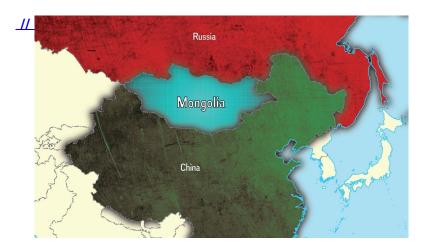


Cultural Exchange Programme between India and Mongolia

Why in News

Recently, the Minister of State for Culture discussed various issues under the **Cultural Exchange Programme** with his Mongolian counterpart.



Key Points

- Highlights of the Meet:
 - Strengthening the **strategic partnership** established in 2015.
 - The Cultural Exchange Program between India and Mongolia stands renewed until 2023.
 - 10 dedicated <u>ICCR scholarships</u> for studying 'Tibetan Buddhism' have been allocated for Mongolians to study in specialized institutes of CIBS, Leh and CUTS, Varanasi, starting from 2020-2021.
 - The Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) is an autonomous organisation of the Government of India, involved in India's external cultural relations (cultural diplomacy), through cultural exchange with other countries and their peoples.
 - Tibetan Buddhism combines the essential teachings of Mahayana Buddhism with Tantric and Shamanic, and material from an ancient Tibetan religion called Bon.
 - India reiterated its commitment for digitization of Buddhist manuscripts in Gandan monastery and would consider Mongolia's request for assistance in setting up a museum-cum-library there.
 - The Ministry of Culture is likely to complete reprinting of about 100 sets of sacred <u>Mongolian Kanjur</u> by 2022 for distribution in the main centers of Buddhism in Mongolia.
 - Mongolian Kanjur is a Buddhist canonical text in 108 volumes and is considered to be the most important religious text in Mongolia. It has been translated from Tibetan and is written in classical mongolian.

- In the Mongolian language 'Kanjur' means 'Concise Orders'- the words of Lord Buddha in particular.
- Highlighted steps taken to facilitate the visa and travel of Buddhist monks from Mongolia within India.

India-Mongolia Relations:

Historical Relations:

India and Mongolia have interacted through <u>Buddhism</u> throughout history.

Diplomatic Relations:

- India was the first country outside the former Soviet bloc of nations to open diplomatic relations with Mongolia in 1955.
- In 2015, Mongolia witnessed the first ever visit by the Prime Minister of India (a part of India's Act East policy).

International Cooperation:

- Mongolia has publicly reiterated its support for India's membership to the permanent seat of the expanded <u>United Nations Security Council (UNSC)</u>.
- India has played an important role in getting Mongolia membership to key international forums, including the United Nations (UN), despite strong opposition from China and Taiwan. India also championed the inclusion of Mongolia in the Non-Aligned Movement.
 - In a reciprocal gesture, Mongolia co-sponsored a 1972 UN resolution with India and Bhutan for the recognition of the newly liberated Bangladesh.
- Other Forums of which both the countries are members: <u>Asia-Europe Meeting</u> (ASEM), <u>World Trade Organisation</u> (WTO).
 - India is a member whereas Mongolia is an observer state at the <u>Shanghai Cooperation Organisation</u> (SCO).

• Economic Cooperation:

- India Mongolia bilateral trade was USD 35.3 million in 2020, down from USD 38.3 million in 2019.
- India has undertaken the <u>'Mongol refinery project'</u> under its Lines of Credit (LoC) programme.

Cultural Cooperation:

- The India-Mongolian Agreement on Cultural Cooperation, signed in 1961, has governed the Cultural Exchange Programme (CEP) between the two countries.
- The Agreement envisages co-operation in the fields of education by way of scholarships, exchange of experts, participation in conferences, etc.

Defence Cooperation:

- Joint defence exercises code-named Nomadic Elephant.
- India is also an active participant in an annual week-long joint training exercise called the **Khaan Quest**, hosted by Mongolia.

Cooperation over Environmental Issues:

• Part of the Bishkek Declaration (snow leopard).

Way Forward

Mongolia's strategic position at the cross junction of Central Asia, Northeast Asia, far East, China and Russia attracts major powers towards it. India should consider Mongolia as a green zone of economic development that absorbs hi-tech features and production skills in a modernization process.

