DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS ANALYSIS

05 SEPTEMBER 2024

1 - Neighbourhood First Policy's Role in the 2024-25 Union Budget:

GS II

International Relations:

- Introduction: Why in News?

- The Union Budget 2024-25 has highlighted India's commitment to its Neighbourhood First Policy through a significant allocation of development aid. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has outlined its strategic plans, prioritizing regional connectivity, cooperation, and stability with neighbouring countries and key strategic partners.

- **How is the Development Aid Distributed Among Countries?**

- The MEA's budget allocation of ₹4,883 crore for development aid is crucial for maintaining and enhancing India's diplomatic ties with its neighbours.

- **The distribution of this aid is as follows:**

- Bhutan: Receiving the largest share of ₹2,068.56 crore, although slightly reduced from the previous year's ₹2,400 crore. Bhutan remains a key ally in the region.
- Nepal: Allocated ₹700 crore, marking an increase from last year's ₹550 crore, reflecting the growing importance of bilateral relations.
- Maldives: Consistently receives ₹400 crore, despite internal anti-India sentiments and leadership remarks.
- Sri Lanka: Aid has been increased to ₹245 crore, up from ₹150 crore, indicating India's support amidst the island nation's ongoing challenges.
- Afghanistan: Despite the ongoing turmoil, Afghanistan continues to receive ₹200 crore, underscoring India's role in the region's stability.
- Iran: The Chabahar Port Project retains its allocation of ₹100 crore, reflecting India's strategic interest in this critical infrastructure.
- Africa: African nations collectively receive ₹200 crore, showcasing India's expanding influence and commitment to the continent.
- Seychelles: Aid has increased significantly to ₹40 crore from ₹10 crore, highlighting the strengthening of ties.

- **Benefits of Development Aid to Neighbouring Countries:**

- **India's development aid plays a pivotal role in advancing its strategic interests through various means:**

- Strengthening Diplomatic Relations: By extending aid, India solidifies diplomatic relations, fostering political and economic partnerships.
- Promoting Regional Stability: Financial assistance helps stabilize neighbouring nations, creating a more secure regional environment beneficial to India.
- Supporting Economic Development: Aid fuels infrastructure projects and development programs, bolstering economic growth and regional prosperity. For instance, the Chabahar Port in Iran is crucial for connectivity and trade.
- Encouraging Trade and Investment: Improved infrastructure and economic conditions in neighbouring countries can lead to enhanced trade and investment opportunities for India, such as the Agartala-Akhaura railway project with Bangladesh.
- Enhancing Strategic Influence: India's aid extends its influence and builds alliances, ensuring that neighbouring countries align more closely with Indian interests, as seen in Bhutan's support during the Doklam issue.
- Addressing Humanitarian Needs: Aid addresses urgent needs in healthcare, education, and disaster relief, improving life quality in recipient nations, as demonstrated by Operation Karuna in Myanmar during Cyclone Mocha.
- Strengthening Soft Power: Investing in the development of neighbouring countries enhances India's reputation as a responsible regional leader, mitigating perceptions of India as a dominant power among smaller neighbours.

- **India's Neighbourhood First Policy:**

- India's Neighbourhood First Policy, established in 2008, has become the cornerstone of its foreign relations strategy with its immediate neighbours, including Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. This policy emphasizes enhancing physical, digital, and people-to-people connectivity across the region, fostering trade, and improving diplomatic ties.

- Strategic Significance: The policy underscores India's commitment to regional stability and development, focusing on achieving tangible outcomes in connectivity, security, and cooperation.
- Diplomatic Approach: India's engagement with its neighbours is characterized by consultation, non-reciprocity, and a results-oriented approach.

- **Importance of Neighbourhood First Policy for India:**

- **The Neighbourhood First Policy is crucial for India due to several strategic concerns:**

- Terrorism and Illegal Migration: Enhanced relations improve border security and help mitigate threats from terrorism and illegal migration, including the smuggling of arms and narcotics.
- Relations with China and Pakistan: With strained relations, especially regarding Pakistan's involvement in terrorism, regional and multilateral platforms help India address these challenges collectively.
- Border Infrastructure Investment: Addressing deficiencies in border infrastructure is essential for regional stability. Improved cross-border roads, railways, and ports are crucial for this policy.
- Monitoring Line of Credit (LOC) Projects: The significant increase in LOCs to neighbouring countries strengthens India's influence and economic linkages.
- Defense and Maritime Security: Joint military exercises and enhanced maritime security cooperation are vital for maintaining regional security.
- North-Eastern Region Development: The region's development is integral to both the Neighbourhood First and Act East Policies, with projects like the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway playing a pivotal role.
- Tourism Promotion: Tourism fosters cultural exchange, which can enhance India's soft power and economic influence.
- Multilateral Organizations: Engagement with SAARC and BIMSTEC helps India assert leadership in South Asia and counterbalance other major powers' influence.

