

Tuesday, March 21, 2023

Daily Current Affairs



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Advanced Studies

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Scholars, experts from SCO countries discuss ways to revive Buddhist culture



Dinakar Peri
NEW DELHI

In a first-of-its-kind event, India hosted a conference last week on 'Shared Buddhist Heritage' under the ambit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), which saw participation of scholars and experts from Russia, China, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Belarus, Bahrain, Myanmar, the United Arab Emirates and Kazakhstan.

India will also be hosting the World Buddhist Conference in the next few months, officials said.

"Cross-cultural linkages between central Asian and South East Asian nations need to be revived and the spiritual artery of Buddhism remains in India. And the effort is for the revival of Buddhist culture to which the SCO can give momentum, given the common linkages despite the divergences," an official said on the sidelines of the conference.

The two-day conference on March 14 and 15 was or-



G. Kishan Reddy, Union Minister for Culture and Tourism, with delegates at the SCO conference. ANI

ganised by the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of External Affairs and the International Buddhist Confederation (IBC), as a grantee body of the Ministry of Culture.

"The aim of the conference is to re-establish trans-cultural links, seek out commonalities between Buddhist art of Central Asia, art styles, archaeological sites and antiquity in various museums' collections of the SCO countries," statement issued by IBC said.

Buddhism can be used to build a common cultural line between all the SCO

countries, another official said at the conference. Cooperation aside, the much-awaited announcement of the next Dalai Lama, the spiritual leader of Buddhism, is a continuous issue with China stating that the choice of the next Dalai Lama lies with them.

"In future, in case you see two Dalai Lamas come, one from here, in free country, one chosen by Chinese, then nobody will trust, nobody will respect (the one chosen by China)," said the 14th Dalai Lama, who has been living in exile in India since fleeing China in 1959.

Connection of SCO and Buddhism

- Several member states of SCO, such as India, China, Central Asian Republics and even Russia have Buddhist heritage.
- Buddhist heritage can still be found in countries such as Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan, where ancient ruins, art, and artefacts bear witness to the religion's former prominence.

Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO):

- The SCO comprises China, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan as member-states.
- It has observer-states namely as Afghanistan, Belarus, Iran and Mongolia.
- Armenia, Azerbaijan, Cambodia and Nepal are SCO dialogue partners. Of these, Buddhism is among the dominant philosophies in countries such as China, Mongolia, Nepal and Cambodia.

The first B2B Global Conference & Expo on Traditional Medicine under the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) was hoisted by the Assam government to promote traditional medicines at the global level. The event took place in Guwahati

Category:

- Prelims
- GS-1
- GS-2

Japan PM: India indispensable for free Indo-Pacific

India, Japan PMs hold talks: Our ties crucial for stable region, says Modi

SHUBHAJIT ROY
NEW DELHI, MARCH 20

AMID INCREASING concern over China's aggressive behaviour in the region, Japan Prime Minister Fumio Kishida on Monday emphasised that India is "indispensable" in Tokyo's plan for a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific".

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, too, underlined the importance of the India-Japan partnership for a stable Indo-Pacific. Following his meeting with his Japanese counterpart, Modi said the India-Japan Special Strategic and Global Partnership is based

on shared democratic values, and respect for the rule of law in the international arena. "Strengthening this partnership is not only important for both our countries, it also promotes peace, prosperity and stability in the Indo-Pacific region," he said.

"As the world is standing at history's turning point fraught with difficulties, what role should Japan and India play," said the visiting Japan PM.

While both leaders did not mention the Russian invasion of Ukraine in their public statements, officials said the issue figured prominently during the

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Japan PM: India indispensable for free Indo-Pacific

working lunch after the bilateral meeting. Briefing reporters, Japan's Cabinet Secretary for Public Affairs Noriuki Shikata said: "Kishida was straightforward...they should not condone any unilateral change of status quo, including in Asia."

