



DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 02-08-2025

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Piprahwa Gems and Relics

Syllabus: GS-1; Ancient History- Buddhism

Context

- The **Ministry of Culture**, Government of India, recently announced the **repatriation of the sacred Piprahwa relics** of Lord Buddha—marking a significant moment in the preservation of India's spiritual and archaeological heritage.



About Piprahwa Relics and Gems

- **Discovery:**
In **1898**, **William Claxton Peppé**, a British estate manager and engineer, excavated a stupa at Piprahwa, just south of **Lumbini**—the birthplace of Lord Buddha. The excavation unearthed a cache of sacred relics and ornate gemstones.
- **Key Findings:**
 - Bone fragments believed to be those of **Lord Buddha**
 - **Crystal and soapstone reliquary caskets**
 - A **sandstone coffer**
 - Offerings including **gold ornaments and gemstones**
- **Historical Significance:**

- An **inscription in Brahmi script** on one of the reliquary urns confirmed that the relics belonged to the Buddha and were enshrined by the **Sakya clan**, to which he belonged.
- The find was one of the earliest archaeological validations linking a relic directly to the historical Buddha.
- **Post-Discovery Events:**
 - Under the **Indian Treasure Trove Act, 1878**, the British Crown claimed the find.
 - Some relics were gifted to **King Chulalongkorn (Rama V)** of **Siam (Thailand)**.
 - The majority were housed in the **Indian Museum, Kolkata**, since **1899**.

Legal Protection

- The Piprahwa relics and associated artefacts are classified as '**AA**' **antiquities** under Indian heritage law.
- Such artefacts are **non-transferable**, and **export or sale is strictly prohibited** under the **Antiquities and Art Treasures Act**.

To Know

- **Piprahwa**, located in present-day Siddharthnagar district of Uttar Pradesh near the India-Nepal border, is renowned for the discovery of sacred **Buddhist relics** and valuable gemstones interred in an ancient stupa.

Doctrine of Merger

Syllabus: GS-2: Judiciary – Major Doctrines.

Context:

- The **Supreme Court of India** recently reiterated that the **Doctrine of Merger** should not be applied mechanically.
- Emphasized the **need for caution** in its application and to **preserve avenues for justice**.

What is the Doctrine of Merger?

- A **common law principle**, not codified in any statute.

- It ensures **discipline** and **hierarchical propriety** in the judicial system.
- States that when a **superior court** (appellate/revisional) passes an order, the **order of the lower authority** gets **merged** with that order.

Key Features

Feature	Description
Purpose	To ensure only one final enforceable order exists for a single matter.
Nature	Based on judicial discipline and propriety; not statutory .
Scope	Applies to judicial, quasi-judicial, or administrative authorities .
Effect	The lower court's decision ceases to exist independently once reviewed by the superior authority.
Not Universal	Application depends on the nature of jurisdiction (e.g., appellate vs. original) and subject matter of the case.

Essence of the Doctrine

- **Only the final decision** (affirmed, modified, or reversed) of the superior court is **enforceable**.
- Prevents confusion when there are **conflicting orders** from different levels.
- Ensures **consistency** and **clarity** in the justice delivery system.

Recent Judicial Observation

- The SC warned against using the doctrine to **deny genuine relief** or **dismiss appeals mechanically**.
- Courts must assess the **intent and effect** of the higher court's decision before invoking merger.

Applicability Conditions

- Existence of a subordinate order.
- **Right to appeal or revision** exercised before a superior authority.
- The **superior authority** must have:
 - Affirmed, Modified, or Reversed the decision.

Limitations

- **Not applicable automatically** in all cases.
- Depends on:
 - Jurisdiction type (Appellate or Original).
 - Nature of the superior court's order.
 - Whether the superior court dealt with merits or dismissed on technical grounds.

Supply and Use Table

Syllabus: GS-3: Indian Economy –Industrial Policy.

Context:

- MoSPI has released the Supply and Use Tables (SUTs) for 2020-21 and 2021-22.
- These are important for **national accounts compilation, policy analysis**, and improving **data consistency**.

What is the Supply and Use Table (SUT)?

- It provides a **comprehensive snapshot** of all economic activities.
- Represents the **flows of goods and services** in the economy.
- Aligns **production, income, and expenditure approaches** to GDP in one integrated framework.

Components of SUT

- **Two Interlinked Tables:**
 - **Supply Table** (Product × Industry):
 - Captures total supply of goods and services.
 - Includes:
 - Domestic production (by industry)
 - Imports (by product)

➤ **Use Table** (Product × Use):

- Records how goods/services are used.
- Includes:
 - Intermediate consumption (by industries)
 - Final consumption (household + government)
 - Gross capital formation (investment)
 - Exports

Purpose and Significance

➤ **Improves Coherence and Consistency:**

- Helps reconcile discrepancies between **production and expenditure estimates**.

