



DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 02-05-2026

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Mains Perspective

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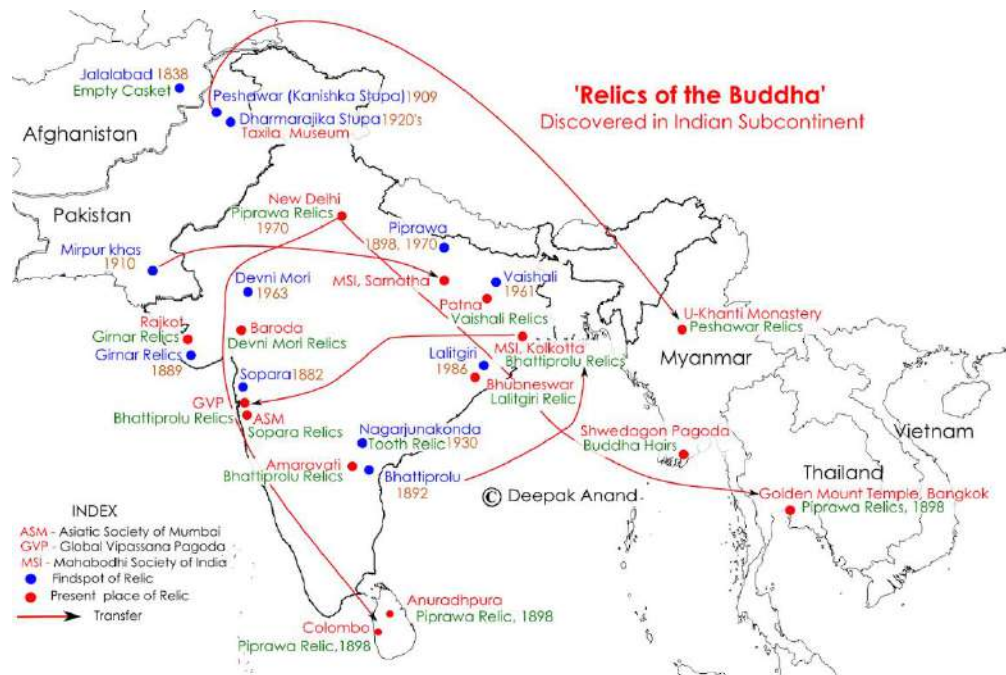
Piprahwa Relics

Syllabus: GS-1: Indian History – Buddhism.

Context:

- Leh witnessed a rare confluence of faith and history as the sacred Piprahwa relics of Gautam Buddha were ceremoniously brought to the high-altitude town, marking a landmark spiritual celebration across Ladakh

About Piprahwa Relics



Discovery & Location

- The Piprahwa Relics are a collection of sacred artifacts discovered in 1898 at the Piprahwa Stupa in Uttar Pradesh
- Archaeological evidence associates Piprahwa with ancient Kapilavastu, identified as the place where Buddha spent his early life prior to renunciation

Historical Significance

- Among the earliest and most historically significant relic deposits directly connected to Lord Buddha
- Unearthed by British colonial engineer William Claxton Peppé in 1898

Nature of Relics

- Include bone fragments believed to be of Buddha, along with crystal caskets, gold ornaments, gemstones, and a sandstone coffer

- Brahmi inscription on one casket links relics to the Sakya clan (Buddha's lineage), indicating enshrinement around 3rd century BC

Colonial Context & Distribution

- British Crown claimed the find under the Indian Treasure Trove Act
- Bones and ash were presented to King Chulalongkorn of Siam
- Majority of ~1,800 gems housed in Indian Museum, while Peppé retained ~1/5th

Legal Status & Preservation

- Classified as 'AA' antiquities under Indian law → prohibits removal or sale
- Further excavations (1971–1977) by Archaeological Survey of India recovered additional steatite caskets with 22 bone relics
- These relics are preserved at National Museum

Recent Developments

- A part of relics remained with the Peppé family for generations
- Initially slated for auction in Hong Kong (May 2025)
- Successfully secured and repatriated to India through collaboration between Government of India and Godrej Industries Group

Analytical Significance

- Reflects **archaeology–religion interface** and validation of early Buddhist history
- Highlights **colonial appropriation of heritage** and post-independence restitution efforts
- Demonstrates importance of **cultural diplomacy and heritage repatriation** in contemporary policy discourse

May Day

Syllabus: GS-1: World History.