Later, in a speech to unveil Japan's new plan for a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific", Kishida said the two countries are "in an extremely unique position in the current international relations" and have a great responsibility towards maintaining and strengthening "a free and open international order based on the rule of law". In an oblique reference to China's zero-Covid policy, he said: "Even during the Covid-19 pandemic, there were no voices at all in either Japan or India that said that a totalitarian system of governance would be better."

"I believe that Japan and India are in an extremely unique position in the current international relations and, furthermore, in the history of the world...I have always viewed with great respect the way such a huge and diverse country as India has developed democracy. Japan, for its part, was the first country in Asia to achieve modernisation and embrace

democracy. It is fair to say that both countries are naturally receptive to, and fully committed to, the idea of electing governments through general elections and deciding policies through public debate," Kishida said.

At the same time, he said, the two countries have unique historical backgrounds. "The people of the two countries humbly acknowledge that there are diverse values, cultures and histories on this planet, and that fully understanding them is not an easy task. We are the kind of people who understand intuitively that the best way forward is to respect the other party and cooperate through dialogue," he said.

Emphasising that India and Japan have a great responsibility towards maintaining and strengthening "a free and open international order based on the rule of law," he said: "This year, as Japan holds the G7 presidency and India holds the G20 presidency, my hope is that, through working together with ASEAN and many other countries, we will bring about peace and prosperity to the international community, which faces a time of challenges. The vision for achieving this is a 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific' (FOIP)

based on the rule of law. I believe that this region will be a place where freedom and the rule of law are valued, free from force or coercion."

Modi, in his statement, echoed Kishida. "Our meeting today is special for another reason as well. This year, India is chairing the G20, and Japan is chairing the G7. And therefore, this is the perfect opportunity to work together on our respective priorities and interests. Today, I explained in detail to Prime Minister Kishida about the priorities of India's G20 presidency. Giving voice to the priorities of the Global South is an important pillar of our G20 presidency. We have taken this initiative because we are a culture that believes in 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' (the world is one family), and in taking everyone along," he said.

Kishida, in his speech later, pointed to the divergences on the Russia-Ukraine war. "One characteristic of this turning point is the lack of a guiding perspective that is acceptable to all about what the international order should be. This was clearly demonstrated by the considerable discrepancies in the attitudes across various countries toward Russia's aggression against

Ukraine. I think this is an indication that a strong centrifugal force is working within the international community at the most basic level of a 'perspective,'" he said.

"I reiterate that Japan strongly condemns Russia's aggression against Ukraine and will never recognise it. Prime Minister Modi, too, expressed to President Putin that 'today's era is not of war'. Japan opposes any unilateral changes to the status quo by force anywhere in the world," he said. Modi, however, did not mention Russia in his public remarks.

Earlier, Modi said they reviewed the progress made in bilateral relations. "We exchanged views on defence equipment and technology collaboration, trade, health and digital partnership. We also had a fruitful discussion on the importance of reliable supply chains in semiconductor and other critical technologies. Last year, we had set a target of Japanese investment of 5 trillion yen in India in the next five years, that is, Rs 3,20,000 crore. It is a matter of satisfaction that there has been good progress in this direction," he said.

Kishida said he had invited Modi for the G7 summit in Hiroshima in May.

significance of Indo-Pacific region for India:

- 1 Strategic significance:** Indo-Pacific is a multipolar region, contributing more than half of the world's GDP and population. A stable, secure and prosperous Indo-Pacific Region is an important pillar of India's strategic partnership with the other countries especially USA.
- 2 Mineral Resources:** Maritime territories have also emerged as depositories of vital resources ranging from fish stocks to minerals and offshore oil and gas. The South China Sea, for instance, is estimated to hold some 10 per cent of the global catch of fish as well as 11 billion barrels of oil and 190 trillion cubic feet (tcf) of gas.
- 3 Economic Growth:** According to a report of the Asian Development Bank (ADB), countries in the Indo-Pacific produce over 60% of global GDP, making the region the largest single contributor to global growth.
- 4 Commerce:** The region consists of many of the world's vital choke points for global commerce, including the Straits of Malacca which is very critical for the growth of world economy. The Indo-Pacific region also stands at the intersection of international trade, with around 32.2 million barrels of crude oil pass through annually and 40% of global exports come from the region.
- 5 Maritime Trade:** Pacific islands are strategically significant from New Delhi's point of view as they sit astride important sea lines of communication through which important maritime trade is conducted.

Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy

- It is a new concept given by Japan during Japan PM's India Visit.
- Aims to prepare Japan to deal with the fast changing global and regional order and threats from China and North Korea.
- Strategy aims to create a "free and open" Asia-Pacific region which connects parts of eastern Africa, south Asia and southeast Asia with the western Pacific Ocean region and Japan.



Climate ministers hold first high-level meet since COP27

COPENHAGEN, March 20: Climate ministers and envoys convened at the two-day Copenhagen Climate Ministerial on Monday, which is being hosted by the incumbent Egyptian and incoming UAE presidencies of the Conference of the Parties (COP), and Denmark's Minister of Energy and Climate Dan Jorgensen.

Egypt's Foreign Minister and COP27 President Sameh Shoukry, and COP28 President-designate Sultan Al-Jaber, will co-chair the meeting with

Simon Stiell, Executive Secretary of the UNFCCC, other UN senior officials and non-governmental stakeholders in attendance.

The political high-level meeting in the Danish capital, the first such since COP27, will focus on catalyzing the implementation of the outcomes from COP27.

The meeting will tackle the main issues of adaptation, finance, mitigation of loss and damage through a three-fold agenda that addresses: implementing the Sharm el-Sheikh

Implementation Plan (SHIP) and building on COP27 outcomes, commitments and pledges, setting the course for a successful COP28 in the UAE, and cementing Paris Agreement targets through the first Global Stocktake exercise.

"I am very pleased to co-lead once again the Copenhagen Climate Ministerial. Last year, Minister Dan Jorgensen and the Danish government provided a dynamic and constructive platform for ministerial climate conversations. The

ministerial meet is an opportunity for us to reflect on the instrumental breakthroughs, as well as key achievements that came out of Sharm El Sheikh and consolidate the unity of purpose in fighting climate change and driving further implementation and action through 2023, on the road to COP28 in the UAE," said Shoukry.

"I continue to urge more ambitious climate action, remind us of the perils of backsliding, and to stay focused on implementation and outcomes." – IANS

Category:

- Prelims
- GS-2
- GS-3

Outcomes of COP27?

On Loss and Damage: Developing countries have been seeking financial assistance for loss and damage for nearly 3 decades. It refers to money needed to rescue and rebuild the physical and social infrastructure of countries devastated by extreme weather. Countries have now agreed to set-up a fund to provide financial assistance to poor nations stricken by climate disaster. This is the biggest achievement of the Conference. However, there is no agreement yet on the mechanism of operation of the fund or how finance should be provided and administered.

On Fossil Fuels: At COP26, a commitment to phase down the use of coal was agreed. At COP27, some countries, led by India, wanted to include a commitment to phase down all fossil fuels

Sharm el-Sheikh Implementation Plan: The cover decision, known as the Sharm el-Sheikh Implementation Plan, highlights that a global transformation to a low-carbon economy is expected to require investments of at least US\$ 4-6 trillion a year

The G7 and the **V20** ('the Vulnerable Twenty') launched the Global Shield against Climate Risks.

