

Reset. Restart.
Refocus.

As many times
as you need to.

Important Issues of the Day

- **Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) – Page No. 1, GS 2**
- **Bullying tactics – Page No. 6, GS 2**
- **Corruption and prior sanction – Page No. 6, GS 2**
- **Crisis in education – Page No. 6, GS 2**
- **Piprawaha relics – Page No. 7, GS 1**
- **Gaza peace board – Page No. 10, GS 2**
- **Dugongs – Prelims**
- **Sammakka–Saralamma Jatara – Prelims**

Now, GBS outbreak claims 2 lives in M.P.

Mehul Malpani

BHOPAL

Authorities swung into action on Sunday following the death of two children due to Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) in Madhya Pradesh's Neemuch district. Eighteen cases have been detected over the past few days, officials said.

According to officials, Sonu Soni, 15, and Keshav Detwal, 6, residents of Neemuch's Manasa area, died due to the immunological nerve disorder while nine confirmed cases and nine suspected cases are receiving treatment at hospitals.

Manasa Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) Kiran Anjana told *The Hindu* that a special ward has been established at the Civil Hospital for new patients while existing patients have been referred to bigger hospitals in nearby areas. "Some patients have also been given aid through the Red Cross Society," she said.

Deputy Chief Minister

Nine confirmed cases detected in Neemuch district; special ward set up for patients at Civil Hospital: SDM

Rajendra Shukla, who holds the Health portfolio, visited Manasa and held meetings with district and Health Department officials. The Minister said the State government was bearing the expense of treatment for all patients.

"Samples from a water purification plant and other places have not been found contaminated at first glance. Samples of blood serum of patients, food items, and other materials have been sent to institutes in Hyderabad, Kolkata, and Pune for testing," he said.

"A National Joint Outbreak Response Team is also scheduled to visit from Delhi to trace the contamination," a district administration official said.

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- **According to officials, Sonu Soni, 15, and Keshav Detwal, 6, residents of Neemuch's Manasa area, died due to the immunological nerve disorder while nine confirmed cases and nine suspected cases are receiving treatment at hospitals.**
- **GBS is an autoimmune disorder where the immune system attacks peripheral nerves, causing muscle weakness and, in severe cases, paralysis.**
- **It is rare, affecting 1–2 per 100,000 people annually.**

WEAKNESS and **TINGLING**
in Your Extremities are
Usually the First
Symptoms

GUILLAIN BARRE SYNDROME

Guillain Barre Syndrome is
a Rare Disorder in which
your Body's **Immune**
System attacks your
Nerves