- **Challenges in India's Relationships with Neighbouring Countries:**

- **Despite its efforts, India faces several challenges in maintaining stable relationships with its neighbours:**

- Border Disputes: Ongoing disputes, particularly with China and Pakistan, lead to tensions and conflicts.
- Terrorism: Pakistan's continued support for militant groups poses a significant security threat to India.
- Illegal Migration: The influx of illegal migrants, especially from Bangladesh, creates demographic and security concerns.
- Trade Imbalances: Economic disparities and trade barriers with neighbours like Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Nepal exacerbate tensions.
- Water Disputes: Conflicts over river water sharing, such as the Indus and Teesta, strain relations with Pakistan and Bangladesh.
- Internal Conflicts: Political instability in neighbouring countries impacts bilateral relations, as seen with Nepal and Bangladesh.
- Diplomatic Relations: Issues like the treatment of minorities in Sri Lanka and India's stance on Myanmar's government create diplomatic friction.

- Environmental Issues: Joint efforts are needed to address environmental challenges like flooding, which affects relations, particularly with Bhutan and Bangladesh.
- Regional Cooperation: Disagreements within SAARC and BIMSTEC hinder effective regional cooperation.

- **Initiatives by India to Improve Relationships with Neighbours:**

- **India has launched several initiatives to strengthen its ties with neighbouring countries:**

- Neighbourhood First Policy
- Act East Policy
- SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region)
- Project Mausam
- BIMSTEC
- SAARC Rejuvenation
- Gujral Doctrine

- **Conclusion/Way Forward:**

- India's Neighbourhood First Policy remains a cornerstone of its foreign strategy, ensuring stability and fostering regional development. Moving forward, it is crucial to:

- Strengthen Diplomatic Engagement: Regular diplomatic dialogues and high-level meetings are essential for resolving disputes and fostering cooperation.
- Enhance Economic Cooperation: Fair trade agreements and improved connectivity infrastructure will bolster economic integration and mutual benefits.
- Promote Security and Stability: Coordinated efforts on regional security initiatives will help address common threats like terrorism and illegal migration.
- Foster People-to-People Connections: Increasing educational and tourism initiatives can build mutual understanding and goodwill among the populations of neighbouring countries.
- Address Environmental and Humanitarian Issues: Joint efforts on natural disasters and environmental problems will enhance regional cooperation.
- Strengthen Regional Organizations: Active participation in SAARC and BIMSTEC will ensure effective decision-making and implementation of regional initiatives.
- Balance Domestic and External Factors: Ensuring that domestic policies align with international relations will prevent adverse impacts on relationships with neighbouring countries.

Source → The Hindu

2 - UNAIDS Global AIDS Update 2024:

GS II

Health related issues:

- **Context and Importance:**

- The recently released UNAIDS Global AIDS Update 2024, titled "The Urgency of Now: AIDS at a Crossroads," provides an in-depth examination of the current global HIV/AIDS epidemic and the collective efforts being made to combat it. The report brings to the forefront the urgent need to address inequalities and improve access to both preventive and therapeutic measures to achieve the ambitious goal of ending AIDS as a public health threat by 2030.

- **Key Highlights of the Report:**

- **Global Overview:**

- **Potential to End AIDS by 2030:** The report underscores that ending AIDS as a public health threat by 2030 is achievable. This goal requires addressing persistent inequalities, improving access to prevention and treatment, and ensuring sustainable financial resources.
- **Progress and Challenges:**

- **Reduction in HIV Infections and AIDS-Related Deaths:**

- Since 2010, new HIV infections globally have decreased by 39%, with sub-Saharan Africa witnessing the steepest decline of 56%.
- 2023 marked the lowest number of new HIV infections since the late 1980s, with nearly 31 million people receiving antiretroviral therapy (ART).
- AIDS-related deaths have plummeted to their lowest levels since the peak in 2004, largely due to the widespread availability of ART.

