



Promotion of Buddhist Sites

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Why in News

The Ministry of Tourism has undertaken development of **tourism** related infrastructure and facilities at various **Buddhist Sites** in the country under its flagship schemes of **Swadesh Darshan & PRASHAD**.

Key Points

- **Steps Taken to Promote Buddhist Sites:**
 - **Swadesh Darshan Scheme:** It has included Buddhist circuit and Spiritual circuit among its **13 thematic circuits** under which buddhist sites are being promoted.
 - **PRASHAD Scheme:** 30 projects for **development of infrastructure** have also been undertaken under the PRASHAD Scheme.
 - **Iconic Tourist Sites:** Buddhist Sites at **Bodhgaya, Ajanta & Ellora** have been identified to be developed as **Iconic Tourist Sites (aimed at enhancing India's soft power)**.
 - **Buddhist Conclave:** **Buddhist Conclave** is organised every alternate year with the objective of promoting India as a Buddhist Destination and major markets around the globe.
 - **Diversity of Languages:** Signages have been installed in **Chinese** language at buddhist monuments in Uttar Pradesh and in **Sinhala** language (official language of Sri Lanka) at Sanchi monuments in Madhya Pradesh.

- **PRASHAD Scheme:**

- The 'National Mission on Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Augmentation Drive' (PRASAD) was launched by the **Ministry of Tourism** in the year 2014-15 with the objective of **holistic development of identified pilgrimage destinations**.
- The name of the scheme was changed from PRASAD to “**National Mission on Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual, Heritage Augmentation Drive (PRASHAD)**” in October 2017.

After the discontinuation of the HRIDAY scheme of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, the **development of Heritage destinations** was included in the PRASAD Scheme, changing it to PRASHAD.
- **Implementation Agency:** The projects identified under this scheme shall be implemented through the identified agencies by the respective State/ Union Territory Government.
- **Objective:**
 - **Rejuvenation and spiritual augmentation** of important national/ global pilgrimage and heritage sites.
 - Follow **community-based development** and create **awareness** among the local communities.
 - **Integrated tourism development** of heritage city, local arts, culture, handicrafts, cuisine, etc., to generate livelihood.
 - Strengthen the mechanism for **bridging the infrastructural gaps**.

- **Swadesh Darshan Scheme**

- Swadesh Darshan, a **Central Sector Scheme**, was launched in 2014 -15 for **integrated development of theme based tourist circuits** in the country.
- Under the scheme, the Ministry of Tourism provides **Central Financial Assistance (CFA)** to State Governments/Union Territory Administrations for infrastructure development of circuits.
- This scheme is envisioned to **synergise with other schemes** like **Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, Skill India, Make in India** etc. with the idea of positioning the tourism sector as a major engine for job creation, driving force for economic growth, building synergy with various sectors to enable tourism to realise its potential.

Way Forward

- India's Buddhist heritage is not only important from the tourism point of view but is also a binding factor that strengthens its relationship with Asian countries, in line with its **Act East Policy**.
- As peace and **sustainable development** are interlinked, the Buddha's prism can be the guiding lights to every single stakeholder from local to global institutions and leaders, to work together for promoting dialogue, harmony, and justice based on compassion and wisdom.

Source: PIB