**Limb
Weakness**



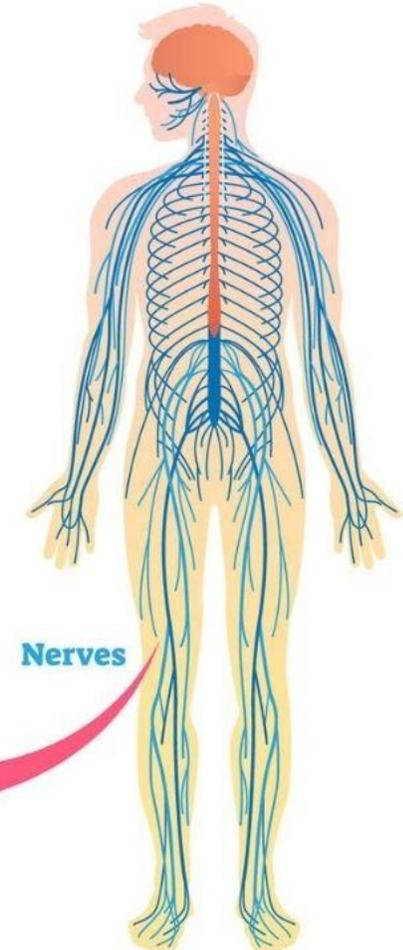
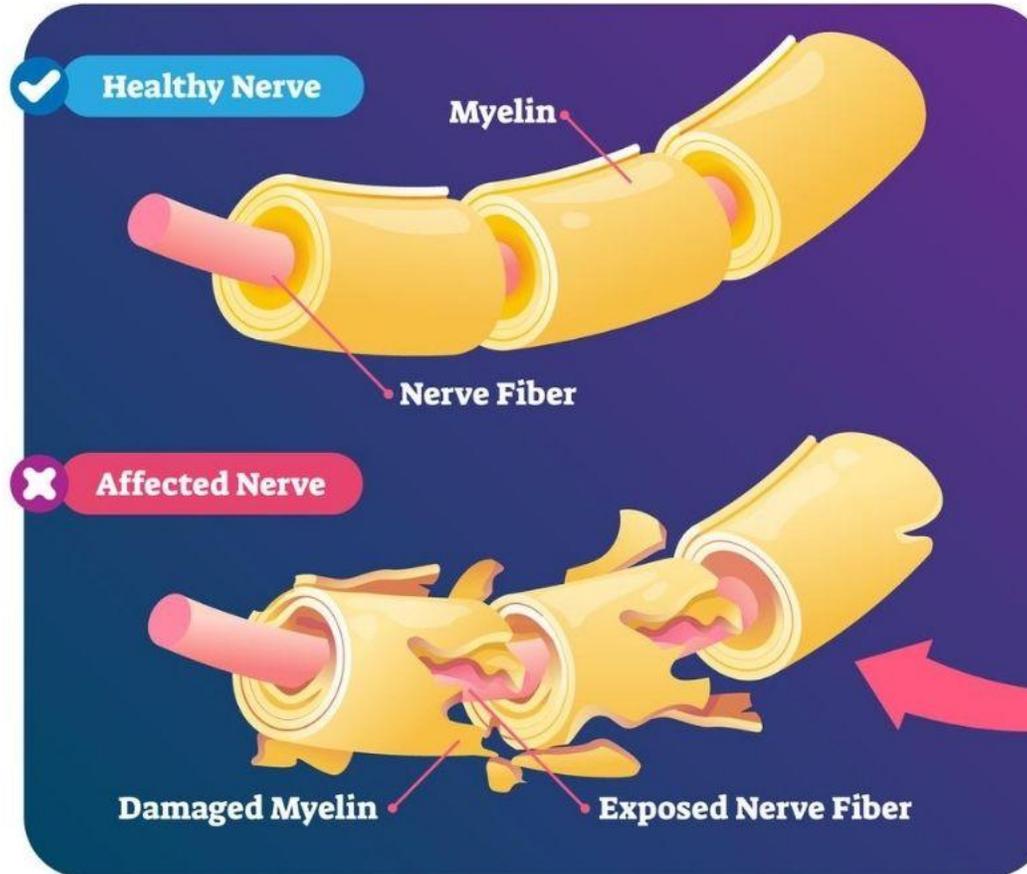
**Difficulty
Swallowing**



**Shortness
of Breath**



**Flaccid
Paralysis**



- It is more common in adults and males.
- It is often triggered by viral or bacterial infections, especially *Campylobacter jejuni* (a cause of gastroenteritis), influenza, Epstein-Barr virus, Zika virus, or, in rare cases, vaccinations.

Its Symptoms:

- **Early signs:** Tingling, weakness in legs spreading to the upper body, pins-and-needles sensation, back pain.
- **Severe cases:** Paralysis, breathing difficulties, loss of speech, vision problems.
- **Complications:** Can affect the autonomic nervous system, leading to irregular heartbeat, blood pressure fluctuations, and potential respiratory failure.

- **Plasma Exchange (Plasmapheresis): Removes harmful antibodies attacking nerves.**
- **Intravenous Immunoglobulin (IVIG) Therapy: Injects healthy antibodies to counteract immune attacks.**
- **Supportive care: Some patients require ventilator support, physical therapy, and months to years of rehabilitation.**

In the context of vaccines manufactured to prevent COVID-19 pandemic, consider the following statements:

- 1. The Serum Institute of India produced COVID-19 vaccine named Covishield using mRNA platform.**
- 2. Sputnik V vaccine is manufactured using vector-based platform.**
- 3. COVAXIN is an inactivated pathogen-based vaccine.**

Which of the statements given above are correct?

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

Mains Question

Q. *“Access to safe and clean drinking water is not merely a welfare issue but a foundational requirement for public health, economic productivity, and social equity.”*

In this context, examine the challenges faced by India in ensuring universal access to clean drinking water. Suggest policy and institutional measures to achieve sustainable water security.