- **Regional Disparities:**

- Despite significant progress in sub-Saharan Africa, other regions like Eastern Europe, Central Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East and North Africa have seen an increase in new HIV infections.
- For the first time, more new HIV infections occurred outside of sub-Saharan Africa than within it.

- **Key Affected Populations:**

- **Vulnerable Groups:**

- Populations such as sex workers, men who have sex with men, people who inject drugs, transgender individuals, and those in prisons face heightened risks due to inadequate prevention efforts and ongoing stigma and discrimination.
- Community-led interventions, though crucial, often remain underfunded and lack sufficient recognition.

- **Gaps in Prevention and Treatment:**

- **Shortcomings in HIV Prevention:**

- There are significant deficiencies in access to services like pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) and harm reduction for people who inject drugs.
- Around 9.3 million people living with HIV are not receiving ART, with children and adolescents being particularly underserved.

- **Understanding HIV/AIDS**

- **Overview:**

- **Nature of HIV/AIDS:**

- HIV is a viral infection that targets the immune system, specifically the CD4 cells (T cells), crucial in fighting off infections. Without treatment, HIV progressively destroys these cells, leading to Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS), the most severe phase of HIV infection.

- **Transmission and Causes:**

- HIV is transmitted through contact with infected bodily fluids, including blood, semen, vaginal fluids, rectal fluids, and breast milk. It can spread through sexual contact, sharing needles, childbirth, breastfeeding, and, rarely, through blood transfusions or organ transplants.

- **Symptoms and Diagnosis:**

- **Stages of HIV Infection:**

- **Clinical Latent Infection:** HIV remains active but reproduces at low levels, often without noticeable symptoms.

- **Acute HIV Infection:** Early symptoms resemble the flu, including fever, swollen lymph nodes, sore throat, rash, and muscle aches.
- **AIDS:** Symptoms include severe weight loss, persistent fever, and extreme fatigue, among others.

- **Diagnostic Methods:**

- **HIV Antibody/Antigen Tests:** Detect antibodies or antigens produced by the virus in blood or oral fluid.
- **Nucleic Acid Tests (NATs):** These tests directly detect the virus and can identify HIV infection earlier than antibody tests.

- **Treatment and Management:**

- **Antiretroviral Therapy (ART):**
- ART involves daily medication to control HIV, enabling those infected to live longer, healthier lives and reducing the risk of transmission.
- **Pre-exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP):** A preventive treatment for individuals at high risk of HIV infection, PrEP can significantly reduce the risk when taken consistently.

- **Innovative Treatments:**
- A groundbreaking HIV drug, recently approved in the UK, reduces the treatment regimen from a daily pill to just six injections annually.

- **India's Efforts to Combat HIV/AIDS:**

- **National Initiatives:**

- **HIV and AIDS (Prevention and Control) Act, 2017:** Provides a legal framework for preventing and controlling the spread of HIV and AIDS in India.
- **Access to Antiretroviral Therapy (ART):** Expanding access to ART is a critical component of India's strategy to manage HIV/AIDS.
- **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU):** In 2019, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare signed an MoU with the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment to enhance outreach and reduce stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV/AIDS.
- **Project Sunrise:** Launched in 2016 to address the rising HIV prevalence in India's northeastern states, particularly among people who inject drugs.

- **Targets:**

- India is committed to achieving UNAIDS's 90-90-90 targets: diagnosing 90% of all HIV-positive individuals, ensuring 90% of those diagnosed are on ART, and achieving viral suppression in 90% of those on ART.

- **Global Initiatives:**

- **Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS):**
- Leading the global effort to end AIDS as a public health threat by 2030, UNAIDS was established in 1996 and focuses on achieving zero new HIV infections, zero discrimination, and zero AIDS-related deaths.
- **UN Political Declaration on Ending AIDS (2016):** This declaration aims to end AIDS as a public health threat by 2030.
- **World Health Organization (WHO) "Treat All" Guidance (2015):** WHO recommended treating all individuals with HIV as soon as possible after diagnosis, aiming to reduce HIV incidence and prevent transmission.
- **Global AIDS Strategy 2021-2026:** This strategy focuses on ending inequalities and aims to close gaps that hinder progress toward ending AIDS.

