are worshipped.
- ❖ It is believed that a person performing the ritual has temporarily become a god himself.
- ❖ This performer is both feared and respected in the community and is believed to give answers to people's problems, on behalf of the god.
- ❖ There are several 'Bhootas' who are worshipped in the Tulu-speaking belt of Dakshina Kannada, Uttara Kannada and Udupi districts.
- ❖ It is usually performed in small local communities and rural areas.
- ❖ As per Tulu Adivasi tradition, Bhoota Kola or Daiva Kola is a "non-Vedic" ritual where Bhootas or Daivas (guardians and ancestors) are worshipped.
- ❖ Idols representing 'bhoothas' are taken out in a procession to the beating of drums and bursting of firecrackers,
- ❖ It is widely believed these spirits protect the village from unfortunate incidents.
- ❖ A trained person performs this ritual.
- ❖ The dancing and pooja ritual is accompanied by drums and music.
- ❖ The performer carrying a sword and jingling bells imitates the 'devil'.
- ❖ The divine medium start their traditional performances as the local folklore called 'paddanas' are recited.
- ❖ Tribe: The traditional right to perform the kola belong to the Nalike and Parava tribes of the region.

**Bhoota Kola**





## STAY INVESTED FOREST FIRES

- ❖ Chabahar Port- Chabahar is a deep water port, located on the Makran Coast of Iran's SistanBaluchistan province. It is next to the Gulf of Oman and at the mouth of the Strait of Hormuz.
- ❖ It is the only Iranian port with direct access to the Indian Ocean and consists of two separate ports named Shahid Kalantari and Shahid Beheshti.

### Stay invested

#### India should not tailor its ties with Iran to U.S. foreign policy changes

**B**y signing a 10-year agreement with Iran to develop and operate the Chabahar port, India has taken its infrastructure and trade partnership with the Islamic Republic to the next level despite tensions in West Asia. India will invest \$120 million and offer a credit facility of \$250 million to further develop the terminal it operates in Chabahar's Shahid Beheshti port and related projects. However, after the deal was signed, the U.S. State Department said entities considering business deals with Iran "need to be aware that they are opening themselves up to and the potential risk of sanctions". In the past, American sanctions on Iran had delayed the project. Conceived in 2003, the project did not take off for years after the U.S. and the UN imposed sanctions on Tehran over its nuclear programme. India signed a memorandum of understanding in 2015 after Washington eased sanctions on Iran following that year's nuclear agreement, and in 2016, the contract was executed during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Iran visit. The U.S.'s unilateral withdrawal from the nuclear deal in 2018 and reimposition of sanctions on Iran raised questions on India's continued cooperation with Tehran. But India managed to win a carve-out from U.S. sanctions that allowed it to operate the port through ad hoc measures.

The Chabahar port is critical for India's connectivity plans. First, it offers an alternative route to Afghanistan and Central Asia by bypassing Pakistan, allowing better trade with Central Asia.

2) And, Chabahar is expected to be connected to the International North-South Transport Corridor (NSTC), bringing India closer to Europe through Iran, Azerbaijan and Russia. An alternative to the Suez route, a fully operational NSTC would reduce the time and money spent on inter-continental trade. The port, roughly 200 km 3) from Pakistan's Gwadar, where China is developing a port as part of its BRI, would also help India expand its geopolitical influence in Central Asia. But the U.S. seems to have taken a narrow view of the project over its hostility with Iran. America's interests in the region have also changed. In 2018, when U.S. forces were backing the Islamic Republic government in Afghanistan, it gave a sanctions waiver to India as Kabul also stood to benefit from the port project. Today, U.S. troops are out of Afghanistan, the Taliban has replaced the Islamic Republic, and the U.S.'s focus is on containing Iran. India, in the past, had taken U-turns in its Iran engagement depending on the policy changes in Washington DC. It should not do that any more. It should stay invested in Chabahar and seek to improve its trade and connectivity projects with Central Asia, which is essential for India's continued rise.





**Q. What is the importance of developing Chabahar Port by India? (2017)**

- (a) India's trade with African countries will enormously increase.
- (b) India's relations with oil-producing Arab countries will be strengthened.
- (c) India will not depend on Pakistan for access to Afghanistan and Central Asia.
- (d) Pakistan will facilitate and protect the installation of a gas pipeline between Iraq and India.