➤ **Enhances Statistical Robustness:**

- Useful for constructing Input-Output Tables and Satellite Accounts.

➤ **Supports GDP Estimation:**

- Integrates the three approaches to GDP:
 - **Production:** Output - Intermediate consumption
 - **Income:** Wages, profits, rents, etc.
 - **Expenditure:** Consumption + Investment + Exports - Imports

➤ **Used in Policy and Planning:**

- Helpful in **fiscal planning, supply chain analysis, and structural reforms**.

Importance for India

- Offers a clearer picture of the **sectoral composition** and **inter-sectoral linkages**.
- Assists in **monitoring sectoral productivity, inflation, and supply bottlenecks**.
- Key tool for **evidence-based policymaking** and implementation of schemes like **Make in India** and **Atmanirbhar Bharat**.

Red Panda

Syllabus: GS-3: Wildlife Conservation.

Context:

- Red panda cubs were born at the **Himalayan Zoological Park**, Gangtok (Sikkim) after a **7-year gap**, under a conservation programme.

About Red Panda

- **Scientific Name:** *Ailurus fulgens*
- **Common Name:** Lesser Panda
- **Characteristics:**
 - Shy, solitary, arboreal (tree-dwelling), and primarily herbivorous.
 - Uses its **long, bushy tail** for **balance** and **warmth in winter**.
 - Known for its **cute appearance** and **defensive upright stance**.
 - **Size:** Comparable to a house cat.
- **Ecological Role:**
 - Considered an **indicator species** – signals ecological health and environmental changes.

Habitat and Distribution

- **Geographical Range:**
 - **India:** Eastern Himalayas (Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, and parts of West Bengal)
 - Also found in **Bhutan, Nepal, China, and Myanmar**
- Prefers **temperate forests** with **dense bamboo understory**

Conservation Status

Authority	Status
IUCN Red List	Endangered

Authority	Status
CITES	Appendix I
Wildlife Protection Act, 1972	Schedule I

Threats to Red Panda

- **Habitat loss:** Due to deforestation and fragmentation.
- **Decline in bamboo availability**, essential for nesting and feeding.
- **Poaching**, accidental trapping, and **inbreeding depression** in small populations.
- **Climate change** impacting temperate forest ecosystems.

Indicator Species: Meaning & Relevance

- Species that **reflect environmental conditions** of a habitat.
- Serve as **bioindicators** to monitor **ecosystem health**.
- Sensitive to **ecological changes** – first to show effects of pollution, habitat loss, etc.
- Useful in **conservation planning and policy** decisions.

Ashtamudi Lake

Syllabus: GS-3; Ramsar wetlands, estuarine biodiversity, habitat conservation

Context

- The **Kerala High Court** has directed the **State Government** and the **State Wetland Authority Kerala (SWAK)** to establish an **Ashtamudi Wetland Management Unit** within two months of notification issuance. This step aims to strengthen conservation efforts for the ecologically sensitive wetland.



Geographical Location

- Situated in **Kollam district**, Kerala.
- A significant **freshwater-estuarine lake system**.
- Empties into the **Arabian Sea** through the **Neendakara estuary**.

Physical Features

- **Area:** ~61.4 sq. km
- **Length:** ~16 km
- **Second largest lake** in Kerala, after **Vembanad Lake**.
- Acts as the **gateway to Kerala's backwaters**.
- Shape: Described as **palm-shaped** or **octopus-shaped**.

Etymology

- The name '**Ashtamudi**' originates from Malayalam:
 - '**Ashta**' = eight
 - '**Mudi**' = coned
- Refers to the lake's **eight channels** or arms.

Hydrology

- **Fed by:** Primarily by the **Kallada River**.
- **Drainage:** Into the **Arabian Sea** via Neendakara estuary.

Historical and Cultural Significance

- In the **14th century**, the lake's shores hosted the **port city of Quilon (Kollam)**—a vital maritime hub.
- Noted by **Ibn Battuta** as one of the leading international trade centers in ancient South India.

Biodiversity Significance

- Declared a **Ramsar Site in 2002** due to ecological richness.
- **Birdlife:**
 - Total: **57 species**
 - **6 migratory, 51 resident**
- **Fish diversity:**
 - Total: **97 species**
 - 42 marine
 - 3 estuarine
 - 9 estuarine-riverine
 - 15 marine-estuarine
- **Key Fauna:**
 - **Endangered/Endemic species** include:
 - **Pearl spot fish (Karimeen)**
 - **Mangrove crab**
 - **Otter, water snake**
 - Birds like **kingfisher, egret, heron, cormorant**

Conservation Concerns

- **Threats:**
 - Unregulated urbanisation
 - Sand mining
 - Tourism pressure
 - Water pollution
- Legal intervention signals urgent need for a **scientific, participatory management model**.

