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1. Sun Temple at Modhera, Vadnagar town Rock cut sculpture, Unakoti added to tentative list of UNESCO heritage sites (Dec. 20, 2022)

UNESCO heritage sites

The Union Ministry of Culture announced on 20 December 2022 that **Vadnagar town ,Gujarat, Sun Temple Modhera, Gujarat and Rock Cut Sculptures and reliefs of the Unakoti,Tripura** have been added to the tentative list of UNESCO's world heritage sites.

The submissions were made by Archaeological Survey of India, which is responsible for the conservation and preservation of Indian monuments.

With the addition of these three sites, UNESCO has **52** proposals in the tentative list of India.

According to UNESCO, countries are encouraged to submit their Tentative Lists which mentions the properties which they consider to be cultural and/or natural heritage of outstanding universal value and therefore suitable for inscription on the World Heritage List.

The newly included sites in the tentative list;

Vadnagar

Vadnagar also known as Chamatkarpur, Anandpur, Snehpur and Vimalpur is located in the Mehsana district in Gujarat. The city has been mentioned in the Puranas as well by the Chinese traveller, Hieu-en-Tsang (7th century). Vadnagar is famous for its Buddhist sites, torans, a pair of 12th century Solanki-era columns, 40 feet tall and built in red and yellow sandstone to celebrate a war victory.

Sun Temple, Modhera and its adjoining monuments

Modhera is known for the Sun temple situated on the bank of the Pushpavati River. The temple was built after 1026-27 CE during the reign of Bhima I of the Chalukya dynasty. Modhera village is the first solar powered village in the world.

Rock-cut Sculptures and Reliefs of the Unakoti

Unakoti is famous for its massive stone and rock-cut sculptures that have been carved out from the hillside in the Kailashahar Subdivision of Tripura. Surrounded by lush greenery, this place is also a Shaivite pilgrimage site dating back to the 8th or 9th centuries CE.

Unakoti literally means 'One Less Than a Crore'. According to Hindu mythology Lord Shiva once spent a night here en route to Kashi. He was accompanied by 99, 99,999 gods and goddesses. He had asked his followers to wake up before sunrise and make their way towards Kashi. Unfortunately, none awoke, except for Lord Shiva himself. Before he set out for Kashi alone, he put a curse on the others turning them to stone. And that's how the site got its name

Indian sites in the UNESCO World Heritage List

There are 32 cultural, 7 natural, and 1 mixed property in the 40 UNESCO World Heritage sites in India. In 2021 **Dholavira**, an Indus Valley site in Gujarat and **Rudreswara temple (Ramappa Temple)** at Palampet, Warangal, and Telangana were the 40th and 39th sites respectively.

The first Indian sites to be included in the UNESCO list were **Ajanta, Ellora Caves, Taj Mahal** and **Agra Fort** in 1983.

UNESCO

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations (UN).

- It seeks to build peace through international cooperation in Education, Science and Culture.
- Headquarters: **Paris, France**
- Director General: **Audrey Azoulay**
- Founded: 16 November 1945 in London, United Kingdom
- The organisation has 193 members and 11 Associate members.

2. Puducherry and Aizawl (Mizoram) adjudged best performing State and District in Social Progress Index (Dec. 20, 2022)

State and District in Social Progress Index

The Prime Minister Economic Advisory Council (PMEAC) on 20 December 2022 released the Social Progress Index (SPI) for States and Districts prepared by the Institute for Competitiveness and Social Progress Imperative.

The index assesses states and districts based on 12 components across three critical dimensions of social progress - **Basic Human Needs, Foundations of Wellbeing, and Opportunity**. The index uses an extensive framework comprising 89 indicators at the state level and 49 at the district level.

- **Basic Human Needs** assess the performance of states and districts in terms of Nutrition and Basic Medical Care, Water and Sanitation, Personal Safety and Shelter.
- **Foundations of Wellbeing** evaluates the progress made by the country across the components of Access to Basic Knowledge, Access to Information and Communication, Health and Wellness, and Environmental Quality.
- **Opportunity** focuses on Personal Rights, Personal Freedom and Choice, Inclusiveness, and Access to Advanced Education.