Context:

- Celebrated on **1st May** annually across the world
- Also known as **Labour Day / Workers' Day**
- Symbolises **workers' rights, dignity of labour, and social justice**
- Recognised as a **global labour movement commemoration**

Historical Background

- Origin linked to the **Haymarket Affair** in Chicago, USA
- Workers protested for **8-hour workday**
- Violence during protest led to deaths of workers and police
- Became a turning point in **organised labour movements worldwide**

International Recognition

- Declared by **Second International** (Paris, 1889)
- Aimed to:
 - Promote **labour solidarity**
 - Advocate **fair working conditions**
- Celebrated in over **80+ countries** as a public holiday

May Day in India

- First celebrated in **1923 in Chennai (Madras)**
- Initiated by **Singaravelu Chettiar**
- Marked the beginning of **organised labour movement in India**
- Red flag was used symbolically for the first time in India

Significance

Economic

- Highlights role of labour in **industrial and economic development**
- Focus on **minimum wages, job security, and productivity**

Social

- Promotes **dignity of labour**
- Addresses issues like:
 - Exploitation
 - Gender inequality in workforce
 - Informal sector vulnerabilities

Political

- Encourages **trade union movements**
- Influences labour legislation and welfare policies

Key Labour Rights Associated

- 8-hour workday principle
- Right to form unions
- Safe working conditions
- Fair wages and social security

Contemporary Relevance (India)

- Issues:
 - Informal sector dominance (~90% workforce)
 - Gig economy challenges
 - Labour code implementation (4 Labour Codes)
- Government initiatives:
 - Social security schemes (ESIC, EPFO reforms)
 - Skill development programs

Criticism / Challenges

- Weak enforcement of labour laws
- Declining influence of trade unions
- Contractualisation and precarious employment
- Globalisation leading to labour exploitation in some sectors

Way Forward

- Strengthen **labour law enforcement**
- Expand **social security net** to informal workers
- Balance **ease of doing business with labour welfare**
- Promote **skilling and formalisation of workforce**

Conclusion

- May Day remains a **symbol of workers' struggle and achievements**
- Continues to be relevant in addressing **emerging labour issues in a changing economy**

Prelims Pointer

- First May Day in India: **1923, Chennai**
- Associated event: **Haymarket Affair (1886)**
- Declared by: **Second International (1889)**

E-Praapti Portal

Syllabus:GS-2: Social Security Schemes.

Context:

- E-PRAAPTI (EPF Aadhaar-Based Access Portal for Tracking Inoperative Accounts), a dedicated digital platform of the Employees Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO).

Purpose

- To facilitate identification, tracking, Unique Account Number (UAN) linking, and activation of old EPF accounts.

Inoperative EPF Account – Criteria

- A PF account becomes inactive when no new contributions are made for 36 consecutive months after leaving the job, or when the PF record of the old company is not linked to the active UAN (Universal Account Number).

Universal Account Number (UAN)

- EPFO began issuing a 12-digit unique number, UAN, to each employee in 2014.

Key Features of E-PRAAPTI

- Provides a streamlined Aadhaar-based authentication mechanism enabling members to securely access old EPF accounts not linked to a UAN.
- Facilitates initiation of updating member profile, followed by seamless UAN linking and activation.

Implementation Strategy

- In the initial phase, the portal will be member ID-based, ensuring a secure and efficient rollout while delivering immediate benefits to members possessing their member IDs.

Future Scope

- Scope will be expanded to include members who may not be able to recall or access their old member IDs.