(250 Words | 15 Marks)

प्र. *“सुरक्षित एवं स्वच्छ पेयजल तक पहुँच केवल एक कल्याणकारी विषय नहीं, बल्कि सार्वजनिक स्वास्थ्य, आर्थिक उत्पादकता और सामाजिक समानता की आधारशिला है।”*

इस संदर्भ में भारत में सभी के लिए स्वच्छ पेयजल उपलब्ध कराने में आने वाली चुनौतियों का विश्लेषण कीजिए। सतत जल सुरक्षा प्राप्त करने हेतु उपयुक्त नीतिगत एवं संस्थागत उपाय सुझाइए।

(250 शब्द | 15 अंक)

Bullying tactics

Trump's weaponisation of tariffs over Greenland could undermine NATO

The Trump administration has vowed to slap a raft of European countries with a 10% tariff on “any and all goods” beginning on February 1 which is then set to increase to 25% on June 1, until an agreement is reached on the U.S. demand to purchase or otherwise acquire the Denmark-administered Arctic territory of Greenland. The latest round of tariffs will add to existing 15% U.S.-imposed trade duties on the countries targeted by the White House, which include Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. While French President Emmanuel Macron described the U.S. action as “unacceptable”, U.K. Prime Minister Keir Starmer said the move was “completely wrong”. The targeted nations have sent a small number of troops to Greenland for what they have called a reconnaissance mission, essentially for military exercises that signal and reinforce Europe’s collective commitment to defending the autonomous Arctic territory. Such emphasis by the European Union (EU) clearly reflects concern stemming from the fact that American troops recently entered Venezuela and kidnapped and transported its President Nicolás Maduro to the U.S., and Mr. Trump has since gone on record effectively warning that he might consider intervention – for different purposes and in different circumstances – in Colombia, Cuba, Mexico and Iran next.

Colombia, Cuba, Mexico and Iran next.

Leaving aside the neo-imperialist impulse that is implicit in the Trump administration’s plans to control non-allied nations’ territories based on the threat of military action, or to bully allies by weaponising tariffs against them, such actions are tantamount to a violation of international law, and in the case of the EU, risk degrading years of progress made on transatlantic trade agreements. First, there is a serious issue of no legislative backing by the U.S. Congress and legal basis for the unilateral action taken by the Trump administration in targeting Denmark and other European countries. Second, the Trump administration is likely to face, this week, a judicial ruling against its use of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act to impose tariffs across the board. Third, European nations may bring into force what is known as the “anti-coercion instrument”, a counter-tariff facility that would limit the trade of major U.S. tech firms and related service providers that conduct significant business in the EU. Whatever the denouement of this Trump-made conflict, it will likely take years, if not decades to heal the worsening transatlantic rift that has beset the region. Meanwhile a weakened NATO will stand less able to assist Ukraine in facing off against the depredations of an aggressive Russia on the eastern front. The need of the hour is enlightened leadership, a far cry from what is presently on offer in Washington.

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Which one of the following statements best describes the 'Polar Code'?

- (a) It is the international code of safety for ships operating in polar waters.**
- (b) It is the agreement of the countries around the North Pole regarding the demarcation of their territories in the polar region.**
- (c) It is a set of norms to be followed by the countries whose scientists undertake research studies in the North Pole and South Pole.**
- (d) It is a trade and security agreement of the member countries of the Arctic Council.**

Crisis in education

Higher education institutions need systemic reforms

In an ongoing case relating to student suicides, the Supreme Court of India has issued nine directions to Central and State governments. Recognising the massification of higher education front-ended by privatisation without a commensurate boost in quality, the Court has taken note of student distress covering financial, social, social injustice and academic issues. The Court has invoked Article 142 of the Constitution and seven of the nine directions relate to record-keeping, reporting, and tracking suicides in higher education institutions (HEI) separately. Two directives order the filling of the posts of Registrars and Vice-Chancellors as well as all vacant faculty positions. Evidently, the Court sees these steps as critical to student well-being.

Across India, ground reportage shows that many public HEIs, especially universities, report 50% vacancies. The University of Madras is a case study as it is the premier State-administered HEI in Tamil Nadu – a State which leads the nation in enrolment in higher education and with a stellar record in women's education. With such a storied legacy, the university was known for quality research besides awarding degrees in affiliated colleges through examinations. Teaching became an important component in the late 1970s, but in the last decade, its decline has been pronounced. No new faculty appointments have been made

No new faculty appointments have been made and the teaching strength is half of the sanctioned strength. The university's research component is just about functional. It boasts of centres for advanced studies such as in philosophy, botany and mathematics, but these are a shadow of their original selves. Today, the humanities, science-based and social science research focused on Tamil Nadu, that the government can leverage from its public universities, has been given short shrift. Vice-Chancellor appointments have been stalled by a recalcitrant Governor. The ambiguity thrown in by the Court on the Presidential reference on a Governor's powers may need to be resolved before Vice-Chancellor vacancies can be quickly filled. Filling faculty positions would have to follow UGC process that takes at least six months and a budgetary commitment that may be helped with Union government support. Availability of qualified faculty can be a hurdle. Corruption and political-ideological appointments have affected quality and need to be addressed. Although the four-month schedule prescribed by the Court might seem daunting, the order is a call to action to fulfil the basic requirements of a robust public higher education system before goals such as Viksit Bharat can be seriously aspired for.

