



News Analysis (22 Aug, 2018)

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International Buddhist Conclave 2018

The President of India will inaugurate the “International Buddhist Conclave (IBC), 2018” in New Delhi on 23rd August, 2018.

- The Conclave is being organized by the **Ministry of Tourism** in collaboration with the State Governments of **Maharashtra, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh** from 23rd – 26th August, 2018 at New Delhi and Ajanta (Maharashtra), followed by site visits to Rajgir, Nalanda and Bodhgaya (Bihar) and Sarnath (Uttar Pradesh).
- Apart from the Ministerial level delegation from Bangladesh, Indonesia, Myanmar and Sri Lanka, delegates from other 29 countries will also participate in the International Buddhist Conclave.
- IBC-2018 will have a **religious / spiritual dimension**, an **academic theme** and a **diplomatic and business** component.
- The Ministry will also organize an **"Investors' Summit"** during the Conclave to attract investments in developing world class infrastructure at Buddhist sites.
- The aim of the Conclave is to showcase and project the Buddhist Heritage in India and boost tourism to the Buddhist sites in the country and cultivate friendly ties with countries and communities interested in Buddhism.

Background

- The Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, has been organizing the International Buddhist Conclave biennially since 2004.
- The earlier International Buddhist Conclaves were organized in New Delhi and Bodhgaya (February 2004), Nalanda and Bodhgaya (February 2010), Varanasi and Bodhgaya (2012 and 2014) and in Sarnath/Varanasi and Bodhgaya (October 2016).
- The “ASEAN” was the Guest of Honor during IBC, 2016 and **Japan would be the 'Partner Country for IBC-2018**.

Buddhism

- **Gautama Buddha (born in 563 BC at Lumbini, Nepal)** founded the Buddhist School of Philosophy.
- He attained Nirvana while meditating under a pipal tree in Bodhgaya on the banks of the river Niranjana.
- Buddhist philosophy questioned the authority of the Vedic rituals in helping the attainment of salvation. Instead, the Buddhist philosophy maintains that in order to attain salvation four noble truths must be followed.
- The **four noble truths** are:
 - The Truth of **Suffering (Kutai)**- Human life is full of **suffering** in the form of pain, sickness and death.
 - The Truth of the **Cause of Suffering (Jutai)**- The root cause of human suffering is **desire**.
 - The Truth of the **Cessation of Suffering (Mettai)**- In order to attain a state of peace and nirvana a person **must let go of all his desires and passions**.
 - The Truth of the **Path to the Cessation of Suffering (Dotai)**- To ease human suffering it is important to move towards the attainment of nirvana using the **Eight-Fold Path**.
- The Eight-fold Path, in Pali language, **Aṭṭhangiko Maggo** are:
 1. Right Views - to keep ourselves free from prejudice, superstition and delusion and to see aright the true nature of life.
 2. Right Thoughts - to turn away from the evils of this world and to direct our minds towards righteousness.
 3. Right Speech - to refrain from pointless and harmful talk to speak kindly and courteously to all.
 4. Right Conduct - to see that our deeds are peaceful, benevolent, compassionate and pure; to live the Teaching of the Buddha daily.
 5. Right Livelihood - to earn our living in such a way as to entail no evil consequences.
 6. Right Effort - to direct our efforts incessantly to the overcoming of ignorance and selfish desires.
 7. Right Mindfulness - to cherish good and pure thoughts for all that we say and do arise from our thoughts.
 8. Right Meditation - to concentrate our will on the Buddha, His Life and His Teaching.

- On the other hand, the 'Buddha Path' also refers to the Eight Great Places of Buddhist Heritage, (**referred in Pali as Aṭṭhamahāṭhānāni**). They are:
 1. Lumbini (Nepal)- Buddha was born.
 2. Bodh Gaya (Bihar)- Attained enlightenment.
 3. Sarnath (Varanasi, U.P.)- First sermon.
 4. Kushinagar (Gorakhpur, U.P.)- Buddha died.
 5. Rajgir (Bihar)- Where the Lord tamed a mad elephant.
 6. Vaishali (Bihar)- Where a monkey offered honey to him.
 7. Sravasti (U.P)- The Lord took his seat on a thousand petaled lotus and created multiple representations of himself.
 8. Sankasya (Farrukhabad, Uttar Pradesh)- He descended from heaven.

