



Return of Sacred Piprahwa Relics to India After 127 Years

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**.