

India & USA Signs Cultural Property Agreement

Why In News

- **Government of India and the Government of the United States of America** signed the first ever '**Cultural Property Agreement**' to prevent and curb the **illicit trafficking of antiquities** from India to the USA, on the sidelines of the **46th World Heritage Committee**, at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi.



- The agreement was signed by **Shri Govind Mohan**, Secretary, Ministry of Culture and **H.E. Eric Garcetti**, Ambassador of the United States of America to India in the august presence of Union Minister of Culture and Tourism, Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat

All You Need To Know

- **Cultural Property Agreement (CPA)** is aligned with the **1970 UNESCO Convention** on the Means of Prohibiting and **Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property**, to which both countries are States party.
- **The Illicit trafficking of cultural property** is a longstanding issue that has affected many cultures and countries throughout history. A large number of antiquities have been smuggled out of Bharat before the **ratification of 1970 UNESCO Convention**, and which are now housed in various museums, institutions and private collections across the world.



- **Union Minister of Culture and Tourism**, Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat said that the CPA is another step towards securing India's rich and diverse cultural heritage and invaluable artifacts of our grand history.
- Minister emphasized that preservation and **protection of the Indian artefacts** and cultural heritage has emerged as an integral component of India's foreign policy over the last decade.



- The **Government of India**, under the leadership of Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi has been committed towards this issue, and has adopted a proactive approach towards bringing back Indian artifacts from various parts of

the world. India has **repatriated 358 antiquities since 1976**, out of these 345 have been retrieved since 2014, the Minister informed.

- Union Minister highlighted that **under India's G20 Presidency**, the **'Protection and Promotion of Cultural Property'** emerged as one of the main topical priorities reflecting the core concerns of the Culture Sector globally, particularly those of the Global South.



- **Kashi Culture Pathway'**, the Outcome Document of the **G20 Culture Working Group** unanimously endorsed and called for a strengthened and effective global coalition to bolster the fight against the illicit trafficking of cultural property.
- This commitment of the membership to strengthen the **fight against illicit trafficking of cultural property** at national, regional or international levels to enable its return and restitution to their countries and communities of origin was reiterated in the **New Delhi's Leaders' Declaration (NDLD)** in 2023.



- This historic milestone of the **'Culture goal'** underscoring the impact of culture on social inclusion and economic growth, galvanizing global action to nurture creativity, intercultural dialogue, and empowering marginalized communities, safeguarding vulnerable heritage and fostering resilient and inclusive societies.



- The Minister further informed that the Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, during his visit to USA on 22-23 June, 2023 conveyed his deep appreciation for the **repatriation of Indian antiquities from the United States of America**.
- Both the state parties expressed their strong interest in working expeditiously toward a **Cultural Property Agreement** aimed at preventing illegal trafficking of cultural heritage and enhancing cooperation between the two nations. As many as **262 antiquities were handed** over to India by the USA on the occasion of this State visit.



Conclusion

- **Agreement shall be helpful in** quick seizure of Indian antiquities at US Customs and their repatriation back to India. It is to be noted that **USA has already executed agreement** with countries like -Algeria, Belize, Bolivia, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cyprus, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Greece, Guatemala, Honduras, Italy, Jordan, Mali, Morocco, Peru and Turkey.



- **“Cultural property agreements** prevent the illegal trade of cultural property and simplify the process by which looted and stolen antiquities may be returned to their country of origin.
- **“The United States** has been unwavering in its commitment to protect and preserve cultural heritage worldwide and to restrict trafficking in cultural property,” it said.