Stone Age dwellings and 3,000-year-old rock paintings reported on Puthur hill, Rajapalayam

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News

Natural caves once inhabited by Stone Age people have reportedly been identified on Puthur hill near Thalavaipuram in Rajapalayam taluk, Virudhunagar district (reported 9 Nov 2026). Acting on information from local resident Ramkumar, Dr Po. Kandasamy, history professor at Rajapalayam Rajus' College, and Prof. Po. Prem of Ramco Engineering College surveyed the hill. Three rain-proof natural caves served as Stone Age dwellings, with grinding pits on their floors. The ceiling of one cave carries white-lime paintings of battle scenes, animals and weapons such as swords and shields, which the researchers date to about 3,000 years ago. A Jain stone bed on the south-western face and two meditation caves at the foothills point to a Jain presence. The researchers have urged protection, as soot from cooking near the hill temple threatens the paintings.

Key facts for the exam

Point	Details
Place	Puthur hill near Thalavaipuram, Rajapalayam taluk, Virudhunagar district
Researchers	Dr Po. Kandasamy (Rajus' College), Prof. Po. Prem (Ramco Engineering College)
Habitations	3 natural caves with grinding pits on the floor

Point	Details
Rock art	White-lime paintings – battle scenes, animals, swords, shields
Age (estimate)	About 3,000 years old
Jain evidence	Jain stone bed + 2 meditation caves
Threat	Soot from cooking near the temple
Earlier nearby find	Sanjeevi hill rock paintings, Rajapalayam (2022)

Background

- Stone Age phases: Palaeolithic (hand-axes, cleavers – hunting-gathering), Mesolithic (microliths) and Neolithic (polished stone axes, farming, herding, pottery). Grinding pits and grooves on rock surfaces were used to sharpen stone tools and to grind grain.
- Robert Bruce Foote, the 'Father of Indian Prehistory', found a Palaeolithic hand-axe at Pallavaram, Chennai, in 1863. Attirampakkam and the Gudiyam caves (Tiruvallur district) are key Palaeolithic sites of Tamil Nadu. The Bhimbetka rock shelters of Madhya Pradesh became a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2003.
- Rock paintings are mostly in white (lime/kaolin) and red (ochre – iron oxide). Kizhvalai (Villupuram), Mallapadi (Krishnagiri) and Karikkiyur (Nilgiris) are well-known rock-art sites of Tamil Nadu. White paintings are generally assigned by scholars to the Iron Age.
- Jain stone beds (palli) on the hills of southern Tamil Nadu were shelters of monks. The Tamil-Brahmi inscriptions on the beds at Mangulam near Madurai are among the oldest and mention the Pandya king Nedunchezhiyan.

Tamil Nadu link: The Western Ghats foothills of Virudhunagar district have yielded several finds: white rock paintings on Sanjeevi hill, Rajapalayam (2022), and Neolithic axe-grinding grooves at Shenbagathoppu near Srivilliputhur (reported Dec 2025).

Frequently asked questions

What is this news about?

Natural caves once inhabited by Stone Age people have reportedly been identified on Puthur hill near Thalavaipuram in Rajapalayam taluk, Virudhunagar district (reported 9 Nov 2026).

What are the key facts to remember for the exam?

Place: Puthur hill near Thalavaipuram, Rajapalayam taluk, Virudhunagar district; Researchers: Dr Po. Kandasamy (Rajus' College), Prof. Po. Prem (Ramco Engineering College); Habitations: 3 natural caves with grinding pits on the floor; Rock art: White-lime paintings – battle scenes, animals, swords, shields.

What is the background to this news?

Stone Age phases: Palaeolithic (hand-axes, cleavers – hunting-gathering), Mesolithic (microliths) and Neolithic (polished stone axes, farming, herding, pottery).

Practice questions (with answers)

1. Who, called the 'Father of Indian Prehistory', found a Palaeolithic hand-axe at Pallavaram in 1863?

A) John Marshall

B) Alexander Cunningham

C) Mortimer Wheeler

D) Robert Bruce Foote

Answer: D – Explanation: Geologist Robert Bruce Foote found stone tools at Pallavaram and later at Attirampakkam.

2. Polished stone axes are the hallmark of which period?

A) Palaeolithic

B) Mesolithic

C) Neolithic

D) Chalcolithic

Answer: C – Explanation: Neolithic people ground and polished tools in rock grooves; farming also began in this age.

3. The Bhimbetka rock shelters, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, are in which state?

A) Maharashtra

B) Madhya Pradesh

C) Karnataka

D) Odisha

Answer: B – Explanation: Bhimbetka in Raisen district became a World Heritage Site in 2003; its paintings range from the Mesolithic to the historical period.

4. Which site near Madurai has some of the oldest Tamil-Brahmi inscriptions on Jain stone beds?

A) Mangulam

B) Keeladi

C) Adichanallur

D) Kodumanal

Answer: A – Explanation: The Mangulam inscriptions name the Pandya Nedunchezhiyan and record beds cut for Jain monks.

5. The red ochre used in ancient rock paintings is mainly an oxide of which metal?

A) Copper

B) Lead

C) Calcium

D) Iron

Answer: D – Explanation: Ochre is iron oxide (haematite); white paintings used lime or kaolin.

Sources: ABP Live Tamil (9 Nov 2026) (republished by IPD Tamil); Daily Thanthi (24 Sep 2022); DT Next; UNESCO. © Shanmugam IAS Academy.