Based on the SPI scores, states and districts have been ranked under six tiers of social progress. The tiers are Tier 1: Very High Social Progress; Tier 2: High Social Progress; Tier 3: Upper Middle Social Progress; Tier 4: Lower Middle Social Progress; Tier 5: Low Social Progress; and Tier 6: Very Low Social Progress.

Top Ranked States/Union Territories

State /Union Territories	SPI	Rank
Puducherry	65.99	1
Lakshadweep	65.89	2

Goa	65.53	3
Sikkim	65.10	4
Mizoram	64.19	5

Bottom Ranked State

Jharkhand was ranked at the bottom, 36th with SPI score of 43.95 and Bihar was ranked at 35th with a score of 44.47.

Uttar Pradesh with a SPI score of 49.16 was ranked 31st and was put in the Low Social progress category.

Top performing districts

Aizawl (Mizoram), Solan (Himachal Pradesh), and Shimla (Himachal Pradesh) are the top 3 best-performing districts.

3. MIB directs YouTube to take down three channels for spreading fake news (Dec. 21, 2022)

The **Ministry of Information and Broadcasting** has directed YouTube to remove three channels, **Aaj Tak Live, News Headlines and Government Updates**, for spreading fake news in the country.

Important facts

- The action was taken as the channels were declared peddlers of fake news by the Fact Check Unit of the Press Information Bureau on 20 December.
- In a series of over 40 fact-checks, the **PIB Fact Check Unit (FCU)** busted these three YouTube channels which were spreading false information in India.
- These channels have around 33 lakh subscribers and their videos, almost all of which were found to be false, have been viewed more than 300 million times.
- These YouTube channels were engaged in **spreading false and sensational claims** regarding the Supreme Court of India, Chief Justice of India, Government schemes, Electronic Voting Machine (EVM), farm loan waiver etc.
- In the last one year, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting has banned over one hundred YouTube channels for spreading fake news.

Union Minister of Information and Broadcasting - **Anurag Singh Thakur**

4. IICA launches ESG Impact Leaders Program (Dec. 20, 2022)

IICA launches ESG Impact Leaders Program

Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs (IICA) an autonomous institution under the aegis of the **Ministry of Corporate Affairs**, Government of India has launched on 20th December a programme to create **Impact Leaders in the areas of Environmental-Social-Governance (ESG)**.

Important facts

- Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Govt of India **Leena Nandan** was the Chief Guest at the launch.
- Impact Leader programme is designed as a comprehensive course on ESG giving a holistic understanding of the philosophy of ESG, its principles, its relevance and its implication in the current scenario.
- **The Six Month course** comprising 8 Self paced learning modules will be delivered online.
- Renowned ESG professionals of International & National repute would be involved in delivering the live interactive Master classes.
- IICA has also created the '**National Association of Impact Leaders**' which is a membership-based association exclusively for ESG professionals.
- The association will provide a platform for professional advancement and engagement to its members.
- In future this association may also act as a regulatory body to strengthen the ESG Profession in India.

Key points of Learnings

- Understanding the Glocal ESG Landscape
- Identifying ESG Risks and Opportunities
- Identification and layout of materiality aspects of ESG
- Managing all ESG aspects in an organization - turning theory into action
- Integrating ESG best practices into core operations - Creating an ESG sensitive culture
- Creating flexible ESG strategies

Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs

- It was registered as a society on September 12, 2008 under the **Societies Registration Act, 1860**.
- It is an autonomous institute, working under the aegis of the Ministry of Corporate Affairs to deliver opportunities for research, education, and advocacy.

It is a think-tank, capacity building and service delivery institute.

5. UAE to host the 13th WTO Ministerial Meeting in 2024 (Dec. 20, 2022)

UAE to host the 13th WTO Ministerial Meeting in 2024

The **United Arab Emirates (UAE)** will host the 13th World Trade Organisation (WTO) Ministerial meeting in February 2024. The African country of Cameroon had also expressed its willingness to host the 13th WTO ministerial meeting.

The WTO's 12th Ministerial Conference was held in Geneva, Switzerland, from June 12 to June 17. It was originally meant to be held in Kazakhstan in 2020, but was postponed due to the covid pandemic.

The **World Trade Organisation** was set up on 1 January 1995 replacing the General Agreement on Tariff and Trade (GATT). Its main purpose is to promote rule based trading systems in the world and to settles trade related disputes between the member countries.

