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### **DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 07-01-2025**

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## Indus Valley Script

### Syllabus: GS-1; Ancient History, Art & Culture

#### Context

- Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin announced a \$1 million prize for experts or organisations that succeed in deciphering the scripts of the Indus Valley Civilisation for everyone to understand.

#### About

##### Origin and Context

- The script belongs to the **Indus Valley Civilization (IVC)**, one of the world's earliest urban civilizations (c. 2600–1900 BCE).
- Found on seals, pottery, copper tablets, and other objects, primarily in Harappa, Mohenjo-Daro, and other IVC sites.



##### Nature of the Script

- The script is **pictographic**: It uses symbols resembling objects, animals, and geometric shapes.
- It is a **logo-syllabic script** (likely combining logograms and phonetic syllables).
- Around **400–600 unique symbols** have been identified.
- Most inscriptions are short, with an average length of 5–6 symbols, suggesting possible administrative or ritualistic usage.

### Direction of Writing:

- The direction of the Indus Valley script is generally referred to as "**boustrophedon**" which means it is written from right to left on one line, then left to right on the next, similar to the way a farmer would plow a field; essentially alternating directions between lines.

### Purpose:

- Likely used for **trade, administrative records, religious practices, and ownership markers**.
- Often found on seals, which were possibly used to stamp trade goods.

### Challenges in Decipherment:

- The script remains **undeciphered** due to:
  - Lack of bilingual texts (like the Rosetta Stone for Egyptian hieroglyphs).
  - Ambiguity about the underlying language.
  - Short length of inscriptions.

### Key Theories:

- Linguists and historians hypothesize links to **Dravidian languages, Proto-Indo-European languages**, or an independent linguistic family.
- Some researchers believe it may not represent a fully developed language but instead convey symbolic or religious meanings.

### Cultural and Economic Significance:

- The script reflects the high level of sophistication and organization in IVC society.
- Its widespread use across the Indus region indicates a shared cultural or administrative system.

### Decline:

- The script disappeared around **1900 BCE**, coinciding with the decline of the Indus Valley Civilization.

## **Modhweth festival**

**Syllabus: GS-1; Art & Culture**

### **Context**

- The Todas' most important festival of the year, known as Modhweth, was celebrated at the Muthanadu Mund, near Thalaikundah, in the Nilgiris.

### **About Toda tribe**

- The Toda tribe is an indigenous community primarily residing in the Nilgiri Hills of Tamil Nadu, India. They are known for their unique culture, traditional practices, and harmonious relationship with nature.



### **Origin and Location**

- **Region:** The Todas are primarily concentrated in the Nilgiri Hills, part of the Western Ghats.
- **Language:** They speak Toda, a Dravidian language, and many also speak Tamil and English due to interactions with the outside world.

- **Population:** Their population is relatively small, making them one of the most endangered tribal communities in India.

### Lifestyle and Culture

- **Occupation:** Traditionally pastoralists, the Todas rear buffaloes, which play a central role in their economy, culture, and rituals.
- **Diet:** Their diet mainly consists of dairy products from buffalo milk, supplemented by grains and vegetables.
- **Traditional Dress:** The Toda attire includes a distinctive embroidered shawl called **Poothukuli**, with red and black patterns on a white base.
- **Housing:** They live in **Mundhs**, which are unique barrel-shaped huts made of bamboo, grass, and cane.

### Religion and Beliefs

- **Religion:** The Todas follow an animistic religion, worshiping nature and buffaloes as sacred. Their rituals are deeply connected to their buffaloes.
- **Temples:** Their temples are built in the same style as their homes, and only certain members of the community are allowed to enter them.
- **Sacred Buffaloes:** Rituals often involve the consecration of buffaloes, and they are considered intermediaries between humans and the divine.

### Art and Craft

- **Embroidery:** The **Toda embroidery (Pukhoor)** is renowned for its intricate patterns and is recognized as a Geographical Indication (GI) product.
- **Oral Tradition:** The Toda community has a rich oral tradition, including songs and stories that narrate their myths, history, and cosmology.

### Social Structure

- **Clan-based Society:** The Todas are organized into clans, with strong kinship ties within their community.
- **Marriage Practices:** They traditionally practiced fraternal polyandry (though it has largely declined). Marriages are arranged within the community.
- **Women's Role:** Women are active in rituals and ceremonies but traditionally excluded from temple entry.

### Environmental Connection

- **Sustainable Practices:** The Todas have a deep respect for their natural environment, ensuring sustainable use of resources.
- **Conservation Efforts:** They contribute to conserving the unique **Shola grasslands** and forests in the Nilgiris.