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- **The university's research component is just about functional. It boasts of centres for advanced studies such as in philosophy, botany and mathematics, but these are a shadow of their original selves.**

With reference to the Constitution of India, prohibitions or limitations or provisions contained in ordinary laws cannot act as prohibitions or limitations on the constitutional powers under Article 142. It could mean which one of the following?

- (a) The decisions taken by the. Election Commission of India while discharging its duties cannot be challenged in any court of law.**
- (b) The Supreme Court of India is not constrained in the exercise of its powers by the laws made by Parliament.**
- (c) In the event of grave financial crisis in the country, the President of India can declare Financial Emergency without the counsel from the Cabinet.**
- (d) State Legislatures cannot make laws on certain matters without the concurrence of Union Legislature.**

Mains Question

Q. *“India’s demographic dividend can turn into a liability without an inclusive, equitable, and quality education system.”*

In this context, critically examine the major challenges faced by India’s education sector. Suggest reforms required to make the education system more responsive to future workforce and societal needs.

(250 Words | 15 Marks)

प्र. *“समावेशी, समान और गुणवत्तापूर्ण शिक्षा व्यवस्था के बिना भारत का जनसांख्यिकीय लाभांश एक बोझ में बदल सकता है।”*

इस संदर्भ में भारत की शिक्षा प्रणाली के समक्ष मौजूद प्रमुख चुनौतियों का समालोचनात्मक विश्लेषण कीजिए। भविष्य की कार्यबल आवश्यकताओं और सामाजिक जरूरतों के अनुरूप शिक्षा व्यवस्था को सक्षम बनाने हेतु आवश्यक सुधार सुझाइए।

(250 शब्द | 15 अंक)

Corruption and prior sanction, case of a divided house

Page No. 6, GS 2

On January 13, a two-judge Bench of the Supreme Court of India, comprising Justice B.V. Nagarathna and Justice K.V. Viswanathan, delivered a split verdict on the challenge to the constitutional validity of Section 17A of the Prevention of Corruption (PC) Act, 1988 (“the section”), in *The Centre for Public Interest Litigation (CPIL) vs Union of India*. Both judgments in this case are exhaustive, exemplifying the best tradition of the Court in bestowing the deepest judicial consideration and exercise of judicial conscience to the issues before the Court. The case had challenged the constitutionality of the section that effectively provided that no police officer would conduct any inquiry or investigation into any offence alleged to have been committed by a public servant regarding any recommendation made or decision taken in the discharge of official functions, without the prior sanction of the appropriate government.

The case was mounted on the premise that corruption is anathema to rule of law and vesting the government with the power to stall corruption investigations (where it may have a vested interest) would allow corruption to go uninvestigated and, hence, unchecked.

Arguments of both sides

In this case, the petitioners argued that the amended section was unconstitutional, being in the teeth of two earlier judgments of the Court. When a Single Directive (a consolidated set of instructions issued to the Central Bureau of Investigation, or CBI, by various Ministries/Departments), requiring prior sanction of the designated authority before initiating investigation against certain categories of public servants, was issued, its legality was challenged.

In *Vineet Narain vs Union of India* (1998) 1 SCC 226, the Court had quashed the Single Directive and held that the final opinion whether to investigate or not has to be made by the CBI and not by anyone else. The executive on its own cannot foreclose inquiry into any allegation of corruption as that would be entering the domain of the investigative agency.

The judgment came in the backdrop of the N.N. Vohra Committee (1993) that presented the frightening criminal nexus between highly-placed politicians, high-ranking bureaucrats, and criminal elements. The Court held that equality before the law under Article 14 and the rule of law itself could only be preserved if investigative agencies are insulated from political, executive and bureaucratic interference.

