Return of Sacred Piprahwa Relics to India After 127 Years | Uttar Pradesh | 01 Aug 2025

Why in News?

Prime Minister Narendra Modi welcomed the return of the sacred **Piprahwa relics** of **Lord Buddha** to India after **127 years**, calling it a **proud and joyous moment** for the nation's **cultural heritage**.

- **Godrej Industries (with government)** played a key role in **acquiring and repatriating the relics,** which were taken abroad during the colonial era, from Sotheby's auction house, ensuring their return to India for display at the National Museum in New Delhi.

About Piprahwa Relics

- **About:** The **Piprahwa relics**, believed to contain **relics of Lord Buddha**, were excavated by **William Claxton Peppé** in **1898** at the **Piprahwa Stupa in Uttar Pradesh**, believed to be **ancient Kapilavastu**, the **birthplace of Lord Buddha**.
    - They include **bone fragments** of the Buddha, **soapstone caskets**, **crystal caskets**, **gemstones,** gold ornaments, and other ritual offerings.
    - An **inscription in Brahmi script** on one casket links the relics directly to Lord Buddha, stating they were deposited by **the Sakya clan**.
- **Legal Protection of the Relics:**
    - India **classifies the relics as 'AA' antiquities (**highest level of legal protection).
    - Indian law **prohibits their sale or export**, making any **attempt to auction** or remove them illegal.
    - While most relics were **handed over to the Indian Museum, Kolkata, in 1899**, descendants of **British excavator William Claxton Peppé** retained some relics like Piprahwa relics.

Note: The **relics of the Buddha** were enshrined in **9 stupas** built at various locations after his death, including:

- **Rajagriha**, **Vaishali**, **Vethadipa**, and **Pava** in **Bihar**
- **Kapilavastu**, **Allakappa**, and **Ramagrama** in **Nepal**
- **Kushinagar** and **Pippalvina** in **Uttar Pradesh**.

UP's New Chief Secretary: Shashi Prakash Goyal | Uttar Pradesh | 01 Aug 2025

Why in News?

Senior **IAS officer Shashi Prakash Goyal** has been appointed as the **new Chief Secretary** of **Uttar Pradesh**, following the completion of the tenure of the current Chief Secretary, **Manoj Kumar Singh**.

- Goyal will serve until his retirement in **January 2027**.

Key Facts About Chief Secretary

- **Office:** The office of the **Chief Secretary** in India originated during British rule in **1799** under **Lord Wellesley** and has since become integral to the state's administration.
    - The **Chief Secretary** serves as the highest-ranking civil servant in a state, overseeing the **state Secretariat** and coordinating **government functions**.
- **Appointment and Status:** The Chief Secretary is appointed by the **Chief Minister** (in the name of the Governor of the state) from senior **IAS officers** based on factors like seniority, merit, and trust.
    - The office was standardized in **1973** to equate it with the position of **Secretary to the Government of India**.
- **Powers and Functions:**
    - **Advisor to Chief Minister:** Acts as the **principal advisor** on matters of **state administration** and provides guidance on **policy issues**.
    - **Secretary to the Cabinet:** Prepares the **Cabinet meeting agenda**, records proceedings, and oversees **decision implementation**.
    - **Head of Civil Service:** Oversees **appointments, transfers, and promotions** within the state civil service and maintains the **morale** of civil servants.
    - **Chief Coordinator:** Ensures **inter-departmental coordination**, presides over **coordination committees**, and resolves **disputes** between departments.
    - **Head of Certain Departments:** Directly manages key departments such as **General Administration, Personnel, and Planning**.
    - **Crisis Administrator:** Leads **relief operations** during crises like **floods**, **droughts**, and **communal disturbances**, representing the state government during emergencies.

Note:

Prof. Ajit Kumar Chaturvedi Appointment as BHU Vice Chancellor: Professor Ajit Kumar Chaturvedi has been appointed as the **Vice Chancellor** of **Banaras Hindu University (BHU)** for a three-year term, as announced by the **President of India**.

- Prof. **Ajit Kumar Chaturvedi**, a **1989-batch IIT Kanpur graduate**, has an extensive academic career, having previously served as the **Director of IIT Roorkee** (2017-2022).
- He also held leadership roles at **IIT Kanpur**, including as **Head of Electrical Engineering**, **Dean of R&D**, and **Deputy Director**.

