

NEWSIN brief

UNSC authorises Syria aid convoys

AFP, United Nations

The UN Security Council adopted a resolution Monday authorising humanitarian convoys to Syria without the consent of the Damascus regime, to help more than one million civilians in rebel-held areas. The council -- including Russia and China, who have vetoed four Western-backed draft resolutions on Syria since the start of the conflict in 2011 -- unanimously approved the measure. More than 10.8 million Syrians are in need of aid, according to UN officials.

Mumbai gang-rapes: teenagers convicted

AFP, Mumbai

A Mumbai court yesterday convicted two teenage boys over separate gang-rapes that shocked the city in a verdict that came days after an Indian minister said juvenile suspects should be treated as adults in rape cases. Officials said the pair, two 17-year-olds, would be sent to a reform institution in Maharashtra state, of which Mumbai is the capital, for three years.

Mubarak's party can take part in Egypt polls

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

A Cairo appeal court ruled on Monday that leaders of the former ruling party of the ousted President Hosni Mubarak will not be barred from running for elections. The decision by the Cairo Appeals Court for Urgent Matters overturns an earlier ruling that banned leaders of Mubarak's National Democratic Party from taking part in any elections. The party was dissolved following the uprising that toppled Mubarak in 2011.

Indian govt to accept self-attested docs

PTI, New Delhi

In what may come as a major relief to citizens, Indian government has decided to do away with the necessity of filing affidavits from a gazetted officer or a notary for a big chunk of government-related work and instead to promote self-attestation of documents.

It has also asked states to review the existing requirement of attaching such affidavits with various application forms, said an official.

Pak man sentenced to death for 'blasphemy'

AFP, Lahore

A court in Pakistan has passed a death sentence on a man convicted under controversial blasphemy laws of insulting the Prophet Mohammed, lawyers said yesterday. Zulfikar Ali, aged in his 50s, was arrested in April 2008 in the eastern city of Lahore and accused of writing blasphemous slogans on walls.



PHOTO: AFP

A Palestinian mother kisses the body of four-year-old girl Sarah Sheik al-Eid after she was killed along with her father and uncle in a Israeli military strike the previous day, during their funeral in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip, yesterday. Israel resumed raids on Gaza yesterday after a Egypt-backed truce failed to get off the ground.

Political deadlock eases

Parliament elects speaker; forces push into Tikrit

AFP, Baghdad

Iraq's fractious parliament elected a speaker yesterday, setting the stage for the government formation process to proceed after extensive delays, as security forces advanced into militant-held Tikrit.

World powers and Iraq's top Shia cleric, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, had piled pressure on MPs to put aside their differences to help counter a major jihadist-led onslaught that has overrun swathes of territory north and west of Baghdad.

After two sessions in which they made no progress, MPs elected Salim al-Juburi parliament speaker, a post traditionally held by a Sunni Arab that must be filled before the process of forming a government can go ahead.

Acting speaker Mahdi Hafez announced that Juburi, an MP from Diyala who ran on an independent list, won 194 of 273 votes cast.

It was not immediately clear if his election was part of a package deal involving the two outstanding senior posts of president and prime minister, but yesterday's progress after previous deadlocked sessions indicates that some type of accord has been reached.

Lawmakers must now elect a president, who will then give the biggest bloc the first chance to form a government.

The UN's Iraq envoy, Nickolay Mladenov, has warned politicians that "failing to move forward on electing a new speaker, a new president and a new government risks plunging the country into chaos".

Earlier yesterday, security forces began an attack on Tikrit, aiming to revitalise an operation to retake it that began more than two weeks ago but became bogged down south of the city.

"Iraqi forces began a military operation to liberate the city of Tikrit and our forces were able to control the southern part of the city," Ahmed Abdullah Juburi, the governor of Salaheddin province, of which Tikrit is the capital, told AFP.

Tikrit was seized by militants on June 11 as part of a sweeping offensive that has overrun large areas of five provinces since it began last month.

Tribesmen and security forces also battled militants in the town of Dhuluiyah on Thursday, just 80 kilometres (50 miles) north of Baghdad.

Violence also struck south of Baghdad yesterday, with bombings in the Madain area killing nine people, including four soldiers, officials said.

The fighting and bombings came a day after the Pentagon said American military teams sent to Iraq last month had completed their assessment of Iraqi security forces.

The details were not released, but The New York Times said one conclusion was that only roughly half of Iraq's units are capable enough to be advised by US personnel, if the decision is taken to do so.

IRAQ CRISIS

Moscow metro tragedy kills 21

AFP, Moscow

Twenty-one people died and scores more were wounded after a train derailed in Moscow's packed metro during rush hour yesterday in the worst accident ever to hit one of the world's busiest subways.

Russian television described scenes of chaos and panic on the capital's famed system, saying passengers fell like dominoes when the train travelling at 70 kilometres an hour braked abruptly and three carriages derailed and crumpled.

Rescue teams were still combing through the mangled metal carriages hours later in an attempt to extricate several bodies.

President Vladimir Putin, who is on a trip to Brazil, ordered a criminal probe into the tragedy that put a huge strain on the city of some 12 million and snarled traffic on its notoriously clogged roads amid a heatwave.

The Investigative Committee said it was looking at a number of possible causes including a mechanical flaw in a carriage and a power failure. A terror attack has been ruled out, the committee said.

Health Minister Veronika Skvortsova told Russian agencies that 21 people had died. More than 160 people were hospitalised, including 42 still in intensive care, the head of Moscow's health department Georgy Golukhov told journalists.

Moscow's ornate metro is considered one of the world's busiest and carries some nine million people every day. In the last serious accident on the Moscow metro in 1982, eight people died when an escalator broke down.

Aliens, UFOs in 10,000-yr-old rock paintings!



PTI, Chhattisgarh

India's Chhattisgarh state department of archaeology and culture plans to seek help from Nasa and Isro for research on 10,000-year-old rock paintings depicting aliens and UFOs in Charama region in Kanker district in tribal Bastar region.

According to archaeologist JR Bhagat, these paintings have depicted aliens like those shown in Hollywood and Bollywood flicks. Located about 130km from Raipur, the caves come under village Chandeli and Gotitola.