Significance

- Presently, it is estimated that there are nearly 500 million Buddhists all over the World and majority of them live in East Asia, South East Asia and Far East countries.
 - However, a very small percentage of them visit the Buddhist sites in India each year.
 - Therefore, the potential of encouraging more tourists to visit the Buddhist destinations where Lord Buddha lived and preached is immense.
 - Earlier in 2014-15, the Ministry of Tourism has also launched the **Swadesh Darshan scheme** with a vision to develop theme-based tourist circuits on the principles of high tourist value. The Ministry has identified **Buddhist Circuit as one of the thirteen thematic circuits** for development under the Swadesh Darshan scheme.
 - Moreover, this Buddha Path is **the Living Heritage** that still continues to inspire millions of people to walk and find out Peace, Happiness, Harmony and Solace.
 - To work for the promotion of both the **intangible and the tangible Buddhist Heritage**, the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India has decided to organize 6th International Buddhist Conclave on the theme, **"Buddha Path – The Living Heritage"**.
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SC Scraps NOTA for Rajya Sabha

The Supreme Court has scrapped the use of 'None Of The Above' (NOTA) option in the coming Rajya Sabha elections.

Key Observations

- The court has held that the NOTA option is meant only for universal adult suffrage and direct elections and not for polls held by the system of proportional representation by means of the single transferable vote as done in the Rajya Sabha.

- The court held that making NOTA applicable in Rajya Sabha elections is contrary to Article 80(4) of the constitution and the Supreme Court's judgment in **PUCL v Union of India (2013)**.

Article 80(4) states that the representatives of each state in the council of states shall be elected by the elected members of the legislative assembly of the state in accordance with the system of proportional representation by means of the single transferable vote.

- NOTA defeats the fairness in indirect elections, it ignores the role of an elector in such an election and destroys democratic values and encourages malpractices like defection and corruption.
- In the Rajya Sabha, the nature of the representative is different as the candidate is the representative of the state. In contrast, a candidate who is elected by voters in a direct election represents a constituency.
- NOTA can destroy the concept of the value of a vote and representation and encourage defection that shall open the doors for corruption which is a malignant disorder.
- The maintenance of secrecy of voting through the system of the open ballot will be violated by the introduction of NOTA in Rajya Sabha polls.
- It will not only affect the discipline that has been prescribed under the Tenth Schedule to the Constitution but will also infringe upon the disqualification of a member on the ground of defection.

Anti-Defection Law

- The **52nd Amendment to the Constitution** added the Tenth Schedule which laid down the process by which legislators may be disqualified on grounds of defection.
- The **anti-defection law was passed by parliament in 1985** to enhance the credibility of the country's polity by addressing rampant party-hopping by elected representatives for personal and political considerations.
- A member of parliament or state legislature was deemed to have defected if he either voluntarily resigned from his party or disobeyed the directives of the party leadership on a vote.
 - **Independent members** would be disqualified if they joined a political party.
 - **Nominated members** who were not members of a party could choose to join a party within six months; after that period, they were treated as a party member or independent member.
 - **Exceptions:** Any person elected as speaker or chairman could resign from his party, and rejoin the party if he has resigned from that post.
- A party could be merged into another if **at least two-thirds of its party legislators** voted for the merger. The law initially permitted splitting of parties, but that has now been outlawed.

- The law states that the decision of the Presiding officer is final and not subject to judicial review. The Supreme Court struck down part of this condition. It held that there may not be any judicial intervention until the presiding officer gives his order. However, the final decision is subject to appeal in the High Courts and Supreme Court.

NOTA in Rajya Sabha

- The Supreme Court, in the PUCL case, directed the EC to introduce NOTA in direct elections in order to provide an opportunity to the elector to express his or her dissent or disapproval against the contesting candidates and to reduce bogus voting.
- A candidate has to get a required number of votes calculated through a formula to get elected to Rajya Sabha.
- The total number of votes (MLAs) are divided by the number of seats going to the polls from the State, adding one vote to the number.
- In Rajya Sabha polls, the MLAs have to show their ballot paper to an authorised party agent before putting it in the ballot box.
- If a member from a party exercises the NOTA option, then the total number of votes cast will go down.
- The impact of the decision of MLAs to exercise the NOTA option in elections to the Rajya Sabha can be the same as that of an abstention.