**Q. Consider the following statements with respect to Chabahar Port:**

- 1. It is the only port of Iran with the direct access to ocean.
- 2. The port is strategically important for India as it will help to boost ties with the Central Asian Countries.
- 3. It is located in the Gulf of Aden.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?:

- (a) 1 and 3 only
- (b) 1 and 2 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

**Answer: B**

**Notes:**

- ❖ Statement 1: Iran has around 26 ports but Chabahar port is the only port which has direct access with the Ocean.
- ❖ Statement 2: The development of Chabahar port will help India strategically to boost its ties with the Central Asian countries by providing trade route and bypassing the route from Pakistan.
- ❖ Statement 3: The statement is incorrect. It is located in Gulf of Oman.



## FOREST FIRES

### Bambi Bucket Operation:

- ❖ The Bambi Bucket, also called a helicopter bucket or a heli bucket, is a specialised container that is suspended by cable under a chopper, and which can be filled by lowering into a river or pond before being flown above a fire and discharged aerially by opening a valve at the bottom of the bucket.
- ❖ The Bambi Bucket is especially helpful in fighting wildfires that are difficult or impossible to reach from the ground. Around the world, helicopters are frequently commissioned to fight forest fires.

SHASHI SHARMA, MAYA SIN, ANAND DELHI

## GROUND ZERO



A forest fire in Nainital district in Uttarakhand on May 6, 2024. Since November 2023, when forest fires began to rage, there have been 1,038 incidents in the State. SHASHI SHARMA KASHAP

# The burning hills of Uttarakhand

Five people were killed in May in forest fires that have been raging in Uttarakhand since last November. The forest department attributes the fires to out-migration, high-tension wires, and the abundance of pine trees, while the State government has said in the Supreme Court that the fires are completely manmade. **Ishita Mishra** travels across the State and finds that villagers, mostly women, are helping extinguish the flames

In May 2, Gyana Chaulane and his wife Bhanu had trudged up the hills to a small village in the scenic district of Almora in Uttarakhand to collect resin from the chir pine trees in the forest. The couple had moved from Nepal to Uttarakhand just last year for a better life and education for their three children. The temperature that morning was about 30°C. They worked to extract the resin, called *lawa* in the hills, for Ramesh Bakani, a contractor. They earned ₹50,000-60,000 if they worked for 10 hours a day for six months.

As they were getting ready to leave, the couple heard a scream. They saw a man running on the hilltop, desperately trying to shake off flames that had engulfed him. They realised with horror that he was Deepak Pujara, a friend. The Chaulanes scrambled to the hilltop and found Pujara's wife, Tara, lying on the ground, half burnt. Quickly, they broke a green branch off a nearby tree and began hitting Pujara, even as their clothes caught fire. Before anyone could help them, the four victims were severely burnt. All of them succumbed to injuries in hospital.

Bakani did not have the courage to break the news to Chaulane's children for days. "They have been playing in my garden for months. I didn't have the heart to tell them what had happened," says Bakani, who is worried that people will no longer work for him. The children are now under the care of their uncle in Nepal's Bajhang district, from where they came.

Five people have been killed and four injured in forest fires in Uttarakhand this year. According to a 2019 report of the Forest Survey of India, Uttarakhand has a recorded forest area of 38,000 square kilometres, which is 71.05% of its geographical area. Since November 2023, when forest fires began to rage, there have been 1,038 incidents that have gutted 1,385.5 hectares (tho) of forest land till May 10. While authorities have dismissed these as "natural affairs" in the hills, the cost of these fires has been borne by the people whose lives depend on the mountains.

**Flame of the forest**  
A booklet on the Uttarakhand forest department website says increasing migration of people from here to other States, which has led to hills barren, high-tension wires, and the abundance of chir pine trees, which are highly inflammable in nature, are the main reasons for forest fires. While the youth don't know how to tackle forest fires because the current academic curriculum does not educate them about the environment, older generations, who predominantly populate the hills, are unable to climb the hilltops to control the fires, the booklet says.

"People in [the] hills are now getting cooking gas under [the] ambitious Ujjwala scheme of the Central government and hence, villagers have stopped going to forests in [the] hills to collect wood for cooking, which is also a reason for increasing forest fires," it adds.

Dhananjay Mohan, who is in charge of the Head of Forest Force in Uttarakhand, says surfaces have become drier because of an excessive dry spell and less snowfall than usual this year. This has caused fires to spread faster in the forests, which are full of pine trees. According to the for-

est department website, Uttarakhand has 2,94,383.84 ha of chir pine forests. Chir pine trees constitute 15% of the 13 varieties of trees in the State.