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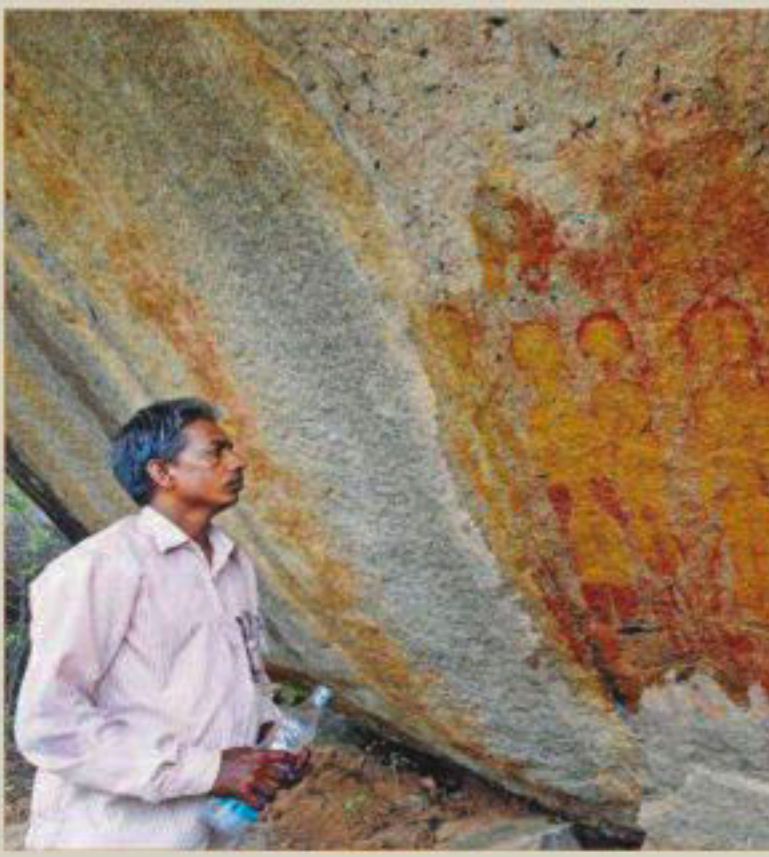
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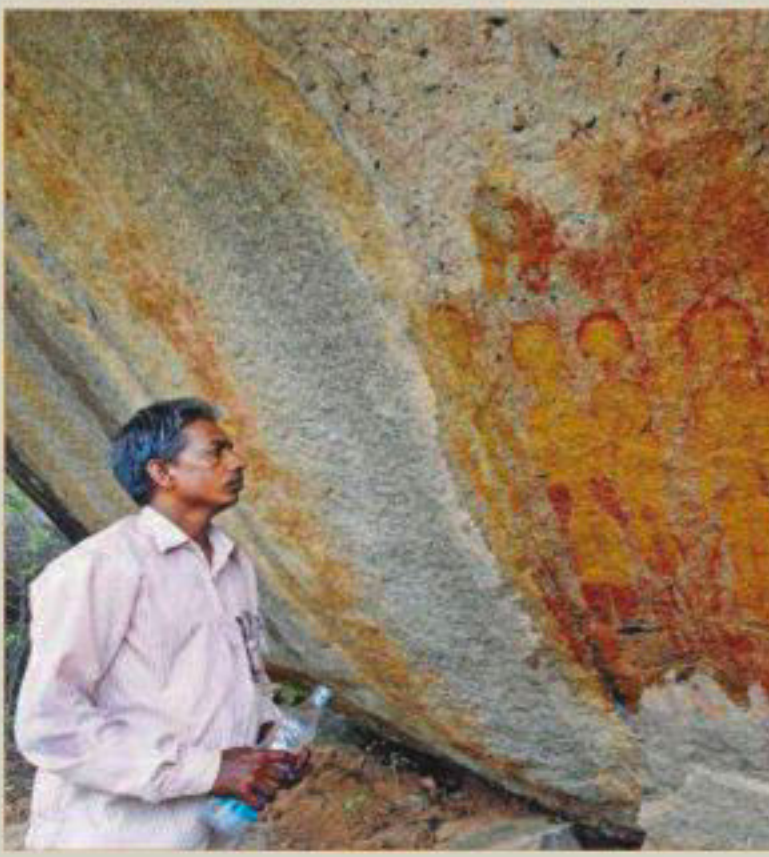
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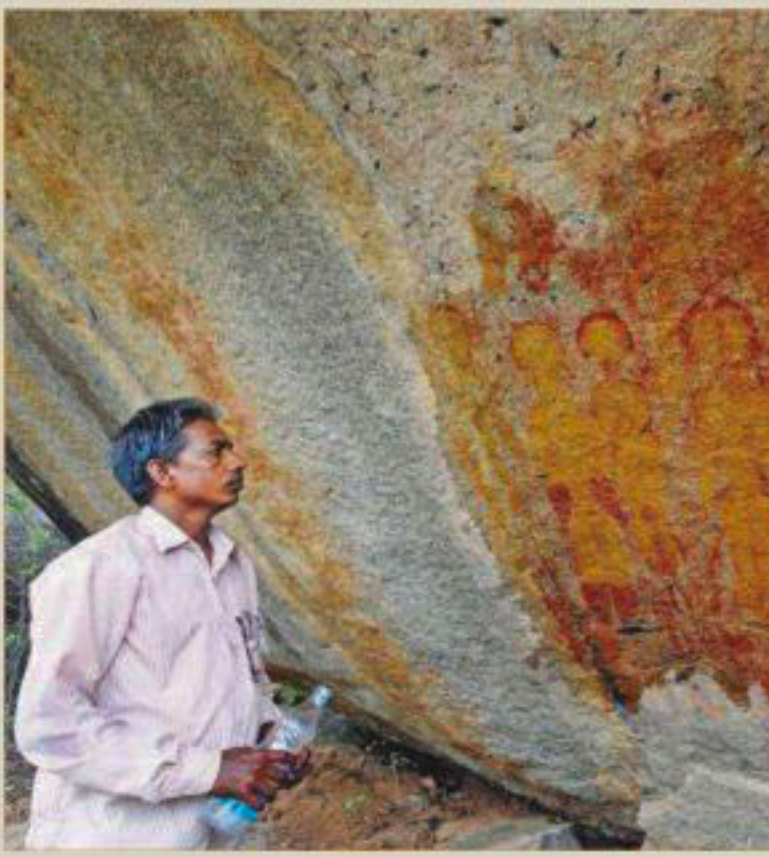
