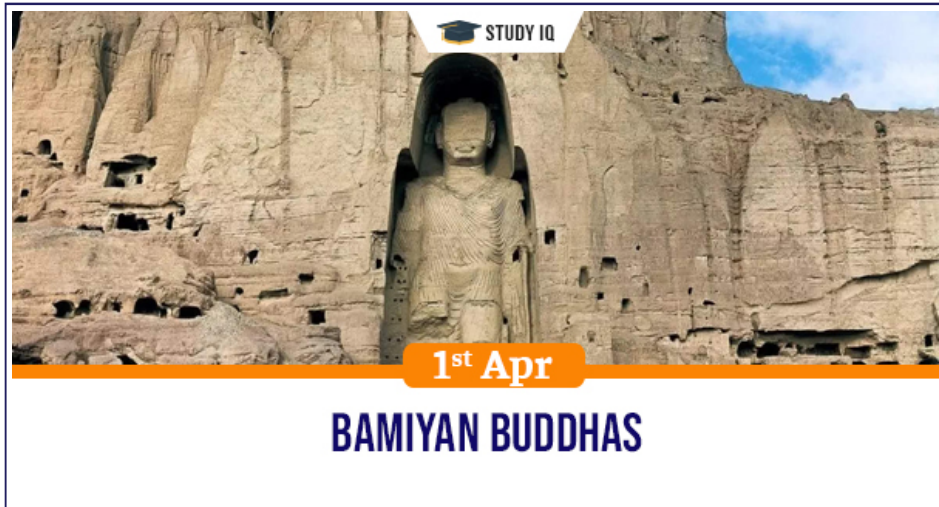


BAMIYAN BUDDHAS



Issue

The ruling Taliban has said that it will protect the ancient Buddha statues in Mes Aynak, better known as Bamiyan Buddhas.

Background

The promise of protection of the statutes is aimed at getting Chinese investment at a copper mine nearby.

Details

- The famous Bamiyan Buddhas were destroyed during the earlier rule of Taliban. They had used explosives and artillery to destroy the statues amid global outrage.
- The move of promising protection is seen as a desperate attempt to raise income through a copper mine that the Chinese can fund.

The Bamiyan Buddhas

- The statues are located in Bamiyan river valley in the Hindu Kush Mountains, which was earlier part of silk route.
- They were part of a cultural exchange that occurred during the spread of Buddhism in central Asia.
- The statues were carved under the patronage of Kushans, who were a semi-nomadic tribe that ruled central Asia.

Features

- The statues are carved on sandstone cliffs and dated to 5th century AD. They were once the tallest standing Buddhas in the world.
- They were amalgamation of Mediterranean and Buddhist culture. They were a mix of Gupta, Sassanian and Hellenistic artistic styles.

The destruction

- The Taliban considered Buddha statues as gods of infidels. Their hard-line Islamic approach wanted to destroy symbols of idol worship.
- Taliban started the process in March 2001 with guns. The process took more than a month, with the artillery scaled up continuously.
- After the statues crumbled, Taliban fighters celebrated the event and brought nine cows to be slaughtered as sacrifice.

Post-destruction

- It was suggested that the statues be reconstructed using the available pieces. This was opposed as security of the statues would always remain a concern.
- The empty sockets were to be preserved as a testament of the violent fanaticism that destroyed precious heritage.
- In March 2021 the statue was recreated using 3D Laser projection. This was done to mark 20 years of its destruction.

NOTES

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