To bypass the judgment in *Vineet Narain*, the central government enacted the Central Vigilance Commission Act, 2003. Here it introduced Section 6A to the Delhi Special Police Establishment Act (DSPE) Act, effectively reintroducing the Single Directive. A Constitution



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is an advocate in the Supreme Court of India

The split verdict in the CPIL case is about protecting honest public servants while also ensuring an efficient anti-corruption regime

Bench in *Dr. Subramaniam Swamy vs Director, CBI & Anr* (2014) 8 SCC 682 declared Section 6A of the DSPE Act to be unconstitutional on the ground that the classification of officers based on status in government service, for the purpose of investigation was discriminatory and violative of Article 14. It also held that such power to interdict corruption investigations would encourage the criminal-bureaucrat-politician nexus and thwart unbiased and efficient inquiry/investigation to track down corrupt public servants. The Court held: “... the signature tune in *Vineet Narain* is, ‘However high you may be, the law is above you’ We reiterate the same. Section 6A offends this signature tune and effectively Article 14.”

In the CPIL case, the petitioners argued that the Section 17A of the PC Act is distinguishable from Section 6A of the DSPE Act only in the sense that it expands the scope of protection to all levels of public servants and not just to a particular category of public servants (as 6A of the DSPE Act did). The Section does not just ignore the clear findings arrived at by the Court earlier but also chooses to defy the spirit of those findings. It was further argued that the Section runs contrary to the dictum in *Lalita Kumari vs Government of Uttar Pradesh & Ors* (2014) 2 SCC 1, which mandated registration of a first information report and consequent investigation on the disclosure of a cognisable offence.

The government on the other hand defended the constitutionality of the Section and sought to distinguish it from the earlier judgments of the Court on the ground that the Single Directive was struck down as it was merely an administrative order. It added that the Subramaniam Swamy judgment was dealing with a distinction made between officers of Joint Secretary and above versus officers below – both of which did not apply to the present challenge to the constitutionality of the Section.

Where the judges differed

Justice Nagarathna, while upholding the petitioner’s contentions, held Section 17A to be contrary to the objects of the Act and unconstitutional as the requirement of prior sanction from the government, she held, “forestalls an enquiry and thereby in substance protects the corrupt”. The Section shields a class of public servants and revives an impermissible protection which was previously struck down in *Vineet Narain* and *Subramaniam Swamy*. She also held that there was a conflict of interest between the government (Minister granting sanction) and the officers whose consent for investigation was sought, since they would often be working in the same department with a meeting of minds about decisions taken, amounting to acts of corruption.

Therefore, such a provision was likely to impede investigation into corrupt officers who may, instead, find protection from higher

authorities within the same institutional nexus, thereby allowing unchecked corruption. She also held that there would be a policy bias in the officials tasked with granting sanction as they would lack neutrality while considering a request for approval for carrying out an inquiry or investigation into a complaint *vis-à-vis* a decision taken by a public servant in their department.

Justice Viswanathan, while agreeing with Justice Nagarathna and the petitioners that leaving the power of consent with the government would render the provision unconstitutional, found no fault with the provision of prior sanction *per se*. He held it to be constitutionally valid, subject to the condition that the grant or refusal of approval would rest not with the government but with an independent agency before the decision is taken by the government.

He observed that striking down the Section would lead to a policy paralysis as he felt that honest public servants needed to be insulated from frivolous and mala fide police investigations. He held that the Lokpal, conceived as an independent anti-corruption authority, would deal with such cases in an independent manner, and that its recommendations would be binding on the government as the PC Act and the Lokpal Act operate in the same normative field. “Both address allegations of corruption against public servants, both recognise the need for screening, and both seek to balance accountability with protection against misuse”.

At the core

The core disagreement between the two judges is on how to strike a constitutional balance between protecting honest decision-making public servants and ensuring an efficient anti-corruption regime. There is partial agreement between the two judges on the provision being unconstitutional if the power of granting sanction for investigation was left with the government. There remains disagreement on whether prior approval before inquiry or investigation by a police officer is an impermissible barrier (making the Section unconstitutional) or whether having an independent agency such as the Lokpal as a filter to prevent abuse would overcome this barrier (thereby upholding the Section’s constitutionality).

Differing from her brother judge, Justice Nagarathna stated, “whether prior approval must be given, was the question, and not who, within or outside the government should give the approval.”

The matter has been referred to the Chief Justice of India for constitution of a larger Bench to decide the issue conclusively.