- **Key Recommendations from the UNAIDS Report:**

- **Accelerating HIV Prevention:**
- Expand access to prevention services, particularly for high-risk groups, and reinstate condom programs where their use has declined.
- Scale up PrEP to reach the global target of 21.2 million users by 2025.
- **Enhancing Treatment and Care:**
- Aim for 95% of people living with HIV to be on ART by 2025, with a special focus on improving treatment access for children.
- **Addressing Inequalities and Stigma:**
- Remove punitive laws that criminalize HIV transmission and target key populations. Strengthen legal protections and reduce stigma in healthcare and community settings.
- **Community-Led Responses:**
- Increase support for community-led organizations to deliver HIV services, targeting a delivery of 30% of testing and treatment services and 80% of prevention services for high-risk populations.
- **Sustainable Financing:**
- Bridge the funding gap, requiring an estimated additional USD 9.5 billion by 2025. Explore innovative financing mechanisms, especially for low- and middle-income countries.

- **Conclusion:**

- The 2024 UNAIDS Global AIDS Update highlights both significant progress and persistent challenges in the fight against HIV/AIDS. While remarkable strides have been made, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, the report emphasizes the urgent need for continued global solidarity, innovative strategies, and sustainable funding to achieve the 2030 goal of ending AIDS as a public health threat. Addressing inequalities, enhancing prevention and treatment, and empowering community-led initiatives will be critical in navigating the crossroads at which the global AIDS response currently stands.

Source → The Hindu

3 - Concerns Over Afghanistan's Opium Stockpiles: Implications for India:

GS II

International Relations:

- **Context and Why in News:**

- In recent developments, a report from the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has shed light on pressing concerns regarding Afghanistan's substantial opium stockpiles. This situation persists despite the Taliban's declaration of a poppy cultivation ban in April 2022. The implications of this are far-reaching, especially concerning narcotics trafficking and its potential impact on India's security landscape.

- **Key Findings from the UNSC Report:**

- Persistence of Opium Stockpiles: Despite the Taliban's ban on poppy cultivation in April 2022, Afghanistan still holds significant reserves of opium. The report indicates that it may take years to evaluate the full effect of this ban, primarily due to these large stockpiles.
- Narcotics Trade Continuation: The narcotics trade remains active, with no marked decrease in drug exports, as observed through seizure statistics.
- Involvement of Taliban and Haqqani Network: Key figures within the Taliban, alongside well-connected traders like the Haqqani Network, continue to benefit financially from drug trafficking activities.
- Control of Trafficking Routes: Prominent Taliban members are in control of various drug trafficking routes across the region.

- Rise in Methamphetamine Production: Methamphetamine production has notably increased, with a significant amount of fentanyl being documented as well. Major production hubs include Farah, Herat, and Nimroz, with active labs in areas like Bahramcha, Dishu district, and Helmand province.
- Implications of Opium Stockpiles and Drug Trafficking for India
- Trafficking Networks: A significant portion of the drugs trafficked into India originates from Afghanistan, with Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) agency playing a central role in controlling these networks.
- Funding Terrorism: Drug money is increasingly being utilized to fund anti-India terror organizations such as Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT).
- Clandestine Operations: Narcotics sourced from Afghanistan are processed in secret laboratories in Balochistan and subsequently smuggled into India.
- Significant Drug Seizures: Indian security agencies have uncovered direct connections between drug smuggling networks and cartels based in Kandahar. Notable interceptions include the seizure of 3,000 kg of heroin by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) at Mundra port in September 2021.
- Government's Response: The Union Home Minister has advocated for a stringent approach towards dismantling smuggling networks. The central government is working on installing container scanners at all ports and land border crossings to curb drug trafficking.

- **Global and National Initiatives to Combat Drug Abuse:**

- **Global Efforts:**

- Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs (1961): A key international treaty that regulates the trade and use of narcotic drugs.
- Convention on Psychotropic Substances (1971): Governs the control of psychotropic substances.
- UN Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (1988): Provides comprehensive measures against drug trafficking and related offenses.
- World Drug Report and Global Drug Policy Index: Published annually by the UN to assess global drug trends.
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC): Established in 1997, UNODC addresses drug control and crime prevention by merging the United Nations International Drug Control Program (UNDCP) and the Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Division.