### Challenges

- **Modernization:** Encroachment by modern settlements and agriculture threatens their traditional lifestyle.
- **Loss of Land:** The encroachment of agricultural and commercial interests has reduced their traditional grazing lands.
- **Cultural Dilution:** Increased exposure to modern society has led to a gradual dilution of their traditional practices.

### Government and NGO Support

- **Recognition:** The Toda community is recognized as a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG) by the Indian government.
- **Schemes and Programs:** Various initiatives aim to support their livelihoods, education, and preservation of their culture.
- **GI Status:** The GI tag for Toda embroidery has helped in preserving and promoting their craft.

## South Korea

### Syllabus: GS-1 Geography Mapping

#### Context:

- South Korean investigators attempted to arrest impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol at his residence on January 3, 2025 over a failed martial law bid but were blocked by his security forces.

### South Korea Map

#### Location:

- South Korea is located in East Asia, on the southern portion of the Korean Peninsula.

- It shares a land border only with North Korea, to the north, along the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ).
- The country is surrounded by water, with coastlines along three seas:
  - **West:** Yellow Sea
  - **South:** East China Sea
  - **East:** Sea of Japan

## Historical Division:

- After World War II, the division between North and South Korea was marked by the 38th parallel.
- After the Korean War, the DMZ became the boundary between the two countries.



## Topography:

- **Major Mountain Ranges:**
  - Taebaek Mountains
  - Sobaek Mountains
- **Highest Peak:** Hallasan (located on Jeju Island)
- The Korean Peninsula is geologically stable.

**Rivers:**

- **Longest River:** Nakdong River
- **Other Notable River:** Han River, which flows through Seoul (the capital).
- Most major rivers flow north to south or east to west, emptying into the Yellow Sea or the Korea Strait.

## **One Nation One Election: Impact on Federalism**

**Syllabus: GS-2: Indian Polity – Elections**

**Context:**

- The ruling government, led by the Bharatiya Janata Party/National Democratic Alliance, has been pursuing the One Nation, One Election framework (ONOE) with all seriousness.

**Introduction**

- **Concept:** Synchronisation of Lok Sabha and State Assembly elections into a single electoral cycle.
- **Proponents' View:** Advocates claim administrative and fiscal efficiencies.
- **Critics' View:** Argue it undermines the democratic and federalist principles enshrined in the Constitution.

**Historical Context**

- **Early Practice:** Simultaneous elections conducted in the initial years post-Independence.
- **Disruption:** The cycle was disrupted by:
  - **Invocation of Article 356:** Popularly known as President's Rule, first imposed in Kerala (1959).
  - **Federal Overreach:** Use of Article 356 as a political tool undermined State autonomy.

➤ **Misuse of Article 356:**

- Termed a “dead letter” by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar; yet invoked over 130 times since Independence.
- S.R. Bommai case aimed to curb its misuse but failed to eliminate arbitrary interventions.

➤ **Anti-Defection Law:**

- Enacted via the **52nd Amendment Act, 1985** (Tenth Schedule) to disqualify defectors.
- Loopholes:
  - Lack of time-bound disqualification decisions by Speakers.
  - Provisions for “group defections” dilute its effectiveness.

### **Issues with ONOE**

#### **1. Constitutional Implications**

- Requires amendments to Articles **83** and **172** (guaranteeing five-year terms for Parliament and Assemblies).
- State governments may face **curtailment or extension** of terms, eroding their autonomy.

#### **2. Federal Structure Under Siege**

➤ **Impact on Federalism:**

- Reduces State autonomy in decision-making.
- Aligning elections may impair voters' ability to independently evaluate State and central governments.

➤ **Democratic Principles:**

- Truncated terms for governments violate the principle of "one person, one vote, one value."
- Midterm ONOE may result in governments serving abbreviated tenures.

#### **3. Logistical Challenges**

➤ **Scale:** Over **900 million voters** require enormous resources.

➤ **Burden:**

- Increased strain on Election Commission, security forces, and administrative machinery.
- Risk of voter fatigue and confusion.

#### 4. Economic and Governance Costs

- Increased **frequency of elections** negates fiscal savings.
- Shortened tenures disrupt governance, hinder policy implementation, and cause administrative inefficiencies.

#### Proposed Systemic Reforms

- Address key vulnerabilities before implementing ONOE:
  - **Misuse of Article 356:** Strengthen mechanisms to protect State autonomy.
  - **Anti-Defection Law:** Introduce a time-bound framework and stricter provisions against defections.
  - **Institutional Strengthening:** Enhance accountability and transparency of constitutional processes.

#### Conclusion

- ONOE, in its current form, risks becoming an instrument of centralisation rather than reform.
- Requires a **measured and consultative approach:**
  - Uphold federal principles and respect the diversity of the Indian polity.
  - Strengthen democratic institutions to ensure governance aligned with the Constitution's spirit.
- **Way Forward:**
  - Focus on systemic reforms that address structural vulnerabilities.
  - Ensure ONOE complements, rather than undermines, the federal character of Indian democracy.