NSO Health Survey Findings

Syllabus: GS-2: Social Justice – Health Sector.

Context:

- **National Statistical Office (NSO)** released findings from its *80th round survey on Household Social Consumption: Health (2025)*

- Survey period: **January–December 2025** → comprehensive picture of **healthcare access, utilisation, financial protection**
- Comparison with **75th round (2017–18)** shows **improvement in insurance coverage, healthcare access, institutional deliveries**
- However, **higher coverage ≠ lower out-of-pocket expenditure (OOPE) or increased public hospital utilisation** → indicates a **healthcare paradox**

Rising Insurance Coverage in India

- Coverage levels: **47.4% rural households** and **44.3% urban households** under some form of health insurance
- Growth driven by **Government-Financed Health Insurance (GFHI)** schemes:
 - **Ayushman Bharat – PMJAY** and State-level schemes
- **More than 2.5-fold increase** in GFHI coverage (2017–18 to 2025)
- Other contributors:
 - **Employees' State Insurance Scheme (ESIS)**
 - **Central Government Health Scheme (CGHS)**
 - State employee schemes
- Reflects India's movement towards **Universal Health Coverage (UHC)**

Expanding Access and Government Interventions

- Government highlights **improved healthcare access** across India
- Key initiatives:
 - **Free Drugs and Diagnostics Initiatives (FDSI & FDI, 2015)** → improved availability of medicines/tests
 - **1.84 lakh Ayushman Arogya Mandirs (AAMs)** → strengthened **primary healthcare (preventive, promotive, curative)**
 - **Affordable Medicines and Reliable Implants for Treatment (AMRIT)** → up to 50% discount on ~6,500 medicines via 220 pharmacies
- Outcomes:
 - Better **early detection and management of chronic diseases**
 - Indicates **epidemiological transition towards non-communicable diseases (NCDs)**

Persisting Gaps: Hospitalisation & Expenditure

- **Hospitalisation rate**: no significant increase since 2017–18; still below 2014 levels

- **Decline in public sector utilisation;** rise in **private healthcare demand**, especially urban
- **OOPE trends:**
 - Independent analysis → **more than doubled (2017-18 to 2025)**
 - Private hospital costs ↑ **70% (rural)** and **80% (urban)**
- Even in public hospitals → costs incurred for **medicines, diagnostics, transport, incidental charges**
- **Median OOPE (2025):**
 - Overall: **₹11,285 per hospitalisation**
 - Public hospitals: **₹1,100** (significantly lower)
- High-cost specialised treatments in private sector push **average expenditure higher**

Inequities in Utilisation & Role of GFHI

- **57% of insured individuals** use **private facilities** for hospitalisation
- Urban utilisation skewed:
 - Only **13% beneficiaries** from **poorest income group**
- **Better-off sections disproportionately benefit**
- Fiscal burden on states:
 - Up to **15% of health budgets** (e.g., Haryana, West Bengal)
- Structural issues:
 - Public funds increasingly flow to **private, profit-driven sector**
 - Hospitals impose **additional charges despite insurance coverage** → weakens “free treatment” promise

Financial Protection & Public Health Equity

- Mixed outcomes:
 - **Improved coverage and access**
 - **Inadequate financial risk protection**
- Rural trends:
 - Some **decline in OOPE for bottom income quintiles**
- Urban trends:
 - Continued **financial stress due to private sector dependence**

- **Ayushman Arogya Mandirs (AAMs):**
 - Potential backbone for **primary healthcare under Ayushman Bharat**
- Constraints:
 - **Underfunding of AAMs and National Health Mission (NHM)** limits effectiveness

Way Forward

- **Insurance-led models alone insufficient** for equitable healthcare
- Priority reforms:
 - **Strengthen public health infrastructure**
 - **Ensure availability of drugs and diagnostics**
 - **Regulate private sector** effectively
- Strategic shift required towards:
 - **Preventive and primary healthcare focus**
 - **Robust health data systems**
 - **Outcome-based financing (value over volume)**
- A strong **public health system = cornerstone of inclusive development and social justice**

Creamy Layer Debate

Syllabus: GS-2: Indian Polity – Reservations and associated issues.

