



DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 11-11-2024

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Asian Buddhist Summit

Syllabus: GS-1; Art & Culture

Context

- India hosts maiden Asian Buddhist Summit.



About

- The Asian Buddhist Summit, an event focusing on promoting peace, harmony, and Buddhist teachings in Asia, provides a platform for Buddhist leaders, scholars, and practitioners to gather, discuss, and address issues relevant to Buddhism in contemporary society.

Objective

- The summit aims to promote Buddhist **values of peace, non-violence, and compassion across Asia**, fostering interfaith dialogue and cultural exchanges to address modern societal issues.

Participants

- It typically gathers representatives from various Asian Buddhist countries, including monks, government officials, scholars, and lay practitioners, which enhances mutual understanding and cooperation among Buddhist communities.

Themes Discussed

- Role of Buddhism in fostering regional **peace and harmony**.
- Addressing challenges faced by Buddhist communities, such as preserving heritage, dealing with modernization, and confronting discrimination.
- Environmental responsibility in line with Buddhist teachings on compassion for all beings.

Significance for India

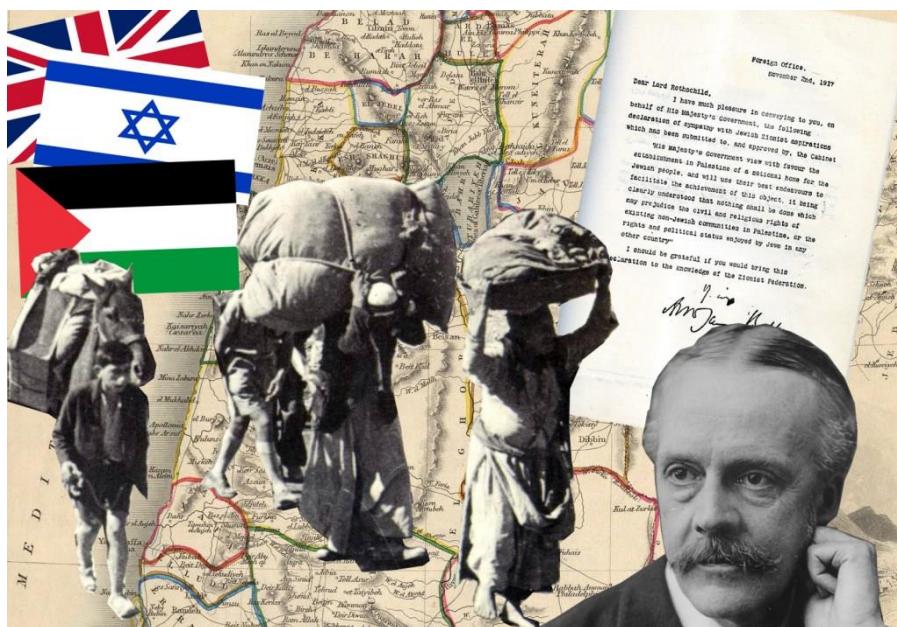
- India, as the birthplace of Buddhism, plays a pivotal role in these discussions, underscoring its historical, cultural, and religious ties to Buddhism.
- It enhances India's soft power in the region, strengthening cultural diplomacy through

Balfour Declaration

Syllabus: GS-2; International Relations

Context

- The Balfour Declaration was made on November 2, 1917, A century later, its violent ripples are still being felt in West Asia.



What was the Balfour Declaration?

- The Balfour Declaration was a statement made by the British government on November 2, 1917, expressing support for the establishment of a "**national home for the Jewish people**" in Palestine.
- It was issued in the form of a letter from Arthur James Balfour, the British Foreign Secretary, to Lord Lionel Walter Rothschild, a prominent leader of the British Jewish community and supporter of the Zionist cause.
- The Declaration, though brief, marked the first significant political endorsement of Zionism by a major world power.