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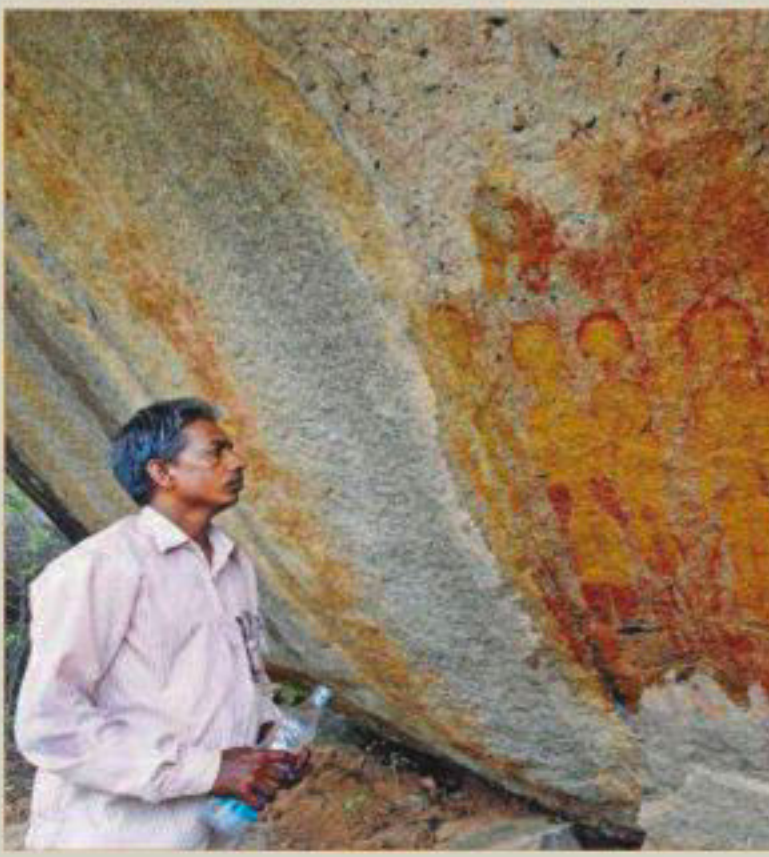
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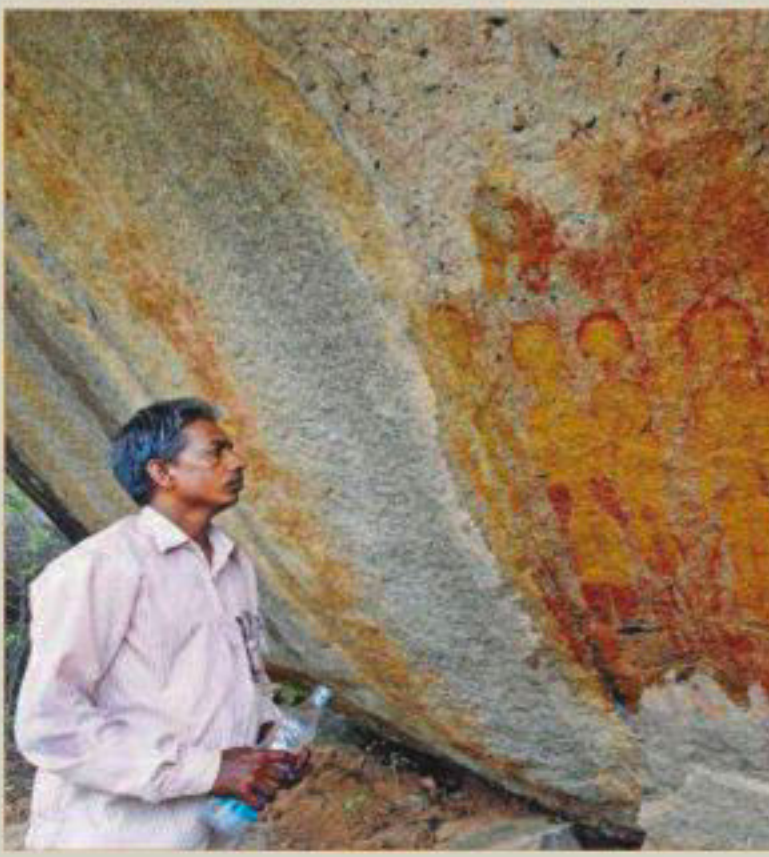
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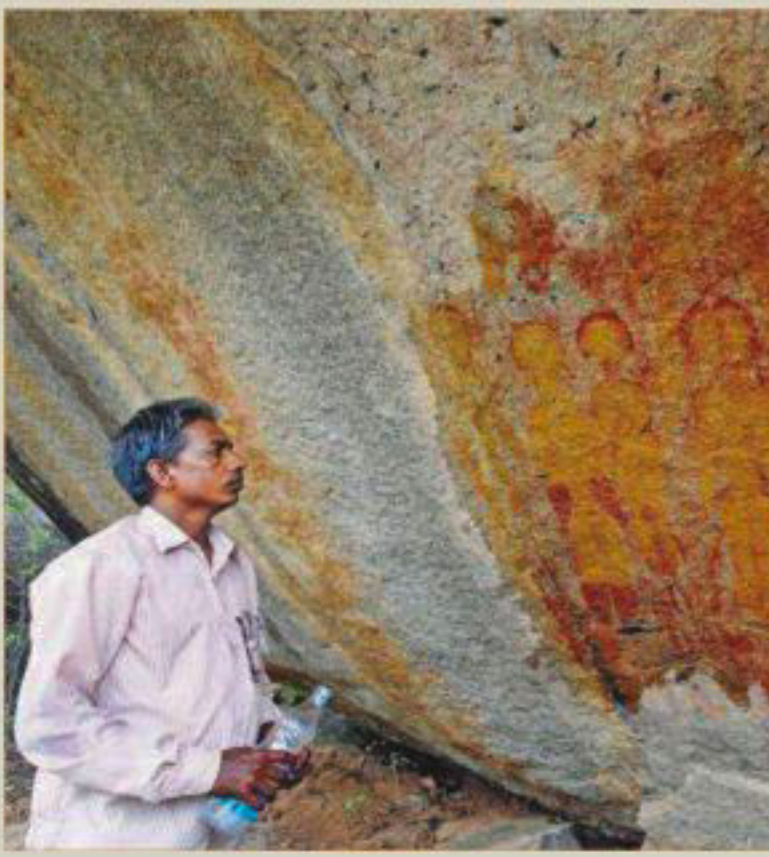
