

19 October 2024

International Abhidhamma Divas

Context: On October 17, 2024, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi addressed the nation on the historic occasion of International Abhidhamma Divas, highlighting the government's commitment to preserving and promoting the Pali language and the sacred teachings of Lord Buddha.

- This event also marked the recognition of Pali as a classical language in India. The Prime Minister emphasized the cultural and spiritual significance of Pali as the language through which Buddha's teachings were conveyed, and reiterated that its preservation is integral to safeguarding India's civilizational heritage.

What is a Classical Language?

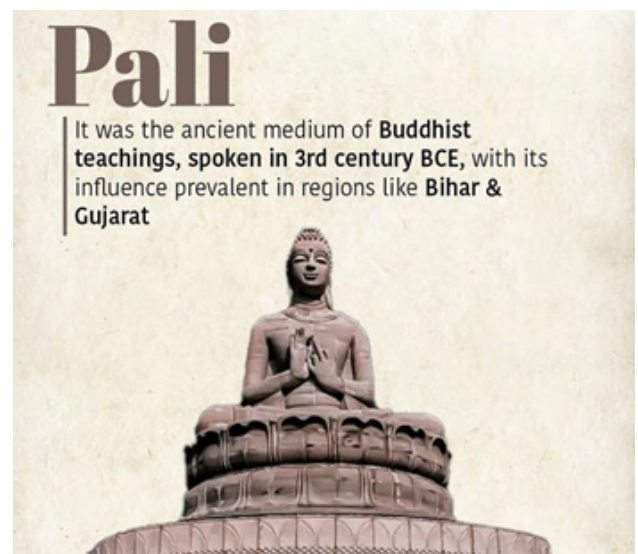
- A classical language is a designation given to languages with a rich literary and cultural heritage that have played a significant role in shaping civilizations. In India, the government assigns classical language status based on the following criteria:
 - » **Antiquity:** The language must have a long documented history, typically over 1500-2000 years old.
 - » **Literary Tradition:** It should possess an extensive body of ancient texts, epics, and literary works of high quality.
 - » **Independence:** The classical language should not be derived from another language.
 - » **Legacy:** The language and its texts should have significantly contributed to the heritage of the nation and influence modern languages and culture.
- In India, languages such as Sanskrit, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, and Odia have been recognized as classical languages. Now, Pali, the language of Buddha's teachings, has also been granted this status.

Buddhism as Soft Power to Connect Southeast Asia:

- Buddhism has long been a cultural bridge between India and Southeast Asian nations, offering significant soft power potential for fostering diplomatic and cultural relations.
- Soft power is the ability to attract and influence others through cultural, historical, and ideological affinity rather than coercion.

Cultural Influence:

- **Historical Ties:** Buddhism spread from India to Southeast Asia over 2,000 years ago, influencing countries like Thailand, Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, and Indonesia. Ancient kingdoms like Srivijaya and Angkor were shaped by Buddhist culture.
- **Shared Heritage:** Many Southeast Asian nations practice Theravada Buddhism, which is rooted in the Pali Canon and closely tied to Indian Buddhism. India is revered as the birthplace of Buddhism, making it a pilgrimage destination for Buddhists from across the region.



Diplomatic and Cultural Initiatives:

- **Buddhist Diplomacy:** India can use Buddhist heritage to strengthen ties with Southeast Asia through events, cultural exchanges, and Buddhist summits.
- Initiatives like the Buddha Circuit—connecting significant Buddhist sites in India and Nepal—draw international attention and foster deeper connections with Buddhist-majority countries.
- **International Buddhist Confederation (IBC):** India's promotion of Buddhist dialogues, events like the International Abhidhamma Divas, and recognition of Pali as a classical language further reinforce India's leadership in Buddhist diplomacy.
- India's soft power through Buddhism serves as a diplomatic tool, enhancing bilateral relations and cultural influence while balancing China's geopolitical presence in the region, particularly in countries like Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Myanmar.

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19 October 2024

'Maiya Samman Yojana'

Context: The Jharkhand state government led by Chief Minister Hemant Soren has announced a significant increase in financial assistance for women under the 'Maiya Samman Yojana'.