Background

The petition challenging the introduction of NOTA in Rajya Sabha elections had argued that the Election Commission cannot sanction the use of NOTA in Rajya Sabha elections by way of mere circulars, which have the effect of overriding the provisions of Article 80(4) — proportional representation by means of the single transferable vote, the provisions of Representation of People Act 1951 and the Conduct of Election Rules 1961.

Centre for Removal of NOTA from Rajya Sabha Poll

UDAN International

The Ministry of Civil Aviation has prepared a draft scheme document for “UDAN International” which will enable the State governments to encourage tourism on preferred international air routes by offering the subsidy to domestic airlines **for a period of three years**.

- The scheme is designed for State governments that are keen to promote air connectivity on international routes identified by them and for which they are willing to provide the subsidy to airlines.

- The **Airport Authority of India** will be the implementing agency of the scheme.

Key Points

- As per the draft, a **State will identify international routes** for which the Airports Authority of India (AAI) will determine a subsidy amount.
- This will be followed by airlines submitting their proposals, which will include the routes they wish to connect as well as the subsidy needed by them.
- The financial assistance to an airline will be offered from the **International Air Connectivity Fund (IACF)**, which will be created through the contributions made by the State government.
- The scheme is meant for domestic airlines. Only fixed-wing aircraft with more than 70 seats can be operated under the scheme and airlines will have to conduct a minimum of three and a maximum of seven departures on a given route on three days in a week.
- The Centre has allowed airlines to enter into a code-sharing arrangement with international and domestic airlines for UDAN international.
- An airline that is awarded a particular route will have exclusive rights to a subsidy on that route **for a period of three years.**

No Capping of Fares

No capping of fares is the key difference between this scheme and the regional connectivity scheme (RCS) also known as Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik (UDAN), for domestic routes. The international connectivity targets people with disposable incomes who are looking to undertake air travel for the purpose of tourism.

Under RCS, fares are capped at ₹2,500 for one hour of flight on a fixed-wing aircraft in order to make air travel affordable.

Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagarik (UDAN)

- UDAN was launched in 2016 to make air travel affordable for people through subsidised ticket rates. The aim is to connect smaller places through air network by using under-served and unserved airports.
- Under UDAN, fares for a specified number of seats is capped and the government provides a viability gap funding (VGF) to the carriers to make up for the below-market pricing.

NCRB to Track Complaints on Sexual Violence

The Ministry of Home Affairs has designated National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) as the nodal agency for monitoring the complaints received on a government portal related to child pornography and sexual violence videos.

- The NCRB would coordinate with service providers such as Facebook, YouTube and WhatsApp and ask them to block malicious videos and contents.
- It can act on such content either on receiving complaints or suo moto.
- It was also decided to share list of 500 keywords used in searching such content with Internet Service Providers (ISPs) like Facebook, WhatsApp, Google, etc.

National Crime Record Bureau

- NCRB, headquartered in **New Delhi, was set-up in 1986** under the **Ministry of Home Affairs** to function as a **repository of information on crime and criminals** so as to assist the investigators in linking crime to the perpetrators.
- It was set up based on the recommendations of the **National Police Commission (1977-1981)** and the MHA's Taskforce (1985).
- It was constituted by merging the **Directorate of Coordination and Police Computer (DCPC), Inter State Criminals Data Branch of CBI, Central Finger Print Bureau of CBI, and Statistical Branch of BPR&D.**
- It developed **Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems (CCTNS)** in 2009 which connects approximately 15000 police stations and 6000 higher offices in the country.

Background

- The **Section 67(b) of the Information Technology (Amendment) Act 2008** clarifies who all are punishable for publishing or transmitting material that depicts children in sexually explicit acts.
Not just the ones who create and share content of child pornography but **also the ones who view, browse or download** such content are also punishable under the act.
- Despite a law in place, India is one of the biggest contributors and also consumers of child pornography.
- Taking cognizance of this, the Supreme Court in 2017 asked the Centre to implement the proposals given by the high-powered committee on videos of child pornography, rape and gang rape.