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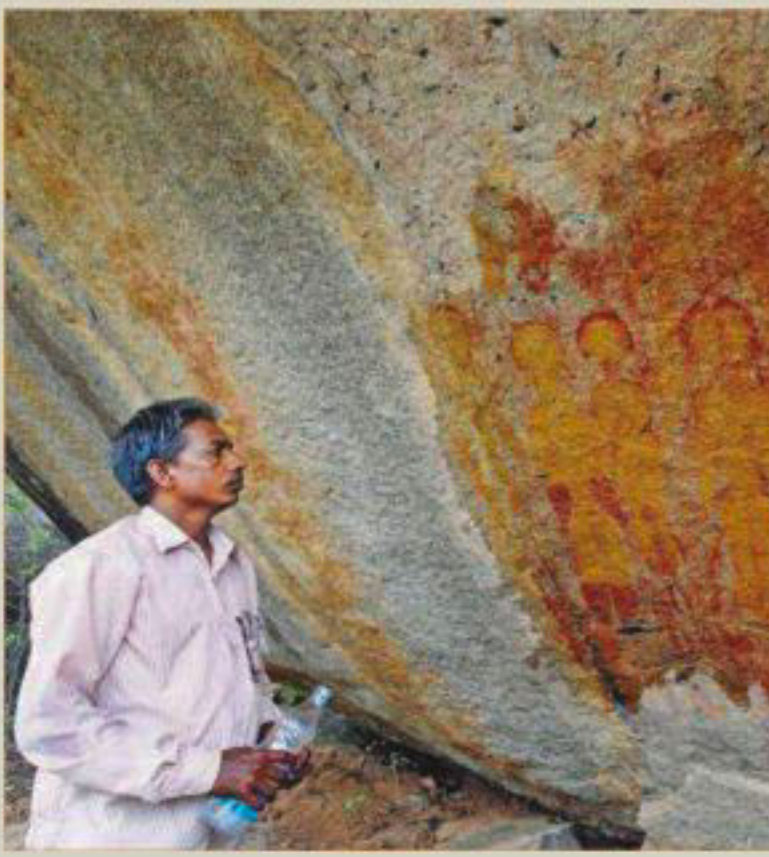
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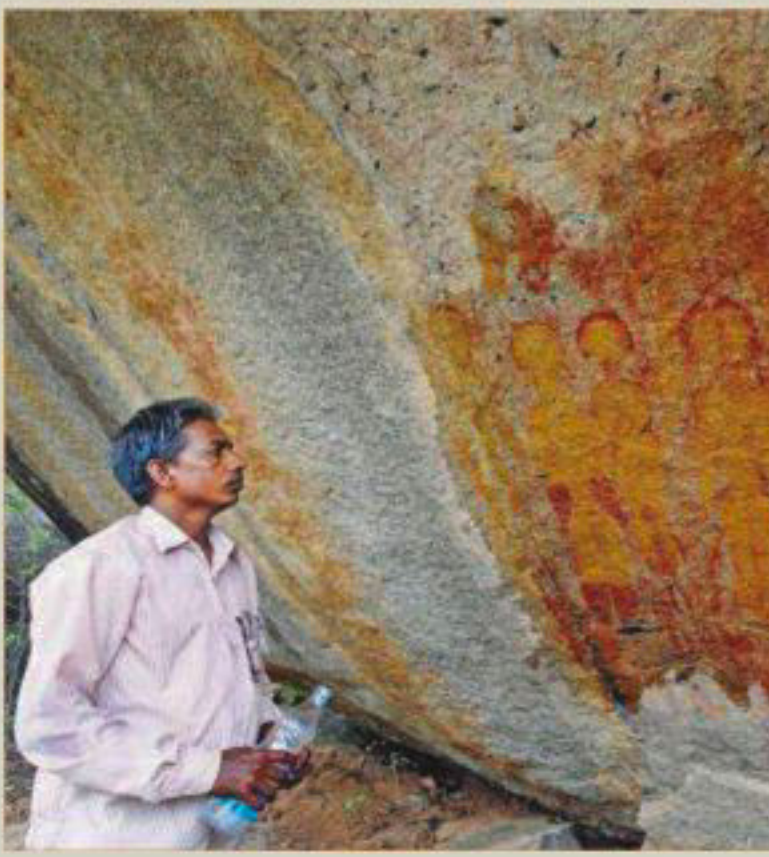
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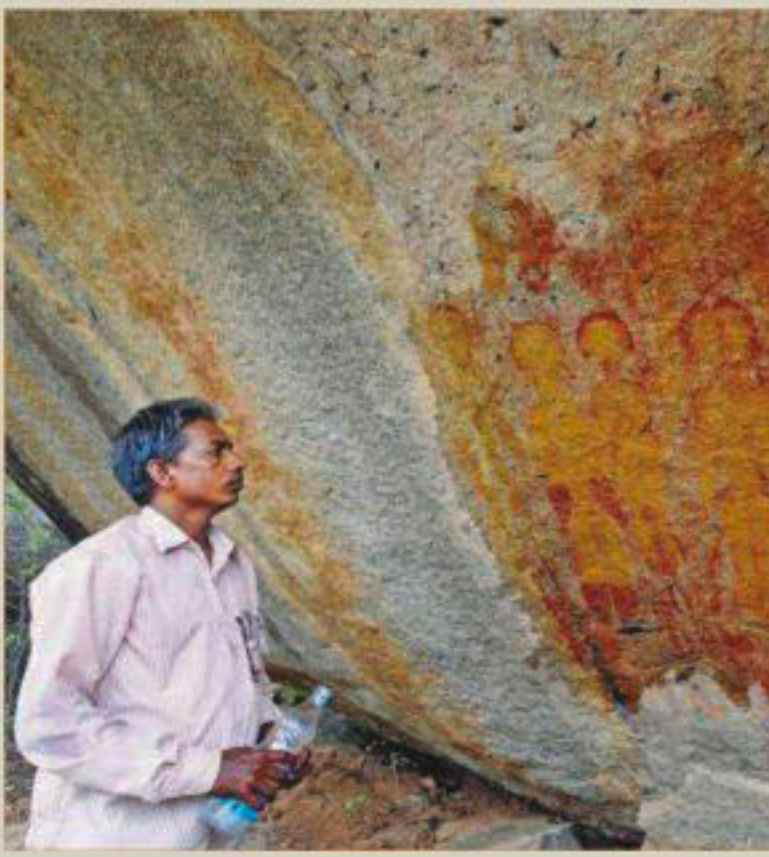