Prashant Bhushan and Cheryl Dsouza were counsels for the petitioners in this case before the Supreme Court of India

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- **The case had challenged the constitutionality of the section that effectively provided that no police officer would conduct any inquiry or investigation into any offence alleged to have been committed by a public servant regarding any recommendation made or decision taken in the discharge of official functions, without the prior sanction of the appropriate government.**
- **The judgment came in the backdrop of the N.N. Vohra Committee (1993) that presented the frightening criminal nexus between highly-placed politicians, high-ranking bureaucrats, and criminal elements.**
- **The Court held that equality before the law under Article 14 and the rule of law itself could only be preserved if investigative agencies are insulated from political, executive and bureaucratic interference.**

- **When a Single Directive (a consolidated set of instructions issued to the Central Bureau of Investigation, or CBI, by various Ministries/Departments), requiring prior sanction of the designated authority before initiating investigation against certain categories of public servants, was issued, its legality was challenged.**
- **In Vineet Narain vs Union of India (1998) 1 SCC 226, the Court had quashed the Single Directive and held that the final opinion whether to investigate or not has to be made by the CBI and not by anyone else.**
- **The executive on its own cannot foreclose inquiry into any allegation of corruption as that would be entering the domain of the investigative agency.**
- **To bypass the judgment in Vineet Narain, the central government enacted the Central Vigilance Commission Act, 2003. Here it introduced Section 6A to the Delhi Special Police Establishment Act (DSPE) Act, effectively reintroducing the Single Directive.**

- **The core disagreement between the two judges is on how to strike a constitutional balance between protecting honest decision-making public servants and ensuring an efficient anti-corruption regime.**
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Consider the following organizations/bodies in India:

- 1. The National Commission for Backward Classes**
- 2. The National Human Rights Commission**
- 3. The National Law Commission**
- 4. The National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission**

How many of the above constitutional bodies?

- (a) Only one**
- (b) Only two**
- (c) Only three**
- (d) All four**

A display plan for the Piprawaha relics

Page No. 7, GS 1

After being dispersed for over a century, ancient gems, charged by their proximity to the historical Buddha's corporeal remains, have been reunited with some other extraordinary relics excavated at Piprawaha, Uttar Pradesh. This partial reunification, made possible by an Indian conglomerate's acquisition of the gems from an overseas seller and their handing it over to the government – is being celebrated by an exhibition in Delhi that Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated earlier this month. How they will be housed once the exhibition closes is an urgent question. If these artifacts are carefully displayed – with lessons absorbed from a study of the ancient cult of relics and with an eye to the future – then this restitution has the potential to shift public opinion of India's beleaguered museums, set new standards for safeguarding its composite heritage, and persuade travellers from afar to circumambulate the land of the Buddha.

Understanding the place of Buddhist relics in early India provides insights into how small, visually indistinguishable, and sometimes unattractive objects, were looked after and appreciated. After the Buddha's passing, his followers periodically divided ash, charred bones and other bodily remains among themselves. These remains were placed in vessels, occasionally with gems and other offerings, and eventually interned in the cores of large hemispherical mounds called stupas. A well-preserved stupa at Sanchi can demonstrate how reliquaries conveyed the power of relics, helped people come close to them, and transformed them. Plausibly first constructed in Ashoka's reign, the stupa was elaborated about two centuries later. New gateways built in the four cardinal directions led to a path that wrapped around the mound's circumference. The



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These historical artifacts are living entities and the museum to be their new home needs to think of long-term plans to engage viewers, historians and students

gateway posts and architraves bore relief carvings of the Buddha's life, worshippers at sacred centres, and royal and auspicious emblems. Taken together, these reliefs prepared viewers to apprehend and properly approach the relics. Figurations of spirits associated with the site acknowledged its long history while depictions of individuals in exotic clothing recognised foreign travellers who were beginning to traverse the trade routes that intersected near Sanchi. Once they were on the pathway that wrapped around the mound, visitors were partially separated from their mundane surroundings by high railings. Once outside the sacred prescient, they found themselves in the company of monastics eager to cultivate friendships.

The success of such strategies to honour and contextualise the Buddha and communicate his teachings can be attested from the support that locales such as Sanchi received from diverse social strata and their rapid growth into major sacred centres replete with many other edifices and institutions. It can also be gleaned from the gradual development of Buddhist enclaves in lands far removed from the landscapes where the historical Buddha lived. For example, in the rock-cut sanctuaries of peninsular India, the Buddha's presence was subtly communicated by monolithic stupas without relics in their cores that were thoughtfully set in spaces laden with sculptures and sometimes frescoes.