The Ministerial Conference is the topmost decision-making body of the WTO and usually meets **every two years.**

It brings together all members of the WTO and takes decisions on all matters under any of the multilateral trade agreements.

The headquarters of WTO is in **Geneva**, Switzerland. There are 164 member countries .

Director General of WTO : **Dr Ngozi -Okonjo-Iweala of Nigeria**

WTO Ministerial Meeting

Number	Place	Date
First	Singapore	9 to 13 December 1996.
second	Geneva, Switzerland	May 18 and 20, 1998
Third	Seattle, United States of America	November 30 and December 3, 1999,
Fourth	Doha, Qatar	9-14 November 2001
Fifth	Cancun, Mexico	September 10 to 14, 2003
Sixth	Hong Kong	December 13 to December 18, 2005,
Seventh	Geneva, Switzerland	30th November to 2nd December 2009,
Eight	Geneva, Switzerland	December 15 to 17, 2011

Ninth	Bali, Indonesia	3rd to 7th December 2013
Tenth	Nairobi, Kenya	December 15 to 19, 2015
Eleventh	Buenos Aires, Argentina	December 10 to December 13, 2017
Twelfth	Geneva, Switzerland	June 12 to June 17, 2022

6. Fifth Scorpene Submarine 'Vagir' delivered to Indian Navy (Dec. 20, 2022)

Fifth Scorpene Submarine 'Vagir' delivered to Indian Navy

The **fifth submarine of the Project -75, Kalvari Class submarines, Yard 11879 (Vagir)** was delivered to the Indian Navy on 20 December.

Important facts

- Project -75 includes indigenous construction of **six submarines of Scorpene design.**
- These submarines are being constructed at **Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL) Mumbai**, under collaboration with M/s Naval Group, France.
- **Launched on 12 Nov 20, Vagir** commenced sea trials from 1 Feb 2022 and has completed all major trials, including weapon and sensor trials, in less time than earlier submarines.
- The construction of these submarines in an Indian yard is another step towards '**Atmanirbhar Bharat**' and instills confidence in the region.
- What is also a remarkable achievement is that this is the third submarine delivered to the Indian Navy in a span of 24 months.

Project- 75

- Project- 75 intends to build six diesel-electric attack submarines of the **Kalvari class** that are based on the **Scorpene-class**, which are being built at MDL (Mazagon Dock Limited).
- Project 75 (I), approved in 2007, is part of the **Indian Navy's 30 year Plan** for indigenous submarine construction.

7. Agriculture Ministry organises Millet Food Festival in Parliament (Dec. 20, 2022)

Agriculture Ministry organises Millet Food Festival in Parliament

To raise awareness about the importance of millets, the Ministry of Agriculture organised the **Millet Food Festival in Parliament** on 20 December.

Important facts

- During the Millet food festival, branding of Millet and recipes displayed and millet-based food items served to the Members of Parliament in the Parliament House premises.
- Recently, the **Food and Agriculture Organization** of the United Nations organised the opening ceremony of the **International Year of Millets - 2023 (IYOM 2023) in Rome, Italy.**
- The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) accepted the proposal by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, to celebrate 2023 as the International Year of Millets.
- As the global agrifood systems face challenges to feed an ever-growing global population, resilient cereals like millet provide an affordable and nutritious option.

8. Atal Innovation Mission at NITI Aayog opens applications for ATL Marathon 2022-23 (Dec. 20, 2022)

Atal Innovation Mission at NITI Aayog opens applications for ATL Marathon 2022-23

[Atal Innovation Mission \(AIM\) at NITI Aayog](#) on 19th December opened applications for **ATL Marathon 2022-23**, a flagship innovation challenge under **Atal Tinkering Labs** programme.

About ATL Marathon

- It is a national level innovation challenge for **young innovators** across India who can solve community problems of their choice, develop innovative solutions in the form of working prototypes or Minimum Viable Product (MVP).
- The previous edition of the marathon saw **over 7000 innovations** and out of them top 350 received internship opportunities with reputed companies in India, awards and certificates from AIM.
- This year's ATL Marathon is going to be bigger and grander.
- **The theme** for this edition of **ATL Marathon is India's G20 Presidency.**
- As India assumes the presidency of the G20 this year, AIM has prepared issue statements based on the inspiring recommendations of the G20 Working Groups on internationally relevant issues in various areas of focus.
- The idea is to create a huge opportunity for the students to innovate not only for a better India but for the world by solving global problems in various fields.
- Students can get all the details about ATL Marathon in **English and Hindi** and can submit their entries in both the languages.