- **Indian Initiatives:**

- Nasha Mukt Bharat Abhiyaan: A nationwide campaign aimed at eradicating drug abuse in India.
- National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction: Focuses on reducing the demand for narcotics through education, rehabilitation, and law enforcement.
- Narco-Coordination Centre: Coordinates efforts among various agencies to combat drug trafficking.

- National Fund to Control Drug Abuse: Provides financial support for initiatives aimed at controlling drug abuse.

- **Hotspots of Illicit Drug Production:**

- Golden Triangle: A region in Southeast Asia, where the borders of Myanmar, Laos, and Thailand meet, is notorious for opium production.
- Golden Crescent: Encompassing Afghanistan and Iran, this area is a major transit point for drugs smuggled out of Pakistan, often referred to as the "Death Crescent."

- **Regulation and Uses of Opium in India:**

- Opium Regulation: The Narcotics Commissioner under the Narcotic Drugs & Psychotropic Substances Act (1985) and Narcotic Drugs & Psychotropic Substances Rules (1985) oversees all activities related to opium cultivation and production.
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- Cultivation Areas: Opium poppy cultivation in India is restricted to specific regions notified by the government, including Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh.
- Production Hotspots: Mandsaur district in Madhya Pradesh and Chittorgarh and Jhalawar districts in Rajasthan account for approximately 80% of the total area under opium poppy cultivation.

- **Uses of Opium:**

- Medical Applications: Opium is critical in the medical field, used as an analgesic, anti-tussive, anti-spasmodic, and as a source of edible seed oil.
- Traditional Medicine: It is also utilized in Homeopathy, Ayurveda, and Unani systems of medicine.

- **Conclusion and Way Forward:**

- The UNSC report underscores the complexity and persistence of the drug trafficking problem in Afghanistan, even in the face of the Taliban's poppy cultivation ban. The enduring stockpiles of opium and the surge in methamphetamine production present significant challenges for global and regional security, particularly for India. Strengthening international cooperation, enhancing surveillance at borders, and ramping up domestic initiatives are crucial steps in combating the narcotics threat. As the situation in Afghanistan evolves, it remains imperative for India to stay vigilant and proactive in addressing these security concerns.

Source → The Hindu

4 - Amravati: Rediscovering a Jewel of Buddhist Heritage:

GS I

Indian Culture:

- **Why in the News?**

- Recently, the Finance Minister of India announced a substantial financial package of Rs 15,000 crore to support the development of Andhra Pradesh's new capital city, Amravati, alongside other state development projects. This announcement has reignited interest in Amravati, a site of immense historical and spiritual importance in Andhra Pradesh that has been somewhat overlooked in contemporary discussions.

- **Historical Context and Evolution of Amravati:**

- Discovery and Renaming: In the late 1700s, Raja Vessareddy Nayudu stumbled upon ancient limestone ruins in Andhra Pradesh's Dhanyakatakam village. These ruins were repurposed for construction, leading to the village's renaming to Amravati.
- Rediscovery and Preservation: The systematic destruction of these ruins persisted until 1816, when Colonel Colin Mackenzie's survey, although causing additional damage, led to the rediscovery of the grand Amravati Stupa.
- Modern Developments: In 2015, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister announced plans to develop Amaravati, the new capital city, inspired by the historic Buddhist site. The aim was to transform it into a modern metropolis similar to Singapore.

- **The Significance of Amravati in Buddhism:**

- Introduction of Buddhism: Buddhism originated in the fifth century BCE in Magadh (present-day Bihar) and spread to Andhra Pradesh mainly through trade routes. Siddhartha Gautama, who became known as Buddha, founded Buddhism.
- Early Evidence and Spread: Significant evidence of Buddhism in Andhra Pradesh dates back to the 3rd century BCE when Emperor Ashoka's inscriptions provided a boost to the religion's spread. Andhra monks participated in the first Buddhist council in 483 BCE at Rajgir, Bihar.
- Longevity and Influence: Buddhism flourished in the region for about six centuries until the 3rd century CE. Sites like Amravati, Nagarjunakonda, Jaggayapeta, Salihundam, and Sankaram continued to practice Buddhism until the 14th century CE.
- Urbanization and Trade: Buddhism's spread in Andhra was facilitated by the region's initial urbanization and maritime trade, which helped propagate the religion.