Context:

- Fresh petitions filed before the Supreme Court seeking to extend the creamy layer principle to SC/ST reservations
- Petitions draw constitutional backing from the seven-judge bench ruling in *State of Punjab v. Davinder Singh* (2024)
- Revived constitutional debate on whether income can replace caste as a basis of disadvantage

Creamy Layer – Concept

- Refers to more economically and socially advanced sections within a backward community — those who have already benefited enough and arguably no longer need reservation

- Currently applicable to OBCs but not to SCs and STs

Origin of the Creamy Layer Principle

- Emerged through Indra Sawhney v. Union of India (1992)
- Supreme Court upheld OBC reservations but excluded advanced sections (“creamy layer”) from benefits

Original Definition (1993 OM)

- 1993 Office Memorandum identified creamy layer primarily through status, not just income
- Key criterion: parental position (Class I/Class II government post)
- Recognised that institutional power and social status compound across generations, not just wealth

Dilution Over Time

- 2004 DoPT clarificatory letter treated PSU salaries alone as disqualifying criterion → shift to income-based approach
- Struck down in Union of India v. Rohith Nathan (2025)
- Court held parental salary alone cannot determine creamy layer → restored status-based logic of 1993 OM

Creamy Layer vs Sub-Classification

- **Creamy Layer Exclusion:** removes advanced individuals from reservation eligibility
- **Sub-classification:** divides reserved category into sub-groups and prioritises most marginalised
- Key distinction: sub-classification does not exclude; only redistributes benefits within the category

Current Issue

- Two petitions triggering debate:
 - Exclusion of creamy layer from SC/ST quotas
 - Income-based prioritisation within SC/ST reservations
- Both rely on interpretations of Davinder Singh judgment (interpretation contested)

Davinder Singh Judgment (2024)

- Supreme Court allowed sub-classification within Scheduled Castes to benefit most marginalised

- Four judges made passing observations on possible applicability of creamy layer to SC/STs
- Current petitions rely on these observations

Ambedkar's Argument – Income vs Caste

- Strong objection from B. R. Ambedkar
- In Lothian Committee (1932) and Mahar Conference (1936): exclusion of wealthy/educated untouchables termed “totally erroneous”
- Core reasoning:
 - Economic progress ≠ social emancipation
 - Caste-based discrimination persists irrespective of income
- Example: educated and propertied Dalit still faces untouchability
- Conclusion: income cannot substitute caste-based disadvantage

Empirical Evidence

- Jaishri Patil v. Union of India (2021) data: income-testing excluded even Group D employees from scholarships
- Studies indicate elite capture of quota benefits is a myth
- Benefits concentrated among less-educated SCs in rural areas
- Uniform income thresholds create distortions:
 - Treat ₹6 lakh and ₹24 lakh incomes similarly
- Leads to “creamy layer trap”:
 - Excludes economically vulnerable
 - Ignores persistent social discrimination

SC/ST vs OBC – Fundamental Difference

- OBC: based on social and educational backwardness (relatively fluid)
- SC/ST: based on Presidential lists under Articles 341 & 342
- Inclusion based on untouchability and tribal exclusion, not poverty
- Social stigma persists irrespective of economic advancement

Way Forward

- Opportunity created by Rohith Nathan judgment (2025) for legislative clarity
- Parliament should:

- Clearly distinguish between sub-classification and creamy layer exclusion
- Clarify that creamy layer does not apply to SC/STs (non-economic basis of inclusion)
- Develop framework measuring social backwardness based on continuing subordination, not income alone

Analytical Insight

- Core tension: **formal equality (income-based)** vs **substantive equality (caste-based disadvantage)**
- Key issue: whether reservation is poverty alleviation tool or social justice mechanism
- Constitutional morality favours addressing structural discrimination rather than purely economic criteria