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### **1. World's first Om-shaped Temple Inaugurated in Rajasthan ( March 29, 2024 )**

The world's first temple in the shape of the iconic Om symbol was inaugurated in Jadan village of Pali district of Rajasthan.

#### **An Overview of the News**

- The construction of this temple started about thirty years ago, the foundation stone of which was laid in 1995.
- The shape of the temple mimics the sacred Om symbol, the first of its kind globally.

#### **Structural Features**

- More than 400 people are working on this project spread over 250 acres.
- It has 1,008 idols of Lord Mahadev and 12 Jyotirlingas.
- It is supported by 2,000 pillars at a height of 135 feet.
- Its complex comprises 108 rooms.
- The central center is the Samadhi of Guru Madhavanand Ji.
- At the apex of the temple lies a sanctum embellished with a shivling made from a rhinestone obtained from the Bansi hill of Dholpur.
- A huge tank with a capacity of 2 lakh tonnes has been built beneath the temple complex.

#### **Accessibility**

- Jadan village is located on National Highway 62, about 71 km from Jodhpur Airport.
- For easy accessibility, travelers can reach Marwar Junction via trains from Delhi to Ahmedabad.

#### **Architectural Style**

- Follows the Nagar style prevalent in North India.
- A huge layout with the Om symbol is spread over a radius of about half a kilometer.

#### **About Rajasthan**

Chief Minister - Bhajan Lal Sharma

Capital - Jaipur (Executive Branch)

Governor - Kalraj Mishra

## **2. New Zealand Implements Ban on Disposable E-Cigarettes and Vapes ( March 23, 2024 )**

Following the recent repeal of legislation aimed at phasing out tobacco smoking, the New Zealand government has implemented a ban on disposable e-cigarettes and vapes.

### **An Overview of the News**

#### **Government action:**

- To prevent sales to minors, fines for retailers selling to those under 18 will increase.
- Retailers may face fines of up to NZ\$100,000, while individuals can be fined NZ\$1,000 for the same offence.

#### **Youth Safety Measures:**

- The rules also restrict the sale of e-cigarettes with packaging or branding that appeals to youth, with the aim of preventing youth from being attracted to vaping.

#### **Reasoning behind the ban:**

- Associate Health Minister Casey Costello says e-cigarettes are recognized as a smoking cessation tool, but the ban is intended to discourage minors from taking up the vaping habit.

#### **Global trend against disposable vapes:**

- United Kingdom's ban: British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak announced a ban on disposable vapes in 2022, citing concerns about long-term effects and youth addiction.
- Australia's ban: Joining the global movement to address the popularity and potential health risks of vaping among youth, Australia also implemented a ban on disposable single-use vapes this year.

## **3. PM Modi Receives Bhutan's 'Order of the Druk Gyalpo' Award ( March 23, 2024 )**

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has created history by becoming the **inaugural non-Bhutanese recipient of Bhutan's prestigious 'Order of the Druk Gyalpo'**.

### **An Overview of the News**

- PM Modi received this prestigious honor from **King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck** of Bhutan during his two-day official visit to Thimphu.

#### **Importance of Award:**

- The 'Order of the Druk Gyalpo' is Bhutan's premier civilian honor recognizing lifetime achievements.

- It has the distinction of being the highest civilian honor given in Bhutan.
- This prestigious award takes precedence over all other orders, decorations and medals of the country.
- To date, only **four distinguished individuals** have been honored with this prestigious award.

**Previous Award Winners:**

- Her Royal Queen Grandmother **Ashi Kesang Choden Wangchuck** was awarded this honor in 2008.
- The 68th Je Khenpo of Bhutan, His **Holiness Je Thrizur Tenzin Dendup**, also received the award in 2008.
- His Holiness Je Khenpo **Trulku Ngawang Jigme Choedra** was awarded the award in 2018.
- Recipients include **Je Khenpo**, who holds the position of chief abbot of Bhutan's central monastic body.

**About Bhutan**

Capital- **Thimphu**

King - **Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuk**

Currencies - **Bhutanese Ngultrum, Indian Rupee**

Official language- **Dzongkha**

**4. India's first solar cycle track inaugurated in Hyderabad ( Oct. 5, 2023 )**

Taking inspiration from a similar solar panel-covered cycle track in South Korea, Hyderabad inaugurated India's first solar cycle track.

**An Overview of the News**

- This innovative project in Hyderabad is now the world's second solar roof-covered cycle track, after similar initiatives in Dubai and Switzerland.

**Features of Hyderabad Solar Cycle Track:**

- The solar cycle track has been constructed along the Outer Ring Road (ORR) of Hyderabad and has a total length of 23 kilometres, consisting of two lines.
- The Pink Line extends from Nanakramguda to Telangana State Police Academy (TSPA), covering a distance of 8.5 kilometres, while the Blue Line runs from Narsingi Hub to Kollur, covering a distance of 14.5 kilometres.
- The track is designed with the safety of cyclists in mind, featuring three dedicated lanes with protective barriers.

- It comprises five access points equipped with various facilities such as parking, food stalls, repair and rental stations, first aid facilities, rest areas and advanced signaling systems.
- A notable feature of the track is its solar roof, capable of generating 16 megawatts of power, which not only illuminates several streetlights but also provides extensive coverage.