"In this environment already conducive to fires, forest fires spread quickly when villagers burn stubble in the fields. Villages and forests are interspersed in the State. Forest fires also occur when people leave lit cigarettes in the forest or set forests on fire to clear the land in the belief that it will boost the growth of fodder," he says.

**Dousing fires for a mango drink, biscuits**  
It is May 6. In Almora's Sitlakhet, located 1,000 meters above sea level in the Kumaon Himalayas, the hills, laden with tall trees, which were once green, are not visible from the balconies of homes in the villages; they have disappeared under a thick cover of smog.

The trees are now black, and the ashes of burnt pine leaves cover the forest floor. The mountains, which always promise clean and cool air, radiate heat. Instead of the aroma of flowers, the smell of burnt wood lingers in the air. Around 20 women from Sitlakhet and the nearby Bhakar village come down from a hilltop after dousing a forest fire. Using green bushes, their only weapon against the towering flames, they worked hard for 10 hours. Their clothes are soaked in sweat and ash; they look exhausted.

The women belong to a 300-member group in Sitlakhet called *Jungle Ke Dost* (Friends of forests). Their mentor is Gajendra Pathak, 56, a pharmacist in a local healthcare centre who brought these women and some men together in a community initiative last year to tackle forest fires. On his call, the members of the group, mostly women, set out to put out fires.

In return for their effort, the women are offered nothing but a 125 millilitre tetrax pack of

Frooti, a popular, sweet mango-flavoured drink; and some biscuits. Pathak has ordered these, and the forest ranger, Manoj Lohani, has paid for them. The women tie the packets to the corner of their sarees to take home for their children.

One of them, Indumati, a housewife, is desperate to go home. "Sir, please take me," she says to Pathak, who is with them. "My six-month-old child must be hungry. I breastfed him at 10 a.m. before coming here. It's 6:30 p.m. now," she says, as she wipes her worn-out slippers.

Pathak stops a jeep passing by and asks the women to sit inside. Lohani gives a few of the women a gardening rake before they climb into the vehicle. They use this to clear the forest line so that fires can be stopped early.

"These women are the reason you see some greenery around. Otherwise, the forest fires would have ruined everything. It is sad that we are not in a position to do anything for them. They risk their lives to save our mountains," says Pathak, who feels that the government must provide life insurance for the people of the State who help mitigate forest fires.

On being asked why there are more women than men in the group, Debull Devi, 65, says, "I've *audai hi to jungle main aag lagate hain*. *Woh Kyu hi bhajenge?*" (It is the men who set the forest on fire. How will they douse the fire?)

Similarly, in Farwa Bagar village of Nainital district, Sunil Rawat says he has helped extinguish more than 20 forest fires since April 19. "Sitlakhet is not the only place where this happens. Villagers across the State come in large numbers to support the forest department, which has now woken up from a deep slumber, to control these incidents," he says.

The District Forest Officer of Nainital, Chandra Shekhar Joshi, says the forest department has sent a proposal to the State government asking for remuneration for the villagers who help mitigate forest fires. Nainital district, with the largest forest area (216,770) in the State, has around 300 forest fire watchers on its rolls. Half of them are women. A similar proposal, the forest department bulletin there is greater damage to reserved forests than to the area managed by the van panchayats. After the recent fires, the State government announced insurance cover of ₹3 lakh for 4,000 contract employees of the forest department.

**Playing politics**

On May 8, the Uttarakhand government said in the Supreme Court that "all the instances of forest fires are manmade." It informed the court that 388 criminal cases had been registered

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GAJENDRA PATHAK  
Head of Jungle Ke Dost

across the State against those found setting the forests on fire. In most cases, people who were arrested had attempted to burn stubble, but had failed to control the fires which spread due to strong winds, the government said.

The 380-page interim status report submitted by the government in Court said that a section of the media had reported that 40% of Uttarakhand was burning, which was "misleading"; and that only 0.5% of forest cover was affected by fires. The State informed the Court that the State Disaster Response Force and the National Disaster Response Force had been deployed to tackle the forest fires. The Indian Air Force was using Bambi Buckets (collapsible containers that hang from a helicopter and release large amounts of water in targeted areas) to douse the flames, it said.

The government added in the report that the Uttarakhand Forest Fire Mitigation Project 2023-25 was pending with the Central government. The report also said that forest fires were not "new" in the State and that there was no longer an "emergency" situation.