- **Distinct Features of Andhra Buddhism:**

- Merchant Patronage: In contrast to Northern India, where Buddhism was primarily supported by royalty, in Andhra, it was propagated by merchants, craftsmen, and wandering monks.
- Political Influence: The success of traders and their association with Buddhism influenced Andhra's rulers, leading them to issue inscriptions supporting the Buddhist sangha, indicating a grassroots spread of Buddhism.
- Integration with Local Practices: Buddhism in Andhra integrated with local practices, such as megalithic burials and worship of deities like the Goddess and Naga, showcasing a unique adaptation to regional traditions.

- **Amravati's Role in Mahayana Buddhism:**

- Birthplace of Mahayana Buddhism: Amravati is celebrated as the birthplace of Mahayana Buddhism, which emphasizes the Bodhisattva path.
- Acharya Nagarjuna: The prominent Buddhist philosopher Acharya Nagarjuna, who resided in Amravati, developed the Madhyamika philosophy focusing on emptiness and the middle way.
- Global Spread: From Amravati, Mahayana Buddhism spread across South Asia, China, Japan, Korea, and Southeast Asia.

- **Decline of Buddhism in Andhra Pradesh:**

- Rise of Shaivism: The rise of Shaivism significantly contributed to Buddhism's decline in Andhra Pradesh. By the seventh century CE, Chinese travellers observed the decline of Buddhist stupas and the rise of Shiva temples, which received aristocratic and royal patronage.
- Decline of Urbanization: The economic decline from the third century CE led to reduced patronage for Buddhist institutions, impacting their sustainability.
- Arrival of Islam: The arrival of Islamic rulers, who favored Islamic institutions, led to the withdrawal of royal support from Buddhist establishments.

- **Key Features of the Amravati School of Art:**

- Overview: The Amravati School of Art, emerging during the post-Mauryan period, was one of the three major ancient Indian art styles, alongside the Mathura and Gandhara schools.

- **Historical Context and Influences:**

- Amravati Stupa: The grand Amravati Stupa was the focal point of this art school, which became a significant center of Buddhist art and architecture.
- Impact of Neglect: Early 19th-century neglect by the government led to local and British officials using stupa materials for construction, causing further deterioration. Excavations by figures like Walter Elliot in 1845 and the subsequent shipment of sculptures to various global locations also contributed to the site's decline.

- **Characteristics of Amravati Art:**

- Major Centers: Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda.
- Patronage: Supported primarily by the Satvahana rulers.

- **Artistic Style:**

- Tribhanga Posture: The art is known for its depiction of the Tribhanga posture, where the body is shown with three bends.
- Material and Detailing: Sculptures are crafted from palnad marble, a type of limestone that allows for fine and intricate carvings.
- Themes: Artworks often feature narrative panels depicting Buddha's life, Jataka tales, and Buddhist rituals.
- Iconic Depictions: A particular Buddha depiction with a robe on the left shoulder and a hand in abhaya (fearlessness) gesture became iconic and was replicated across South and Southeast Asia.
- Indigenous Style: Unlike the Mathura and Gandhara schools, which show Greco-Roman influences, the Amravati school maintained a unique indigenous style with minimal external influences.

- **Global Reach of Amravati Art:**

- International Collections: Amravati sculptures are now found globally in prominent museums, including the British Museum, Art Institute of Chicago, Musee Guimet in Paris, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.
- Indian Collections: Indian museums such as the Government Museum in Chennai and the National Museum in New Delhi also house pieces of Amravati art.
- Restitution: Australia is noted for having returned a stolen Amravati-style sculpture, reflecting ongoing efforts to preserve and restore this artistic heritage.

- **Conclusion and Way Forward:**

- The renewed interest in Amravati, driven by significant financial investments and a focus on its historical and spiritual legacy, provides an opportunity to further explore and preserve this rich heritage. Emphasizing the importance of Amravati in the context of Buddhist history and art can enhance awareness and appreciation, contributing to both cultural preservation and academic study. Future efforts should include comprehensive conservation projects and international collaborations to ensure that Amravati's historical treasures are safeguarded for future generations and recognized for their global significance.

Source → The Hindu