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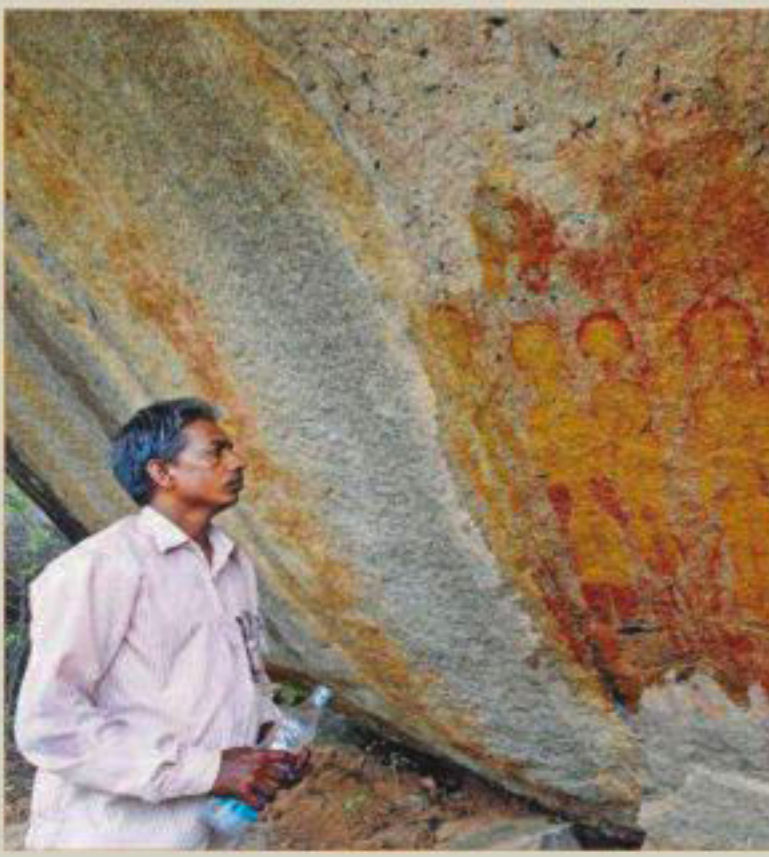
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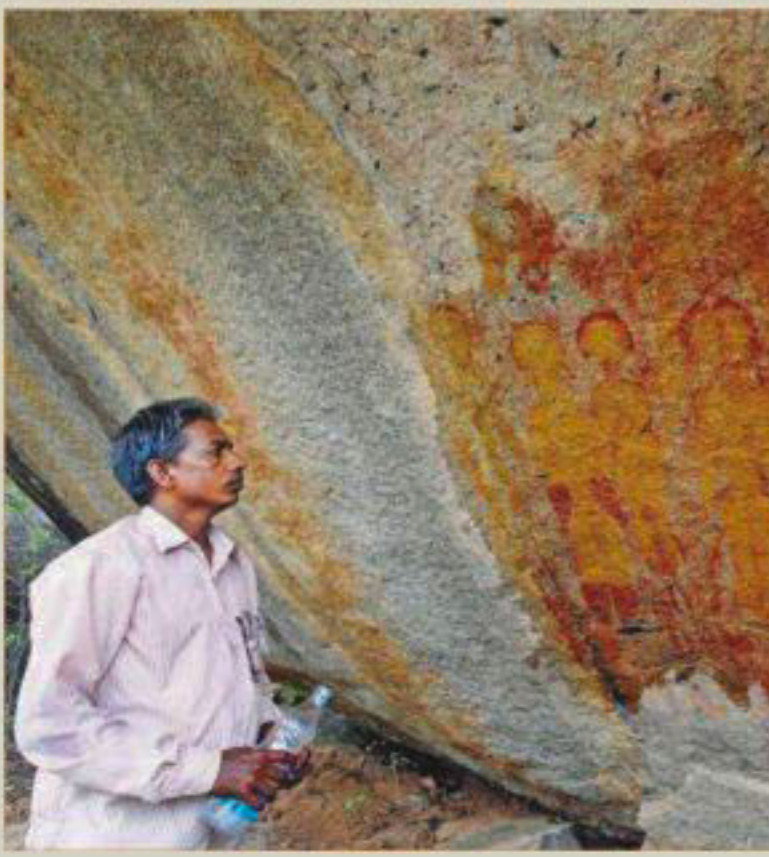
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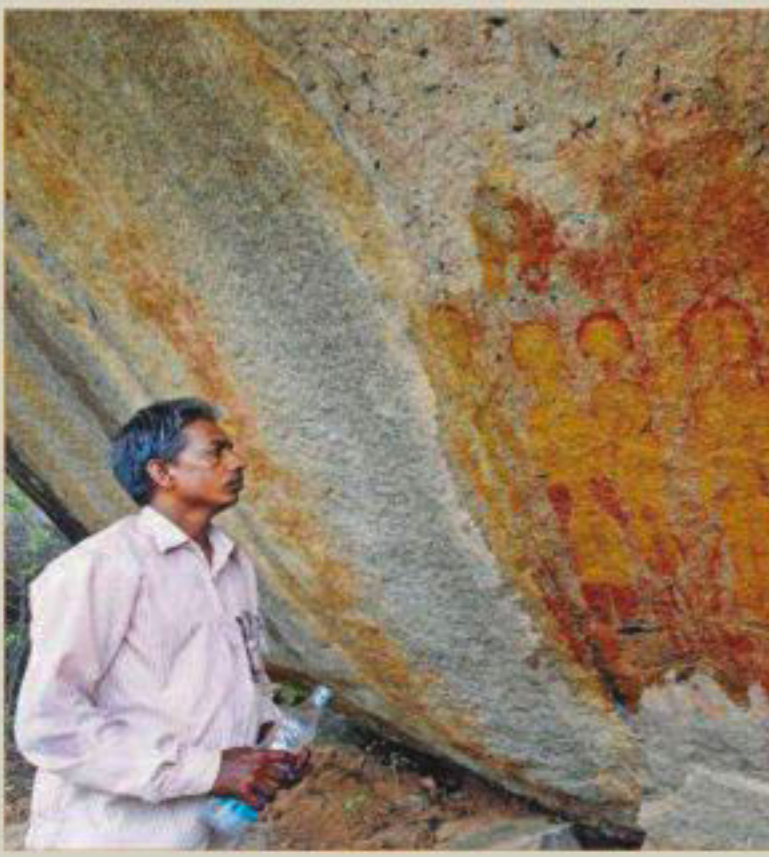