India's First Private AI-Augmented Chandigarh University Campus in Unnao | Uttar Pradesh | 01 Aug 2025

Why in News?

Uttar Pradesh has taken a pioneering step in higher education by inaugurating **India's first private AI-augmented multidisciplinary Chandigarh University campus** in **Unnao**, under the leadership of Chief Minister **Yogi Adityanath**.

- The university aims to blend modern education with **cutting-edge technology** and India's **cultural heritage**, marking a significant milestone in Uttar Pradesh's educational and technological landscape.

Key Points

- **AI-Driven Multidisciplinary Education:** The newly inaugurated university will leverage **artificial intelligence** to enhance **teaching methodologies**, focusing on **research, innovation**, and **holistic growth**.
  - This aligns with the **National Education Policy's** emphasis on multidisciplinary education.
- **Aligning with National Missions:** CM Yogi highlighted the university's alignment with national initiatives like **Startup India**, aiming to strengthen Uttar Pradesh's global presence by fostering **entrepreneurship** and **industry collaboration**.
  - CM Yogi stated that universities should act as **platforms for career guidance**, **industry-oriented skill development**, and **opportunity gateways** for students.

Education Reforms and Infrastructure in UP

- **UP has facilitated the establishment of 23 new private universities** and also hosts the **country's first Ayush University** (Mahayogi Guru Gorakhnath AYUSH University in Gorakhpur) and is building a **sports university (Major Dhyanchand State Sports University).**
  - Under the new reform, the **state now allows private universities on 50 acres of land in rural areas and 20 acres in urban areas.**
  - Universities across the state are increasingly committed to improving their NAAC assessments and **NIRF rankings**. As a result, **six state universities have earned A++ grades, two have received A+ grades,** and notable progress has been made in national rankings.

Innovation Potential in UP

- **Uttar Pradesh** has emerged as the **third-largest startup hub in India**, with over 7,200 active startups generating more than 1 lakh jobs. The **state is also home to 8 unicorns**.
- An **ambitious AI City project is initiated in Lucknow**, with the goal of creating over **50,000 jobs** through the participation of **more than 400 companies**.
  - **IBM will lead the establishment of the AI Center.**

Lucknow as India's First AI City | Uttar Pradesh | 01 Aug 2025

Why in News?

Uttar Pradesh is set to become a leader in artificial intelligence (AI) with a **Rs 10,732 crore investment** aimed at transforming **Lucknow** into **India's first AI City**.

- The initiative, launched under the **IndiaAI Mission** approved in March 2024, aims to build a robust **AI ecosystem in the state.**

Key Points

- **Massive Investment in AI Infrastructure:** The **Rs 10,732 crore investment** will fund **10,000 Graphics Processing Units (GPUs)**, **multi-modal language models**, and the establishment of an **AI innovation center** in Lucknow.
    - This investment is **67% higher** than any other technology infrastructure in the country.
- **AI Pragya Training Initiative:** As part of the **AI Pragya initiative**, over **10 lakh people**, including **youth, teachers, gram pradhans**, **government employees**, and **farmers**, will receive training in **AI**, **machine learning**, **data analytics**, and **cybersecurity**.
    - The training is being supported by global tech giants like **Microsoft**, **Intel**, **Google**, and **Guvi**.
- **AI Traffic Management System:** Lucknow will also see the implementation of a **high-tech AI-based traffic management system**, similar to the one being developed in **Varanasi**.
- **AI in Agriculture and Revenue Management:** The **UP Agris Project** will connect **10 lakh farmers** to AI-powered technologies such as **smart irrigation**, **drone mapping**, **pest detection**, and **digital market access**.
    - The revenue department is also using **satellite imaging** and **AI algorithms** for **land consolidation** and **record management**, ensuring **transparency** and reducing disputes.
- **AI in Security and Healthcare:** AI-powered systems such as **CCTV surveillance**, **facial recognition**, **number plate tracking**, and **SOS alert systems** have been integrated across **17 municipal corporations** and **Gautam Buddh Nagar**.
    - Additionally, **AI** is being used to monitor **illegal mining** and **mineral resource protection**. In the **healthcare sector**, the country's first **AI-based breast cancer screening center** has been set up in **Fatehpur**.