Key Details:

- **Financial Aid Increase:** Under the revised Maiya Samman Yojana, the amount of monthly financial assistance given to women has been increased from Rs 1,000 to Rs 2,500. This move is aimed at financially empowering women in the state.
- **Start Date:** Beneficiaries will start receiving the increased amount from December 2024.
- **Beneficiaries:** The scheme currently benefits around 50 lakh women in Jharkhand, all of whom are above the age of 18 years. With the revised amount, the financial burden on the state government is estimated to increase by Rs 9,000 crore annually.

Background on Maiya Samman Yojana:

- **Launch:** The Maiya Samman Yojana was introduced by the Jharkhand government in August 2024. It initially provided Rs 1,000 per month to women above the age of 18 years as part of an initiative to empower women financially.
- **Purpose:** The scheme is designed to support women in managing their household expenses and promoting financial independence, particularly for those without a regular income.

Universal Basic Income (UBI):

- Universal Basic Income (UBI) is a regular, unconditional cash transfer given to all citizens, regardless of their income or socio-economic status. The goal is to reduce poverty and inequality by offering financial security and giving people more freedom in choosing work.
- **Article 41:** Guarantees the right to work, education, and public assistance in cases of unemployment, old age, sickness, disablement, and other cases of undeserved want
- **Advantages include:**
 - » Economic freedom
 - » Reduced corruption
 - » Equitable distribution of wealth
- **However, there are challenges, such as:**

- » High fiscal costs
- » Inflation risks
- » Potential reduction in workforce participation
- Economic Survey 2016-17 suggests alternatives, such as targeting women or vulnerable groups, to make UBI more feasible in India.

Conclusion:

The Jharkhand government's move to increase the monthly assistance under the Maiya Samman Yojana is a significant development aimed at boosting the financial standing of women ahead of the upcoming elections. As political parties compete for votes, women's empowerment has become a key issue in the electoral agenda.



Government Announces MSP Hikes for Rabi Crops for 2025-26 Season

Context: The Union government has announced new Minimum Support Prices (MSP) for six rabi crops for the 2025-26 marketing season, with significant hikes. The new MSPs were approved by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Key MSP Hikes:

- **Wheat:** Increased by Rs. 150 per quintal to 2,425, marking a 6.59% hike.
- **Barley:** Raised by Rs. 130 per quintal to 1,980 (7.03% increase).
- **Gram:** Hiked by 2Rs. 10 to 5,650, a 3.86% rise.
- **Lentil (Masur):** Increased by Rs. 275 to 6,700.
- **Rapeseed & Mustard:** Highest increase of Rs. 300 per quintal to 5,990.
- **Safflower:** Raised by Rs. 140 to 5,940.

Wheat:

- Wheat, the second-largest crop in India after paddy, saw a significant MSP hike. In 2023-24, wheat was cultivated over 318.33 lakh hectares, with an estimated production

Face to Face Centres



19 October 2024

of 113.92 million tonnes.

- Uttar Pradesh leads in wheat production, followed by Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, and Haryana. During the current Rabi Marketing Season (RMS) 2024-25, the government procured 26.6 million tonnes of wheat, benefiting 22 lakh farmers.



gift to farmers

Winter crops	New MSP in Rs per quintal	increase in rupees
Wheat	2425	150
barley	1980	130
Gram	5650	210
lentils	6700	275
Mustard	5950	300
Sunflower	5940	140

Gram:

- Gram, the largest pulse crop in India, had a significant MSP increase of Rs. 210. In 2023-24, gram was cultivated over 95.87 lakh hectares, producing 11.03 million tonnes.
- Maharashtra, which is heading for elections in November, is the top producer, contributing to about 25% of the total production. Other key gram-producing states include Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh.

Lentil and Oilseeds:

- The MSP of lentil (masur) was increased by 275. Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and West Bengal are the top

lentil-producing states. India imports a significant portion of its lentil needs, with 1.67 million tonnes imported in 2023-24.

- For rapeseed and mustard, the second-largest oilseed crop after soybean, the new MSP is 5,990 per quintal. Rajasthan is the top mustard-producing state, followed by Madhya Pradesh and Haryana.