Historical Context and Motivations

- The Declaration was issued during **World War I**, as Britain sought to secure Jewish support for its war efforts, particularly among Jewish communities in Russia and the United States.
- By aligning with Zionist aspirations, British leaders hoped to sway Jewish public opinion in favor of the Allied cause.
- Additionally, Britain viewed Palestine as strategically important for protecting its interests in the **Suez Canal** and its broader imperial holdings, especially in India.

Significance and Controversy

- The Balfour Declaration has been highly significant and contentious.
- While it marked a **crucial step in the establishment of Israel and the global recognition of the Zionist movement**, it also disregarded the political rights of the Arab population in Palestine.
- Britain had promised the Arab leaders independence in other agreements, such as the McMahon–Hussein correspondence, leading to lasting distrust and conflict.

Legacy

- The Balfour Declaration is often seen as the **origin of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict**.
- It laid the groundwork for British-controlled Palestine's transformation, ultimately resulting in the creation of the state of Israel in 1948 and ongoing disputes over territory, rights, and national identity in the region.

Kodo Millet

Syllabus: GS-3; Agriculture

Context

- Ten elephants who died near Bandhavgarh Tiger Reserve, Madhya Pradesh, were killed on account of eating a surfeit of fungus-infected kodo millet, a toxicology report confirmed.



Kodo Millet (*Paspalum scrobiculatum*)

- Kodo millet is a traditional cereal crop that has gained attention due to its nutritional and ecological benefits.
- It is known for its resilience in arid and semi-arid conditions and is considered one of the most drought-resistant crops.
- It is grown primarily in dryland areas of India, especially in states like **Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, and Tamil Nadu**.

Key Facts and Features

- **Nutritional Value:**
 - Kodo millet is highly nutritious, rich in protein, fiber, vitamins (like niacin and riboflavin), and minerals such as iron, calcium, and phosphorus.
 - It is a gluten-free grain, making it suitable for people with gluten intolerance or celiac disease.
 - It has a low glycemic index, making it beneficial for diabetic patients.
- **Agronomic Benefits:**
 - **Drought Resistance:** Kodo millet can withstand long dry spells, making it a viable option for regions facing water scarcity.

- **Low Input Crop:** It requires minimal fertilizers and pesticides, making it an eco-friendly crop.
- **Soil Health:** Being a hardy crop, it does not deplete soil nutrients and can be grown in poor-quality soils.
- **Short Growing Cycle:** It has a short growing period, typically 3-4 months, and matures quickly, allowing for multiple harvests in a year.

➤ **Ecological Significance:**

- **Climate Adaptability:** Kodo millet is well-suited to the changing climate, especially in areas prone to drought.
- **Sustainable Farming:** Its cultivation promotes sustainable farming practices, conserving water and reducing the reliance on high-input, water-intensive crops like rice and wheat.

➤ **Health Benefits:**

- **Weight Management:** Kodo millet's high fiber content helps in digestion and prevents overeating, aiding in weight management.
- **Heart Health:** The presence of essential fatty acids and antioxidants in Kodo millet helps in reducing cholesterol levels and improving heart health.
- **Anti-inflammatory Properties:** It contains anti-inflammatory compounds that help reduce the risk of chronic diseases.

➤ **Economic Importance:**

- Kodo millet plays a significant role in the livelihoods of farmers in dryland areas, providing an alternative to other cereals in regions with low irrigation infrastructure.
- It contributes to the agricultural diversity and food security of rural communities in India.

➤ **Government Initiatives:**

- **Promotion as a Nutritious Food:** The Indian government has started promoting millets like Kodo as a part of the "National Year of Millets" initiative, aiming to raise awareness about the health and environmental benefits of millets.
- **Millet Mission:** Under the National Food Security Mission, the government is encouraging the production and consumption of millets, including Kodo millet, through subsidies and farmer training programs.

