

Adopt a Heritage scheme

- Private firms, companies, and public sector units can enter into agreements with the Union Ministry of Culture to adopt and maintain State-owned archaeological sites or monuments. Businesses that enter such agreements are going to be known as Monument Mitras.
- Under the 'Adopt a Heritage scheme, businesses may use their Corporate Social Responsibility funds at select sites to construct and maintain ticket offices, restaurants, museums, interpretation centers, toilets, and walkways. They may dramatically illuminate monuments, set up guided tours, hold cultural programs, and fix equipment for light and sound shows

Criticism

- Just as permitting a watch company without expertise in bridge engineering to maintain a colonial-era bridge in Morbi, Gujarat, possibly contributed to heart-wrenching tragedy, so too giving businesses, rather than trained professionals, a chance to build museums and interpretation centers and develop their content

threatens India's understanding of its own past.

- Second, many monuments selected for the scheme including the stupas at Sanchi, the Brihadeshwar temple in Thanjavur, and Akbar's palace city at Fatehpur Sikri already have tourist infrastructure.
- Another provision of the 'Adopt a Heritage' scheme at the cost of further diminishing grounds around iconic monuments?
- These grounds are valuable spaces. If excavations are carried out in them, then they may lead to the discovery of antiquities that can offer clues into the historical context of monuments. Primarily for this reason, new construction in these areas has hitherto been prohibited.



- Another danger of implementing the 'Adopt a Heritage scheme is that it will undermine local communities and their relationships with historical sites.
- Guided tours led by employees of large businesses who have received

permission to adopt a monument may endanger the livelihoods of those who have lived near the site and made a living by regaling visitors with stories of its colourful past.

- What will happen to monuments not adopted by Monument Mitras in the predetermined time frame?

Steps needed

- First, businesses can help citizens understand why monuments matter.
- This can be done by earmarking CSR funds for grants for researching, writing, and publishing high quality textbooks, and developing imaginative and effective ways of teaching history.

Steps needed

- Corporates might also follow the lead taken by Sudha Murthy and N.R. Narayana Murthy in giving gifts to organizations such as the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute in Pune to continue their missions of writing history by rationally coordinating the textual record and the archaeological evidence.
- Second, industrial houses can support the meaningful conservation of heritage buildings by looking within.

- Their CSR funds can be used to purchase new equipment that release fewer noxious gases that darken and corrode marble buildings and discharge fewer effluents into rivers, thus making these water bodies less likely to serve as breeding grounds of microbes that gather on the walls of ancient buildings erected on riverbanks and cause their decay.
- Now is the time for corporations to support interdisciplinary teams at the DRONAH Foundation and the Centre for Advancement of Traditional Building Technology and Skills that are trying to protect monuments from emergent threats such as climate change.
- Rising sea levels are leading to water percolation into forts along Maharashtra's coast. Salination is eating into their foundations. Higher rainfall is leading Ladakh's stucco houses to crumble. Greater fluctuations in temperature are peeling away Shekhawati's murals.

THE HINDU

International courts and climate change

- A group of 16 countries has launched a gallant effort to fight the problem of climate change an existential

threat to human civilisation at the United Nations (UN).

- Led by Vanuatu an island country in the South Pacific Ocean the group seeks an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on the issue of climate change.
- The ICJ has two types of jurisdictions: contentious and advisory.
- While contentious jurisdiction refers to resolving legal disputes between consenting states, under advisory jurisdiction, the UN General Assembly (UNGA), the Security Council (SC), and other specialized bodies of the organization can request the ICJ for an opinion on a legal question. Unlike decisions given under the contentious jurisdiction, the ICJ's advisory opinions are non-binding.
- Yet, they carry normative weight and clarify international law on a relevant issue. The ICJ's advisory opinion on climate change will also be handy in climate-related litigation at the national level.

Vanuatu's initiative

- Small Island Developing (SID) states such as Vanuatu are most vulnerable to rising temperatures and sea levels.
- Accordingly, in September 2021, Vanuatu launched an initiative,

through the UNGA, to seek an advisory opinion from the ICJ to “clarify the legal obligations of all countries to prevent and redress the adverse effect of climate change”.

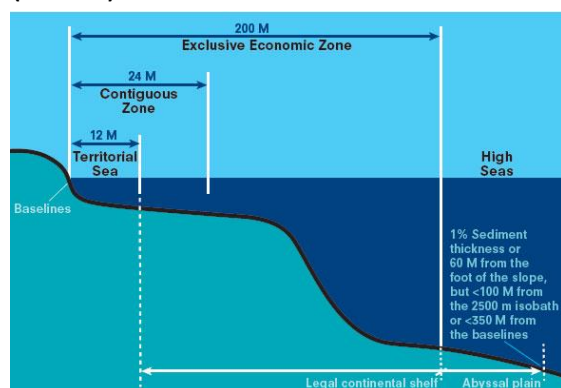
- Since then, the initiative has gathered momentum with more than 100 countries backing the idea.
- First, what are the international law obligations of countries toward the protection of the climate system from anthropogenic emissions of greenhouse gases for the present and future generations?
- The ICJ can use the ‘no-harm’ principle (states are under an obligation that activities within their jurisdiction do not damage other countries) an important part of CIL to shed light on equivocal provisions of the Paris Agreement.
- Second, given these international legal obligations, what are the legal consequences for states that have caused significant harm to the climate system, the SID states, and other people of the present and future generation?
- As part of climate justice, there is a long-standing demand for climate reparations, that is, the rich countries that have historically caused maximum greenhouse gas emissions should compensate developing countries bearing a

disproportionate brunt of climate change.