The **Food and Agriculture for Sustainable Transformation initiative** (FAST) has been launched

The new Indonesia **Just Energy Transition Partnership**, announced at the G20 Summit held in parallel with COP27, will mobilize US\$ 20 billion over the next 3-5 years

On 1.5°C Temperature Limit: At COP26 (Glasgow, 2021) countries had agreed to focus on a 1.5°C limit. Since the promises to cut greenhouse gas emissions weren't enough to stay within the 1.5°C limit, countries had agreed to come back every year to make the commitments stronger. This is called the "ratchet mechanism"

Mission LiFE

Source: The Assam Tribune Analysis, 21 March, 2023



Launching of

Mission LiFE in Assam



A Week for LiFE



Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma
Chief Minister of Assam

A Week for LiFE is an initiative of the Science Technology and Climate Change Department, Govt. of Assam to launch Hon'ble Prime Minister's vision of **Mission LiFE** (Lifestyle for Environment) in the state of Assam

Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma

Hon'ble Chief Minister of Assam

will launch the campaign
in presence of

Sri Keshav Mahanta

Hon'ble Minister,
Science Technology and Climate Change Department,
Govt. of Assam

on **21st March 2023** at **3.00 PM** at

Gauhati Medical College New Auditorium.

It will be followed by a weeklong series of activities to
be carried out at district level addressing all
7 categories of LiFE actions during

22-28 March 2023

All are cordially invited to the launch event

Published by Assam Science Technology and Environment Council, Bigyan Bhawan, GS Road, Guwahati 781005

Published by Directorate of Information & Public Relations, Assam Connect with us @diprassam dipr.assam.gov.in

DAY 1

Save Water

DAY 2

Save Energy

DAY 3

Reduce Single
Use Plastic

DAY 4

Adopt Sustainable
Food Systems

DAY 5

Reduce Waste
(Swachhata Actions)

DAY 6

Reduce E-Waste

DAY 7

Adopt Healthy
Lifestyle

LIFE actions

At the 2021 UN Climate Change Conference (UNFCCC COP26), Hon'ble Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi announced Mission LiFE, to bring **individual behaviours** at the **forefront of the global climate action narrative**.

LiFE envisions replacing the prevalent 'use-and-dispose' economy—governed by mindless and destructive consumption—with a **circular economy**, which would be defined by **mindful and deliberate utilisation**.

It follows three pronged strategy to achieve this goal:

- 1 Promotion of environmental-friendly daily practices among people (demand)
- 2 Enable industries and markets to respond to the shift in demand (supply)
- 3 Influence government and industrial policy to support both sustainable consumption and production (policy).

Category:

➤ **Prelims**

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Daily MCQ for APSC CCE Prelims

2. Consider the following statements :

2. The Rajya Sabha has no power either to reject or to amend a Money Bill
3. The Rajya Sabha cannot vote on the Demands for Grants.
4. The Rajya Sabha cannot discuss the Annual Financial Statement.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A. 1 and 2 Only
- B. 2 and 3 Only
- C. 1 Only
- D. 1 and 3 Only

Ans. A. 1 and 2 Only

Daily MCQ for APSC CCE Prelims

The main advantage of the parliamentary form of government is that

- A. The executive and legislature work independently.
- B. It provides continuity of policy and is more efficient.
- C. The executive remains responsible to the legislature.
- D. The head of the government cannot be changed without an election

Ans. C. The executive remains responsible to the legislature

Daily MCQ for APSC CCE Prelims

Mr. X has three children. The birthday of the first child falls on the **5th** Monday of April, that of the second one falls on the **5th** Thursday of November. On which day is the birth of the third child, which falls on **20th** December ? **[UPSC 2019]**

A. Monday B. Thursday C. Saturday D. Sunday

Correct Answer : B. Thursday

- Any month has 4th week till 28th, so, 5th Monday of April and 5th Thursday of November can be either 29th or 30th of the respective months.
- Suppose, 29th April is Monday. In that case, number of Odd days till 29th November is:
 $= 2+3+2+3+3+2+3 = 18 \sim 4 \text{ odd days}$, that is 29th November would be Monday + 4 = Friday.
- However, given there is 5th Thursday in November, hence, 30th April must be the Monday, in which case, 30th November will be Friday and 29th November will be a Thursday
- Hence, if 30th November is Friday, 20th December will be = Thursday