➤ **International Recognition:**

- The United Nations has declared 2023 as the *International Year of Millets*, recognizing their importance in promoting sustainable agriculture and food security globally.

Key takeaways from UNCBD COP16

Syllabus: GS-3; Environmental Conservation- International Institutions

Context

- The 2024 UN Biodiversity Conference (COP16) held in Cali, Colombia, produced several notable outcomes that set the stage for future global biodiversity conservation efforts.

These key takeaways are vital for understanding the direction of international environmental policies

- **National Biodiversity Targets:**
 - A total of 119 countries, covering 61% of the parties, submitted national biodiversity targets.
 - This is a significant step toward addressing biodiversity loss at a national level.
 - Furthermore, 44 countries presented their **National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans (NBSAPs)**, which are designed to help implement these targets.
- **Incorporating Indigenous Knowledge:**
 - A landmark decision was made to enhance the involvement of indigenous peoples and local communities in biodiversity conservation.
 - This includes embedding their traditional knowledge into the global biodiversity agenda.
 - The decision reflects the increasing recognition of their critical role in safeguarding ecosystems.
- **Cali Fund for Fair Benefit Sharing:**
 - A new financial mechanism, the Cali Fund, was established to ensure that industries benefiting from **Digital Sequence Information (DSI)** share these benefits with developing countries and Indigenous Peoples.
 - At least 50% of the funds are earmarked for these communities, promoting a more equitable approach to biodiversity conservation.
- **Protection of Ecologically Significant Areas:**
 - COP16 agreed on a new process for identifying and managing ecologically or biologically significant marine areas (EBSAs).
 - This initiative aims to improve conservation strategies by utilizing the best available scientific knowledge.
- **30x30 Conservation Commitment:**

- A major achievement of COP16 was the endorsement of the *30x30* goal, which seeks to protect 30% of the planet's land and oceans by 2030.
- This ambitious commitment is aimed at halting the rapid loss of biodiversity and creating sustainable ecosystems.
- These outcomes underscore the importance of a collaborative, inclusive, and scientifically-informed approach to addressing biodiversity loss, with an emphasis on equity and financial support for vulnerable regions and communities.

International Solar Alliance

Syllabus: GS-3; Environmental Institutions

Context

- India and France have been elected President and Co-President of the International Solar Alliance (ISA) for the two-year term from 2024 to 2026. India ran unopposed for the presidency, while France emerged victorious in the contest with Grenada for the Co-Presidency.

Introduction and Establishment

- Background and inception during **COP-21 in 2015**
- Treaty-based international organization **headquartered in Gurugram, India**

Objectives of ISA

- Promote solar energy to reduce fossil fuel dependence
- Combat climate change and enhance energy security
- Reduce technology and financing costs for solar projects, especially in developing countries

Membership

- Initially focused on countries between the **Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn**
- Now open to all United Nations member countries
- Over 120 signatories, with about 90 countries having ratified the agreement

Key Initiatives and Programs

- **Solar Applications for Agriculture:** Solar pumps and other technologies
- **Scaling Solar Mini Grids:** Off-grid solutions for rural areas
- **Affordable Finance at Scale:** Access to affordable financing for solar projects
- **Scaling Solar Rooftop Programs:** Adoption of rooftop solar installations
- **Solar E-mobility:** Promoting solar-powered electric mobility

Strategic Partnerships

- Collaboration with multilateral organizations and financial institutions
- Partnerships with the World Bank and various nations to leverage expertise and resources

Achievements of ISA

- Fundraising for solar projects across member countries
- Development of solar infrastructure in Africa and island nations
- Creation of a knowledge-sharing platform for technology and policy

Importance for India

- Supports India's renewable energy target of 500 GW by 2030
- Reinforces India's leadership role in climate change mitigation
- Enhances diplomatic relations by aiding developing countries in energy independence

Challenges Facing ISA

- Financing and investment barriers for low-income countries
- Need for technology and policy alignment across diverse member states