## **Bhopal Gas Tragedy**

**Syllabus: GS-3: Disaster Management**

### **Context:**

- Protests erupted in Pithampur, Dhar district, Madhya Pradesh, against the planned disposal of 337 tonnes of toxic waste from the Union Carbide factory, associated with the Bhopal gas tragedy.
- **Historical Context:** The toxic waste has been shifted for disposal 40 years after the tragedy occurred.

### **Protests and Legal Measures**

#### ➤ **Protests Details:**

- Around 500-600 people protested near Ramky Enviro Industrial Waste Management Private Limited premises.
- Demonstrations spread across the town, and a bandh was called by Pithampur Bachao Samiti.
- Two individuals attempted self-immolation but were rescued and hospitalized.

#### ➤ **Police Action:**

- Five cases were registered under various sections of the **Bharatiya Nyay Sanhita (BNS)**:
  - **Section 283:** Misleading with false signals.
  - **Section 341:** Intent of forgery with counterfeit instruments.
  - **Section 149:** Assembly for waging war against the government.
  - **Section 147:** Attempt to wage war or abet it.
  - **Section 285:** Obstruction causing public danger.
  - **Section 126(2):** Intentional obstruction of movement.
  - **Sections 190 & 191:** Unlawful assembly and rioting.
- First Information Reports (FIRs): Some cases were filed against named individuals; others were against unidentified persons.

- **Prohibitory Orders:** Imposed under Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), banning gatherings of five or more people near the disposal site.

### Current Situation

- **Status:**
  - Protests subdued as normalcy returned to Pithampur.
  - All industrial establishments resumed operations.
- **Future Steps:**
  - State government to await further court orders before proceeding with the waste disposal.

### Key Points for Analysis

- **Environmental Concerns:** Safe disposal of hazardous waste is critical for ecological and public health.
- **Public Opposition:** Reflects fears about inadequate safety measures and potential risks to health and environment.
- **Legal Framework:** Highlights the role of judicial directives in managing hazardous waste.
- **Governance Challenges:** Balancing public safety, legal compliance, and industrial operations.

### Bhopal Gas Tragedy (1984)

#### Background:

- **Date:** Night of December 2-3, 1984.
- **Location:** Union Carbide India Limited (UCIL) pesticide plant, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh.
- **Incident:** Release of approximately 40 tonnes of **Methyl Isocyanate (MIC)** gas due to a chemical reaction in a storage tank.

#### Causes:

- **Design Defects:**
  - Inadequate safety measures and poor maintenance of the plant.
  - Absence of proper refrigeration for MIC storage tanks.

➤ **Negligence:**

- Failure to address prior safety warnings.
- Lack of skilled personnel and emergency protocols.

➤ **Corporate Responsibility:**

- Lax enforcement of industrial safety standards.
- Cost-cutting measures compromising safety.

**Impact:**

➤ **Human Casualties:**

- Immediate deaths: Over 3,700 people (official figures), but estimated deaths exceed 15,000 over time.
- Over 5 lakh people exposed to the gas, leading to respiratory, neurological, and ocular diseases.

➤ **Environmental Damage:**

- Soil and groundwater contamination with toxic chemicals.
- Long-term ecological degradation in surrounding areas.

➤ **Health Consequences:**

- Chronic diseases, birth defects, and genetic disorders in survivors and subsequent generations.

➤ **Economic Consequences:**

- Loss of livelihood for affected families.
- High costs of medical treatment and rehabilitation.

**Legal and Institutional Responses:**

➤ **Bhopal Gas Leak Disaster Act (1985):**

- Empowered the Government of India to represent victims in legal proceedings.

➤ **Compensation:**

- Union Carbide paid \$470 million as a settlement in 1989.
- Critics argue compensation was inadequate.

➤ **Criminal Cases:**

- Warren Anderson, CEO of Union Carbide, was charged but never extradited.

➤ **Rehabilitation Measures:**

- Medical facilities for victims.
- Social and economic rehabilitation programs.

**Lessons Learned:**

➤ **Need for Stringent Safety Standards:**

- Strict enforcement of industrial safety norms and environmental regulations.

➤ **Disaster Management Preparedness:**

- Robust early warning systems and emergency response mechanisms.

➤ **Corporate Accountability:**

- Ensuring ethical practices and responsibility for industrial operations.

**Current Status:**

- The site remains contaminated, affecting groundwater.
- Persistent health issues among survivors and lack of comprehensive justice.

This tragic event underscores the importance of balancing industrial development with safety, accountability, and environmental sustainability.