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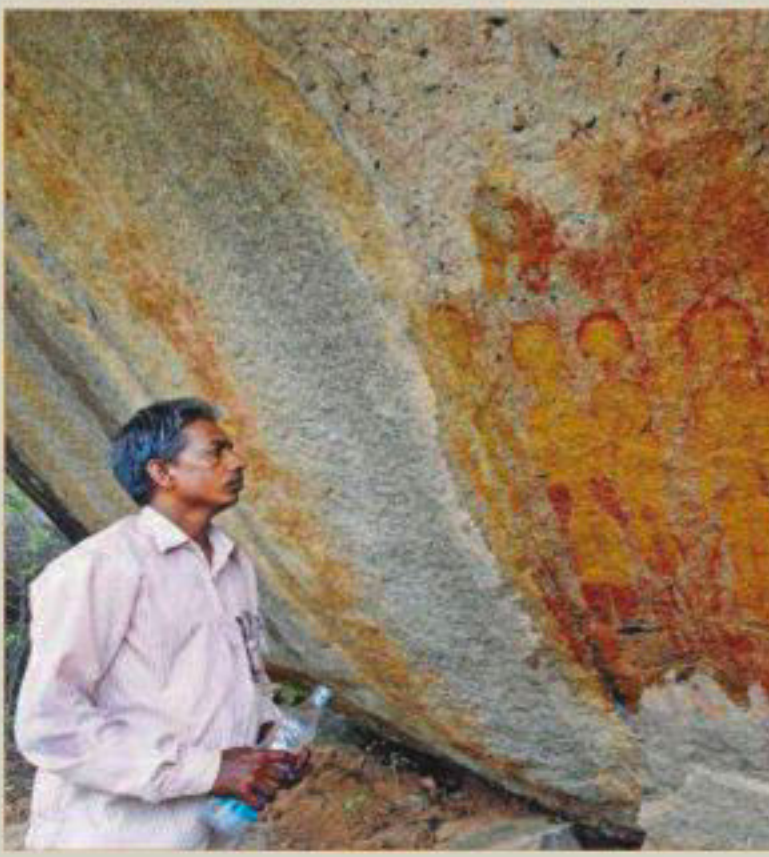
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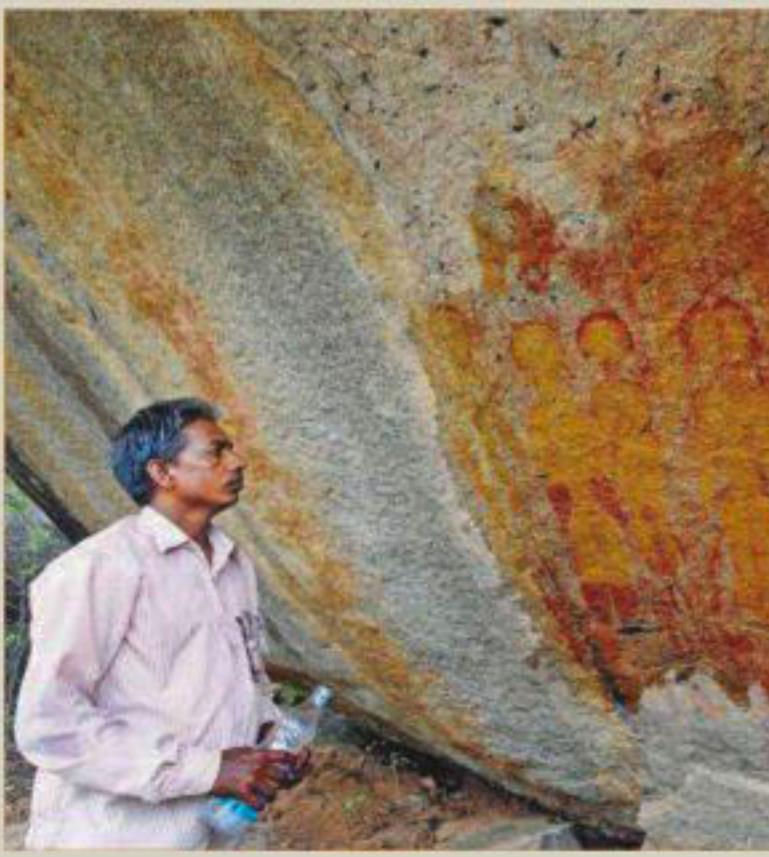
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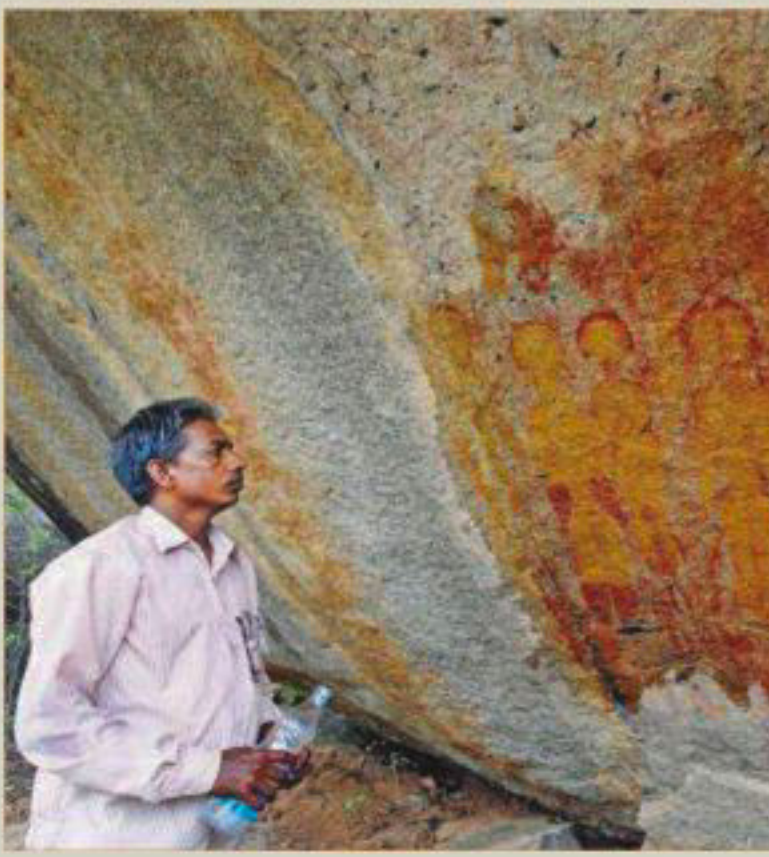