A strategy for the future

As little survives of the stupa that originally accommodated the Piprawaha relics, these esteemed artifacts are likely to be moved to a public institution in India after the temporary exhibition in Delhi closes. Merely placing them in sterile vitrines in a museum, as if they are lifeless objects, risks perpetuating the colonial paradigm that privileged seeing relics over their ability to lie

concealed and yet energise and empower communities.

Thus, the museum chosen as their new home needs to publicly discuss and sensibly implement long-term plans for them. These plans should include designing spaces that prepare diverse individuals to properly approach the Piprawaha relics, give them opportunities to spend time in proximity to the relics as they wish: chanting mantras, quietly meditating, or contemplating their aesthetics, and thereafter allowing them to see the world anew. New grant and fellowship programmes should also be formulated to encourage art historians to collaborate with anthropologists, scientists, film-makers, and others to explicate how historical artifacts are living entities that shape and reflect their environments. The chosen institution must also start designing courses to acquaint postgraduate students and emerging heritage professionals with the principles and best practices of stewardship, with a focus on restitution and interpretation. As a part of this goal, the institution needs to begin collaborating with colleges across India to convene workshops that empower communities living near heritage sites by engaging them in preventing and combating the illicit traffic in antiquities. Teaching communities how to build datasets of cultural assets, helping them understand how trafficking networks often intersect with organised crime, introducing them to the functioning of India's judicial systems, and inspiring them to advocate for updating legislation so that it is aligned to today's ethical concerns and international agreements are also advisable. Once such spaces are designed and initiatives enacted, we can then proudly say that the Piprawaha relics have truly returned to the land of the Buddha and can be fully empowered by their aura and presence.



- **Excavators discovered the Piprahwa Relics in 1898 at the Piprahwa Stupa in Uttar Pradesh, believed to be ancient Kapilavastu, the birthplace of Lord Buddha.**
- **The relics include bone fragments, crystal caskets, gold ornaments, and other ritual offerings.**
- **An inscription in Brahmi script on one casket links the relics directly to Lord Buddha, stating they were deposited by the Sakya clan.**
- **India classifies the relics as 'AA' antiquities, granting them the highest level of legal protection under national law.**
- **Indian law prohibits their sale or export, making any attempt to auction or remove them illegal.**
- **While most relics were handed to the Indian Museum, Kolkata in 1899, descendants of British excavator William Claxton Peppé retained some relics, now surfacing in the auction market.**

- **After the Buddha's death (Mahaparinirvana), his cremated relics were divided among 8 kingdoms and a Brahmin named Drona, who coordinated their distribution.**
- **Each recipient built a Stupa to enshrine their share of the relics, creating important pilgrimage sites and early centers of Buddhist worship.**
- **The 9 stupas were located in Rajagriha, Vaishali, Kapilavastu, Allakappa, Ramagrama, Vethadipa, Pava, Kushinagar, and Pippalivana.**
- **Emperor Ashoka (3rd century BCE) redistributed the relics from these stupas into thousands of new stupas across his empire.**
- **The stupa at Ramagrama is unique because it is believed to remain untouched and still holds the original relics.**

Page No.10 , GS : India invited to join Gaza peace board

New Delhi has not yet responded to the invitation, officials say; the Board of Peace, to be headed by Trump and to include 'other members and heads of state', is expected to oversee funding for the 'redevelopment of Gaza' until the Palestinian Authority completes a 'reform programme'

Kallol Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI

United States President Donald Trump has invited India to be a part of the Board of Peace for Gaza, sources in New Delhi said on Sunday.

U.S. Ambassador Sergio Gor also shared a letter on social media from Mr. Trump to Prime Minister Narendra Modi inviting India.

The Board of Peace for Gaza comprises a group of countries that are being invited by the U.S. to provide a governance structure for the Gaza Strip, as Hamas is being pressured to give up its governance role in the territory as part of Mr. Trump's peace plan.

Officials unwilling to be named said that India has the "invite in hand",

though New Delhi has not responded as yet. This comes three days after Mr. Trump announced on social media that the Board of Peace had been formed and that its members would be announced "shortly".

The Trump peace plan for Gaza was first floated on September 29, 2025, when the U.S. President hosted Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at the White House. Following the announcement, Hamas agreed to return all 48 remaining hostages who were being held in Gaza in exchange for Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails and Gaza detainees.

As per the plan, Gaza will be administered by the "temporary transitional governance of a technocratic apolitical Palestinian committee", which will



U.S. President Donald Trump with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the Oval Office of the White House on February 13, 2025. AFP

consist of Palestinian and international experts. This transitional outfit will be supervised by the Board of Peace, to be headed by Mr. Trump and include "other members and heads of state", as well as the United Kingdom's former Prime Minister Tony Blair.