- Some of the **notable recommendations** of the committee were:
 - The search engines expand the list of keywords which may possibly be used by a user to search for Child Porn (CP) content.
 - These keywords should also be in **Indian languages and vernacular search**.
 - Government of India to form regulations for reporting of identified CP/rape, gang rape (RGR) imagery online.
 - There must be a **user authentication system**, a system in which the users who try to upload an image/video, falling within the subject content, using the pre-defined keywords, are put to a more rigorous verification process which would **have them believe that they would be traced**.
- Ministry of Home Affairs is also implementing the '**Cyber Crime Prevention against Women and Children (CCPWC)**' scheme from **NIRBHAYA funds** during the period 2017-2020.
 - The home ministry will train 27,500 police personnel across the country to tackle cyber crimes against women and children under the scheme.
 - It also aims at setting up an online cyber-crime reporting platform to allow the public to report complaints of cybercrime including child pornography.
 - Twitter handle "CyberDost" launched for tweets on cybercrime Awareness.
 - Facilitate the removal of child pornographic content in coordination with concerned ministries.
- The Ministry of Home Affairs earlier in 2018, launched a centralised online portal, **www.cyberpolice.gov.in**, and helpline number '**155260**' to receive complaints pertaining to child pornography and rape/gangrape (CP/RGR) content.
- SC has also asked the ISPs to develop a mechanism to prevent the circulation of sexual assault videos and child pornography through their platform in a stipulated time.

Concerns

- According to experts, Google or any other prominent search engine for that matter cannot stop videos of child porn or sexual violence from being circulated.
- These are mere search engines and not the internet. They can almost take down an objectionable video from their search engine but cannot take it down from the internet.
- The blocking of keywords that are used while searching these content is also not sure to be helpful that much. If one keyword is blocked the culprits will come up with another new word.

- Peer-to-peer networks are used to circulate such content because after being connected to these networks, one can upload and download files without disclosing much personal information.
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Centre Rules out Total Ban on Firecrackers

The Government of India has ruled out a national ban on firecrackers. This was in response to pleas being heard by the Supreme Court on a complete nationwide ban on the use, manufacture, licensing, sale, resale or distribution of firecrackers and sparklers of any kind in a bid to combat pollution on an emergency basis.

The government has suggested alternative measures to curb pollution during Diwali that include the production of “green crackers”; community cracker bursting in major cities and a freeze on the production of series crackers or laris.

NOTE:

- In July 2017, the Supreme Court prohibited the use of five chemicals, labelled as toxic by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), in the manufacture of firecrackers. they include antimony, lithium, mercury, arsenic and lead.
- In October 2017, the Supreme Court suspended the sale of firecrackers in Delhi and NCR till November 1, 2017, in a bid to test whether a Diwali without firecrackers this year will have a “positive effect” on the health of citizens and a steadily deteriorating air quality.

The Union Ministry of Environment submitted a five-page affidavit to the Supreme Court suggesting ways to deal with the pollution problem and chalking out short-term measures to combat pollution during Diwali.

Proposals Include

- Working together with institutions like the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, National Environment Engineering Research Institute, Petroleum and Explosives Safety Organisation (PESO), Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) to deal with Diwali pollution.
- PESO could be approached to ensure that fireworks with permitted chemicals and decibel levels are used. PESO could run tests for banned ones like lithium, arsenic, antimony, lead, mercury.
- CPCB and respective state pollution control boards shall carry out short-term monitoring in their cities for 14 days.

- Setting up of Raw Material Characterisation Facilities to check the presence of high contents of unburned material, partially combusted material or poor quality of raw material in gunpowder in firecrackers.
 - Use of reduced emission firecrackers or improved firecrackers - these are low emission sound and light emitting functional crackers with PM reduction by 30-35% and a significant reduction in nitrogen oxide and sulphur dioxide due to in-situ water generation as a dust suppressant and low cost due to the usage of low-cost oxidants.
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Important Facts for Prelims (22 August 2018)

Canine Distemper Virus (CDV)

- Canine distemper is **a contagious and serious disease caused by a virus** that attacks the respiratory, gastrointestinal and nervous systems of both domesticated and wild animals, though it is more common in pet dogs and cats.
 - The virus is a member of the **genus Morbillivirus of the family Paramyxoviridae** (the same family of the viruses that causes measles, mumps, and bronchiolitis in humans)
 - The virus **can also be found in wildlife** such as foxes, wolves, coyotes, raccoons, skunks, mink and ferrets and has been reported in lions, tigers, leopards, and other wild cats as well as seals.
 - At least eight jackals have died at the Assam zoo due to a virus associated with canines.
 - The **virus does not affect humans however they may be carriers.**
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