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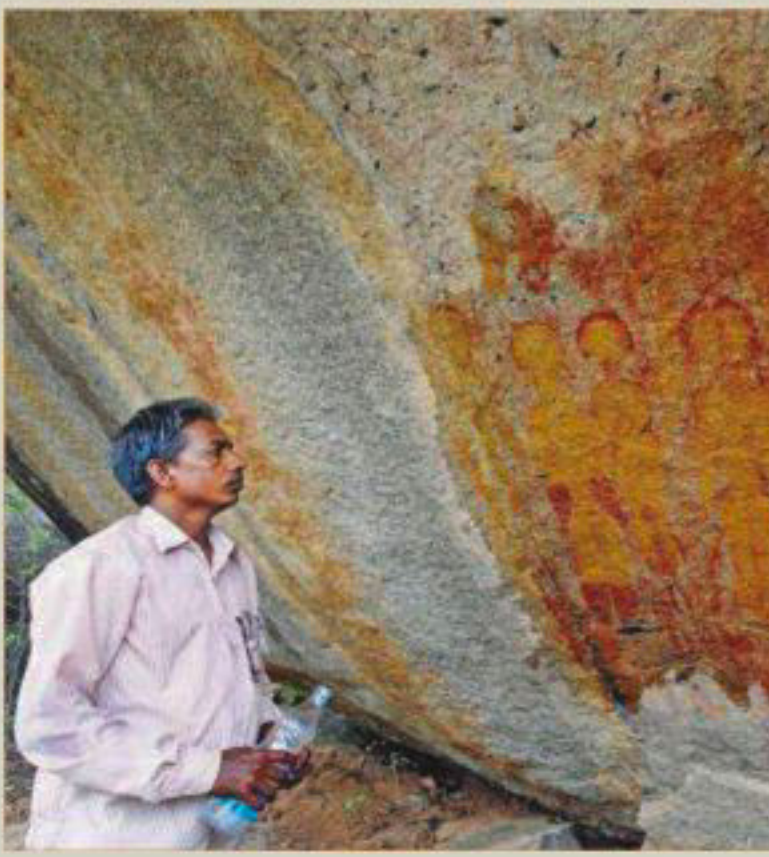
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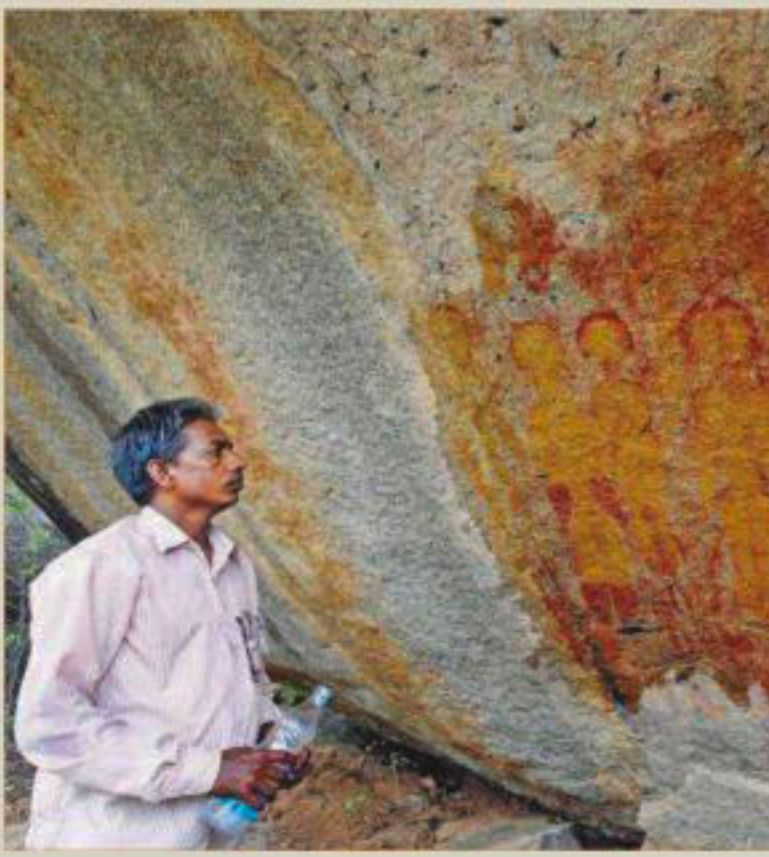
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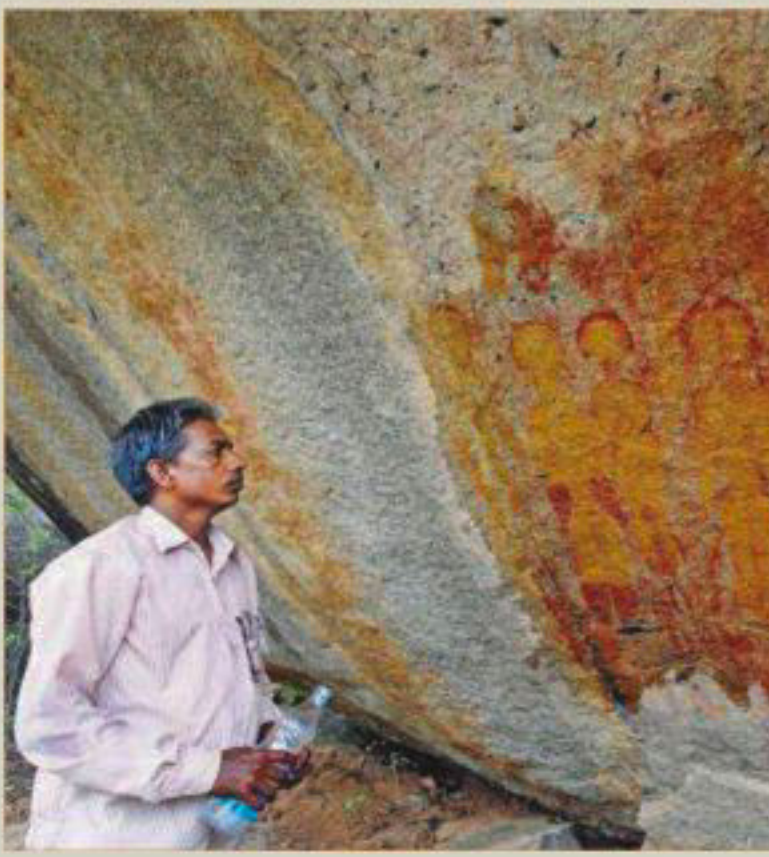