The Board of Peace is expected to handle fund-

ing for the "redevelopment of Gaza" till the Palestinian Authority has completed a "reform programme".

The U.S. is expected to work with international partners to develop a "temporary" International Stabilisation Force (ISF) to be deployed in Gaza soon. The U.S. has been in talks with multiple countries

UAE President arrives today

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

India will host UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, on Monday.

The UAE President will hold talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi. "The visit will provide an opportunity for the two

leaders to chart new frontiers for the India-UAE Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. It will also enable exchange of views on regional and global issues of mutual interest, where India and the UAE share a high degree of convergence," the External Affairs Ministry said.

across the world for troops to participate in the ISF.

Officials here have maintained that India would not be part of the ISF as it is not a peacekeeping force under the aegis of the United Nations.

On October 9, 2025, however, Mr. Modi had welcomed the Trump peace plan in a post on X.

"We welcome the agreement on the first phase of President Trump's peace plan. This is also a reflection of the strong leadership of PM Netanyahu," he said.

Jordan, Greece, Cyprus, and Pakistan also said on Sunday they had received invitations. (With PTI inputs)

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1949 Armistice Lines

■ Jordanian occupied ■ Egyptian occupied □ Armistice lines



Turkey is located between

(a) Black Sea and Caspian Sea

(b) Black Sea and Mediterranean Sea

(c) Gulf of Suez and Mediterranean Sea

(d) Gulf of Aqaba and Dead Sea

Which one of the following countries of South-West Asia does not open out to the Mediterranean Sea?

(a) Syria

(b) Jordan

(c) Lebanon

(d) Israel

Sammakka–Saralamma Jatara



- **Telangana is preparing for the biennial Sammakka–Saralamma Jatara beginning 28 January 2026, alongside a large-scale redevelopment of the sacred precinct at Medaram.**
- **A biennial tribal spiritual festival honouring Sammakka and Saralamma, revered as ancestral goddesses of the Koya Adivasi community.**
- **Recognised as Asia’s largest tribal festival and one of the largest human congregations in the world.**
- **Celebrated at Medaram village in Mulugu district, Telangana, located inside the Eturnagaram Wildlife Sanctuary, part of the Dandakaranya forest belt.**
- **Conducted during the full moon of the Hindu month of Magh.**

- **Rooted in Koya tribal history and legend, centred on Sammakka, a forest-born woman adopted by tribals, and her daughter Saralamma.**
- **According to tradition, they resisted the Kakatiya rulers' tax oppression, attained martyrdom, and are remembered as symbols of tribal resistance and sacrifice.**
- **The deities are not worshipped permanently in temples; instead, they are symbolically brought from the forest to stay with the people for a few sacred days.**

- **Rituals are conducted exclusively by Koya tribal priests, following indigenous customs.**
- **Devotees offer "Bangaram" (jaggery) instead of gold or money, symbolising equality and agrarian life.**
- **Worship centres around sacred trees, bamboo totems, flags (dalgudda) and clan symbols rather than idols.**
- **Attracts over one crore devotees, second only to the Kumbh Mela in scale within India.**

Dugongs



- **The Union government's Expert Appraisal Committee (MoEFCC) has asked Tamil Nadu to revise the design of the proposed International Dugong Conservation Centre at Manora (Thanjavur).**
- **Dugong is a large, slow-moving marine mammal, commonly called a "sea cow", that feeds exclusively on seagrass.**
- **It is a keystone species, playing a vital role in maintaining healthy seagrass meadows.**
- **Found in warm, shallow coastal waters of the Indian and western Pacific Oceans.**
- **Lives mainly in seagrass meadows, estuaries, lagoons, and nearshore areas.**
- **Unlike manatees, dugongs are strictly marine and do not enter freshwater.**

- **IUCN status: Vulnerable.**
- **Key characteristics of dugong:**
- **Large, plump body with paddle-like flippers and a whale-like tail fluke.**
- **Grows up to 3 metres in length and can weigh 400 kg or more.**
- **Gentle, herbivorous grazer that feeds almost continuously on seagrass.**
- **Acts as an ecosystem engineer, helping seagrass regenerate and supporting marine biodiversity.**
- **Holds cultural significance for many coastal and indigenous communities and is linked to ancient mermaid legends.**

Thank You!