About Minimum Support Price (MSP):

- The Minimum Support Price (MSP) is a critical mechanism employed by the Indian government to ensure farmers receive fair prices for their crops. The MSP is fixed by the central government based on the recommendations of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACPC), a statutory body that submits two reports annually for the Kharif and Rabi seasons. The MSP is established twice a year, providing crucial financial support to farmers.
- Annually, the Government of India announces MSPs for 22 major agricultural commodities, including 14 Kharif crops, 6 Rabi crops, and 2 commercial crops. In addition, MSP for Toria and de-husked coconut is also fixed based on MSPs of rapeseed & mustard, and copra, respectively

Importance of MSP:

- The MSP plays a vital role in safeguarding farmers against price fluctuations in the market, which can occur due to various factors such as good harvests that lead to price drops. By providing a guaranteed minimum price, the MSP encourages farmers to cultivate crops, ensuring a stable supply and supporting the agricultural economy.

Power Packed News

Mera Hou Chongba 2024 Festival

- The Mera Hou Chongba 2024 festival was celebrated on the 15th Lunar day of Mera Month in Imphal, Manipur.
- The event aimed to promote unity and solidarity among various ethnic groups in the state, particularly between the indigenous communities residing in the hills and valleys.
- The State Level Organising Committee hosted the celebrations at the historic Manipur Royal Palace and the sacred site of Kangla, where village chiefs from the hill districts had arrived to participate.
- The titular King of Manipur, Leishemba Sanajaoba, who is also a Rajya Sabha MP, hosted a reception for the village chiefs, cultural troupes, and participants at the Royal Palace.
- The festivities commenced with traditional rituals, including Men Tongba and



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19 October 2024

Yenkhong Tamba at Kangla Utra in the morning, followed by a Thang Ta Salutation and Invocation by Maiba.

- Men Tongba involves a ceremonial offering of rice beer while Yenkhong Tamba is another ritual that follows Men Tongba, characterized by the preparation and offering of various food items, including fruits and sweets.
- The Mera Hou Chongba festival was unique as it brought together both hill and valley indigenous communities, promoting harmony and cooperation among them.

Places in News

The President of India, Smt Droupadi Murmu, recently completed her final leg of her State Visits to Algeria, Mauritania, and Malawi.

Algeria

- Algeria is the largest country in Africa and the tenth-largest in the world.
- Located in North Africa, it is bordered by the Mediterranean Sea to the north, Tunisia and Libya to the northeast, Niger to the southeast, Mali to the southwest, Western Sahara to the west, and Morocco to the northwest.
- The capital city is Algiers. Algeria has a rich history, influenced by various civilizations, including the Phoenicians, Romans, and Arabs.
- The country gained independence from France in 1962 after a brutal war of liberation.



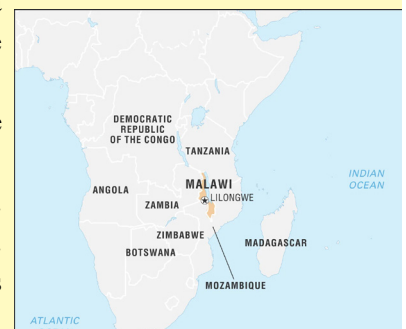
Mauritania

- Mauritania is a country in West Africa, bordered by the Atlantic Ocean to the west, Western Sahara to the north, Algeria to the northeast, Mali to the east and southeast, and Senegal to the southwest.
- The country is characterized by vast deserts, particularly the Sahara, and has a small population concentrated in urban areas like the capital, Nouakchott.
- Mauritania's economy is largely based on agriculture, fishing, and mining, particularly iron ore. The nation has a diverse cultural heritage influenced by Arab, Berber, and African traditions.



Malawi

- Malawi is a landlocked country located in southeastern Africa, bordered by Tanzania to the north, Mozambique to the east, south, and southwest, and Lake Malawi to the west.
- Malawi is known for its stunning landscapes, including Lake Malawi, one of the largest lakes in Africa, which is a UNESCO World Heritage site.
- The capital city is Lilongwe, while Blantyre is the country's commercial center. Malawi's economy is primarily agrarian, with tobacco, tea, and coffee as key exports.
- The nation is also recognized for its warm and friendly people, often referred to as "The Warm Heart of Africa."



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