- At COP-27, while it was agreed to establish a “loss and damage” fund to financially assist vulnerable developing countries, there is little clarity on which countries will provide the funding. Moreover, the connection between funding and the historical responsibility of developed countries in emissions is yet to be determined.

Role of ITLOS

- It is not just the ICJ whose advisory opinion is being sought. The Commission of Small Island States on Climate Change and International Law, comprising countries like Antigua and Barbuda and Tuvalu, has sought the advisory opinion of the Hamburg-based International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS).



- ITLOS has been requested to determine the specific obligations of the countries under the United Nations Convention on the Law of

the Sea about preventing, controlling, and reducing pollution of the marine environment.

- The challenges of ocean warming, sea level rise, and ocean acidification are all linked to the marine environment.

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Online sale of drugs

- The story so far: In early February, the Ministry of Health pulled up at least twenty companies including Tata-1mg, Flipkart, Apollo, PharmEasy, Amazon, and Reliance Net meds, by issuing them a show cause notice, for selling medicines online.
- This happened after the All India Organisation of Chemists and Druggists (AIOCD), a powerful lobby of over 12 lakh pharmacists, threatened to launch a country-wide agitation if the government didn't act

Is banning e-pharmacies a viable option?

- The acute need for door step delivery of drugs was felt during COVID-19
- It saw nearly 8.8 million households using home delivery services during the lockdown.

What next?

- Both e-pharmacies and offline retail pharmacists have realized that in a climate where drug delivery is driven by consumer sentiments, it is futile to stick to any one way of doing business.
- “In the past eight years, the market penetration of e-pharmacies has seen single-digit growth from 3% to 5%. It is just one additional option for consumers for buying chronic care medicines for diabetes, high blood pressure, cardiac issues, and so on,”
- For acute care and emergency, patients still rely on their neighbourhood pharmacy stores.
- This has led e-pharmacy players to now open capital-intensive brick and mortar stores.

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Coin vending machines

- RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das had stated during the last Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) address that the apex banking regulator, in collaboration with banks, would be launching a pilot project to assess the functioning of a QR-code based coin vending machine.

What is the project about?

- In simple words, the vending machines would dispense coins with the requisite amount being debited from the customer’s account using United Payments Interface (UPI) instead of physical tendering of banknotes. Customers would be endowed with the option of withdrawing coins in required quantities and denomination.
- The situation with respect to coins was “peculiar” with the supply being “very high”.
- “It is taking up a lot of storage space and it is not getting properly distributed
- The proposed mechanism for coin dispensation would be a departure from the conventional machines which relied on banknotes for facilitating coin exchanges.
- Further, the proposed machine would eliminate the need for physical tendering of banknotes and their authentication.
- It was observed that the currency being fed into the machines (for coin exchange) was often found to be fake and could not be checked right at that point in time.

Are coins significant in our ecosystem?

- As per the latest RBI bulletin, the total value of circulation of rupee coins stood at ₹28,857 crore as of December 30 last year. The figure is an increase of 7.2% from the year-ago period. Circulation of small coins remained unchanged at ₹743 crores.
- The proposal should not be viewed as a “zero-sum game of digital versus cash.” The two can easily supplement each other.

Middle path in the new world disorder

- Present tense but in making choices, India faces an entirely new set of challenges in the new global disorder. If the center of the Cold War was Europe, the arena of the looming U.S.-China great power contest in Asia. It is unfolding right in India’s neighborhood, and even if it stays out of it, it will feel the heat.
- Second, during the Cold War, India didn’t have hostile relations with any of the opposing superpowers.
- Today, India would be tempted to join the American bloc as it faces the China problem.
- The power imbalance between India and China, which shared similar

economic clout in the 1970s, has widened in recent years.

- China has also developed a strategic partnership with Pakistan, and is raising its influence in other South Asian and Indian Ocean countries.
- Besides, the decades-long border peace between India and China collapsed in 2020 when Chinese troops attacked Indian soldiers in the Galwan Valley in the Himalayas. So on all fronts, India faces the heat of China’s rise. And with China and India rising further, this friction is likely to get more heated.
- There is a convergence of interests between India and the U.S. when it comes to China.
- The U.S. sees China as a long-term threat to the liberal international order. India sees China as a close competitor whose rise is changing the regional balance of power
- Russia is a traditional partner with which India has deep defense ties. As the West has moved to isolate Russia with heavy sanctions in response to its aggression in Ukraine, India is under huge pressure from its partners to take a more critical position on Russia’s actions
- Besides, India also worries that the West’s move to isolate Russia in Europe would push the country further into the Chinese embrace

“Windsor framework”

The new deal, labelled the “Windsor framework”, seeks to address the disruptions to trade between Northern Ireland and the rest of the U.K. caused by the Northern Ireland Protocol, which was agreed as part of Brexit.

Under the Protocol, Northern Ireland would remain a part of the EU’s single market for goods and operate under EU customs rules, which would be implemented by creating a customs border between Northern Ireland and the U.K. Even while the Protocol was being hammered out in 2019, this raised concerns among some Unionists as a pragmatic compromise with the EU, this post-Brexit agreement perhaps has gone the farthest of any such plan by the U.K.

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