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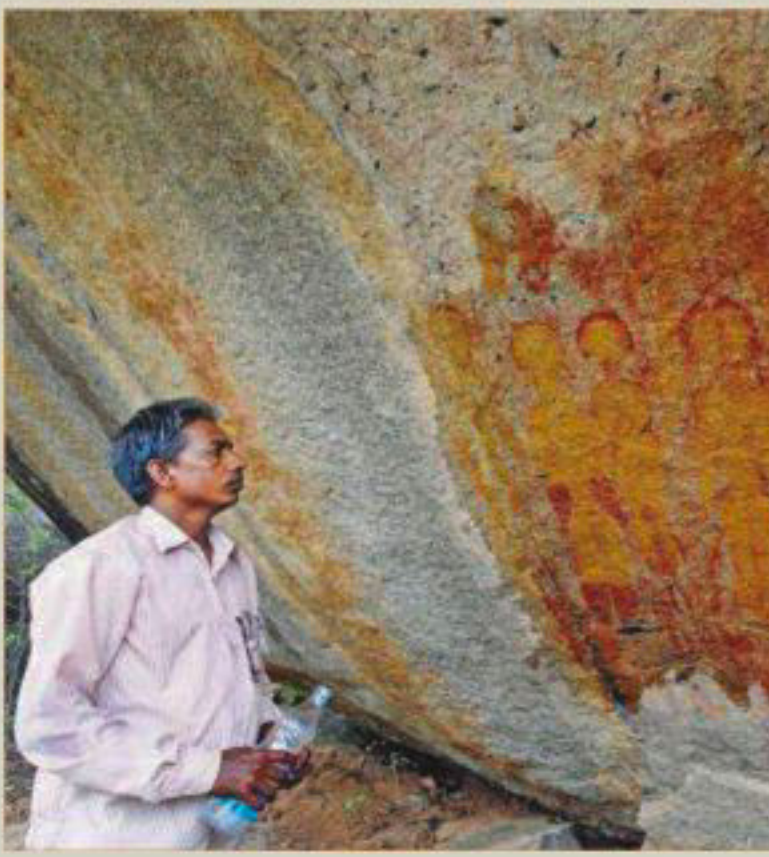
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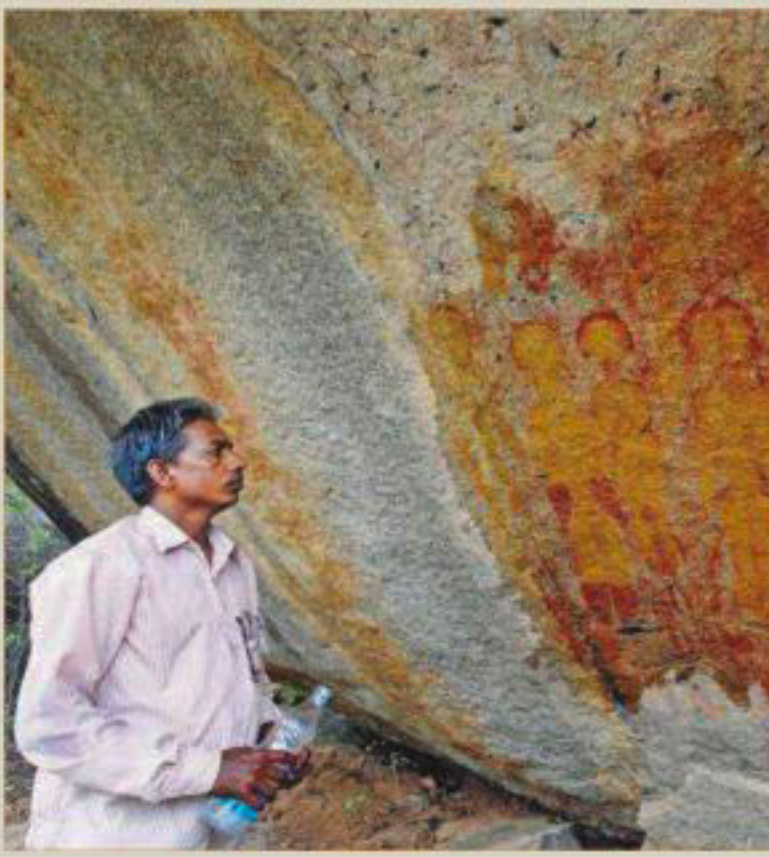
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