The government informed the Court that it is tying up with IT Rookies to explore the option of cloud seeding to increase precipitation and trigger rainfall. Dismissing this solution, the Court said "cloud seeding or depending on [the] rain gods is not the answer" to forest fires.

The next day, after rains, the government claimed credit for having "controlled" the forest fires completely. But fires have raged on. On May 17 alone, 11 forest fires were reported.

On the same day, the Court adjourned the case to September 2024 after expressing satisfaction with the State's response on the measures it was taking to tackle the problem. The State said that it had used the entire Compensatory Afforestation Fund for firefighting and fire prevention and was filling up vacant posts at the field level in the forest department, among other things.

The Congress was quick to use this issue in its Lok Sabha election campaign to target the State government, led by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). "While fires continued to burn the forest in April, Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami was busy travelling to other States to campaign for BJP candidates. Even the Forest Minister, Subodh Uniyal, was campaigning in Assam," said Garima Dasgupta, the spokesperson of Congress.

After completing his campaign, Dhami met with officials and ordered the police to charge those found setting the forests on fire with the Gangster Act and the Uttarakhand Public and Private Property Damage Recovery Act, 2024.

**Where solutions lie**

Pathak believes that great injustice is being done to the chir pine tree, which many people in Uttarakhand hold as the main culprit of the forest fires. "This tree, which hardly needs maintenance, is a major source of timber and fuelwood. It is used to make furniture. Its leaves are used for decoration. Its bark is a source of charcoal, resin, and coal tar, which are not just used by villagers, but also sold to earn money," he says. "It is really not any other tree which gives much trouble."

The State has developed a concept to generate electricity from pine needles, which fall from the trees from mid-March until the onset of rains in July every year. But the low price offered for the collection of these needles is not helping.

This year, Dhami announced the start of a scheme, Piral Lao-Paise Pao (bring pine leaves and get money), under which the State purchases pine leaves at the rate of ₹50 per kg, much higher than the ₹3 per kg which has been the norm in Uttarakhand.

Pathak suggests that the government focus more on community participation to mitigate forest fires. He also believes that the Assisted Natural Regeneration (ANR) technique should be adopted across the State. This simple and low-cost forest restoration method involves facilitating the natural regeneration of degraded or deforested lands by providing favourable conditions for the growth of indigenous tree species. It involves a range of techniques such as the removal of invasive species, the creation of microsites for establishing seedlings, and the protection of natural regeneration from grazing and other disturbances. "ANR will not even cost half of what the government spends on planting trees," he says. "Establishing a fire line across the mountains is crucial to mitigate fires, he adds.

The forest fires in Uttarakhand have also ignited communal flames after a video emerged of young men celebrating, even as fires raged behind them. Some people accused Muslims of setting the forests on fire to "take revenge" on the State government which introduced a Uniform Civil Code and embarked on an "anti-encroachment drive" in Haldwani in February, which sparked riots. The police arrested the men, who hailed from Bihar and claimed to have recorded the video to gain some 'likes' on Instagram.

While the fires are being doused, Hemant Dhiyani, from Ganga Awahan, an NGO which works to save the river Ganga, worries about the snowball effect of recurring forest fires. "Forests get burnt in fires. This reduces the strength of the mountains and the soil. When it rains, the loose soil falls to retain water and impacts ground water rejuvenation, causing flash floods. As the loose boulders crash and water also gushes down, landslides occur," he explains.

Ravi Chopra, an environmentalist from Uttarakhand, says the forest department in the State has "very few or no capabilities" to control forest fires. "Nothing can be done to mitigate forest fires unless they empower the local people and take them into confidence," he says.



In return for their efforts, the women of Jungle Ke Dost, a community-led initiative to extinguish forest fires, are offered a 125-millilitre tetrax pack of Frooti and some biscuits. SHASHI SHARMA KASHAP



## Forest Fire

- ❖ Also called bush or vegetation fire or wildfire, it can be described as any uncontrolled and non-prescribed combustion or burning of plants in a natural setting such as a forest, grassland, brushland or tundra, which consumes the natural fuels and spreads based on environmental conditions (e.g., wind, topography).
- ❖ A wildfire requires three essential elements to sustain combustion like Fuel, Oxygen, and a Heat source.



**Q. Consider the following statements with reference to Bambi Bucket:**

1. It is a specialised aerial firefighting tool.
2. It discharges a solid column of water and useful in extinguishing forest fires.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2