- Top teams will get internship opportunities with leading corporates and incubation centers in India through the Student Innovator Program and will be awarded certificates from AIM.

Atal Innovation Mission (AIM)

- This is an important initiative taken by the Government of India to promote the culture of innovation and entrepreneurship in the country.

Objective of AIM

- Developing new programs and policies to promote innovation in various sectors of the economy.
- Providing forums and opportunities for collaboration for various stakeholders.
- To create an umbrella structure to create awareness and monitor the innovation ecosystem of the country.

Mission Director AIM - **Dr Chintan Vaishnav**

9. India and Netherlands hold 11th Foreign Office Consultations in New Delhi (Dec. 20, 2022)

India and Netherlands hold 11th Foreign Office Consultations in New Delhi

India and Netherlands held **11th Foreign Office Consultations (FOC)** in **New Delhi** on 19th December.

Important facts

- The Indian delegation was led by **Sanjay Verma**, Secretary (West), Ministry of External Affairs and the Dutch side was led by **Paul Huijts**, Secretary General, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands.
- Both sides discussed ways forward in important areas such as **Water, Agriculture and Health (WAH Agenda)**, science and technology, climate innovation and renewable technologies.
- Noting that the Netherlands is **India's third largest export partner in Europe**, the two sides are looking to strengthen their trade ties through the Joint Trade and Investment Committee meeting next year.
- The two countries have also exchanged views on regional and global issues of mutual interest including Afghanistan, Ukraine, Indo-Pacific, European Union, United Nations and climate action.
- Free trade agreement negotiations between India and the European Union and resumption of the connectivity partnership were acknowledged by both sides as key drivers.

- Both countries are also committed to early implementation of the outcome of the **India-EU Leaders' Meeting** in May 2021.
- This year the two countries are celebrating **75 years of the establishment of diplomatic relations.**

About Netherlands

- The Netherlands, also known as Holland, is a country located in **northwestern Europe.**
- Monarch: **King Willem-Alexander**
- Prime Minister: **Mark Rutte**
- Capital: **Amsterdam**
- Currency: **euro**

10. Over 190 nations adopt landmark biodiversity pact to restore natural ecosystems (Dec. 20, 2022)

Over 190 nations adopt landmark biodiversity pact to restore natural ecosystems

Chaired by **China** and hosted by **Canada**, the **15th Conference of the Parties (COP 15)** of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity adopted the "**Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework**" (**GBF**), which sets **four goals and 23 targets for 2030.**

Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework" (GBF)

- Over **190 nations** of the world on 19 December agreed on a historic package of measures deemed critical to addressing the dangerous loss of biodiversity and restoring natural ecosystems.
- The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework provides a global roadmap for the conservation, restoration and sustainable management of biodiversity and ecosystems for the next decade.
- The **objective** of the Framework is to catalyze, enable and inspire urgent and transformative action by governments and local governments, with civil society participation, to prevent biodiversity loss.
- In this, four goals and 23 targets have been set which are to be achieved by 2030.

Four global goals

Goal 1

- Maintain, enhance or restore the integrity, connectivity and resilience of all ecosystems, while significantly increasing the area of natural ecosystems by 2050.

- Stop human-induced extinction of known threatened species and reduce the extinction rate and risk of all species tenfold by 2050.

Goal 2

- By 2050, the sustainable use and management of biodiversity for the benefit of present and future generations and the valuing and promotion of nature's contribution to people, including ecosystem functions and services.

Goal 3

- Monetary and non-monetary benefits from the use of genetic resources, and digital sequence information on genetic resources, and traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources, to be shared fairly and equitably with indigenous peoples and local communities.

Goal 4

- Adequate means of implementation, including financial resources, capacity-building, technical and scientific cooperation, and access and transfer of technology to fully implement the Kunmin-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework in a safe and secure way for all parties, especially developing countries be equally accessible.

Global targets

- **Effective conservation and management of at least 30 per cent of the world's lands, inland waters, coastal areas and oceans**, with emphasis on areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem functioning and services. At present, only about 17% of land and 7% of oceans are protected.