**Implementation and Cost Savings:**

- Hyderabad Growth Corridor Limited (HGCL), a division of the Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority (HMDA), is responsible for implementing the project, taking inspiration from similar facilities in South Korea.
- The project is expected to provide cost savings to HMDA, with an estimated recovery period of six years for the solar panels and an estimated period of 15 years for the entire project.

**Importance of Solar Cycle Track:**

- In addition to its environmental impact, the cycling track aims to reduce carbon emissions and establish itself as the world's most eco-friendly cycling track.
- The strategic lighting system enables year-round, 24x7 use, with additional security provided by CCTV surveillance.
- Future plans include the installation of bicycle rental agencies, health food shops, and retail kiosks to enhance the overall cycling experience.
- Using rooftops for solar panels not only saves land, but also generates clean energy in line with sustainable practices. Additionally, the roof provides protection from sunlight, rain and pollution, contributing to accident prevention.

**5. India begins construction of world's highest combat airfield at Nyoma in Ladakh ( Sept. 11, 2023 )**

The Border Roads Organization (BRO) is building the world's highest combat airfield at Nyoma in Ladakh.

**An Overview of the News**

- Defense Minister Rajnath Singh will lay the foundation stone of this project at Devak Bridge in Jammu on September 12, 2023.
- Nyoma, a major village in southern Ladakh, already hosts an Indian Air Force base and an Advanced Landing Ground (ALG), established in 1962.
- The altitude of Nyoma reaches an impressive 4,180 meters (13,710 ft) above sea level, making it one of the highest altitudes in the region.

**Budget Allocation:**

- The Central Government has consistently increased its budget allocation for the development of border infrastructure.
- Last year, around ₹12,340 crore was allocated, underscoring the government's commitment to strengthening India's border infrastructure.

**Goals of India's infrastructure development:**

- Lieutenant General Rajiv Chaudhary, who heads the BRO, is optimistic about India's rapid progress in developing border infrastructure.
- India aims to surpass China in this regard on the 3,488 km long Line of Actual Control (LAC) within the next two to three years.

**About Ladakh**

- Union Territory - **31 October 2019**
- Capitals - **Leh, Kargil**
- Lieutenant Governor - **B. D. Mishra**
- Member of Parliament - **Jamyang Tsering Namgyal**

**6. World's tallest Nataraja statue unveiled at G20 Summit Venue ( Sept. 9, 2023 )**

The world's tallest Nataraja statue crafted by skilled artisans was unveiled at the G20 summit venue.

**An Overview of the News**

- The G20 summit venue is now adorned with a stunning 27-foot tall statue of Nataraja, which depicts Lord Shiva in his cosmic dance.
- This magnificent statue is carved from Ashtadhatu, an eight-metal alloy, and weighs a remarkable 18 tonnes. A trailer with 36 tires was required for transportation to Delhi.
- The skilled artisans of Swamimalai, Thanjavur district of Tamil Nadu are responsible for creating this masterpiece, which beautifully blends tradition with modernity, taking inspiration from the ancient Nataraja sculptures.

**Master Sculptor of Swamimalai**

- The primary sculptors of this statue are Srikanda Sthapati (61 years old) and his brothers Radhakrishna Sthapati and Swaminath Sthapati. His family boasts an impressive lineage in sculpture, spanning 34 generations, with origins dating back to the Chola era.
- The Sthapathi family received their training through the ancient Gurukul system passed down for generations. She was selected for the Nataraja Project based on stringent criteria outlined by the Indira Gandhi National Center for the Arts, Ministry of Culture.

- The project draws inspiration from three iconic Nataraja sculptures: the Thillai Nataraja Temple in Chidambaram, the Uma Maheswara Temple in Konerirajapuram, and the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Brihadeeswara Temple in Thanjavur.

**Traditional 'lost-wax' casting method**

- The crafting process adopted for this statue was the traditional 'lost-wax' casting method, an indigenous technique of the Chola era.
- The process began with the creation of a highly detailed wax model adorned with intricate ornaments.
- A unique alluvial clay paste, found exclusively in Swamimalai, was used to cover the entire mold, with Kaveri clay from a specific part of the river at Swamimalai playing a key role.

**Investing in Artistry:**

- The construction of this remarkable Nataraja statue cost Rs 10 crore including GST.

**7. NITI Aayog and UNDP come together to accelerate SDGs ( Aug. 31, 2023 )**

In an important step towards accelerating progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), NITI Aayog and UNDP India strengthened their commitment by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

**An Overview of the News**

- This MoU serves as a formal agreement, outlining the collaborative framework between the two entities.

**The MoU symbolizes cooperation in several key areas:**

- **Localizing the SDGs:** The partnership underlines the importance of bringing the SDGs to the grassroots level, ensuring their effective implementation and impact.
- **Data-driven monitoring:** Using data as a powerful tool, the Coalition aims to enhance Monitoring and evaluation of SDG progress.
- **Empowering Aspirational Districts and Blocks:** Cooperative efforts extend to empowering and uplifting specific areas designated as Aspirational Districts and Blocks.
- **Diverse Collaborative Initiatives:** The partnership includes a wide range of collaborative projects and initiatives contributing to overall development.

**Signatories to the MoU**

- NITI Aayog CEO B. V. R. Subrahmanyam
- Dr. Yogesh Suri, Senior Advisor (SDG), NITI Aayog
- Shoko Noda, UNDP India Local Representative

## **UNDP's Pledge of Progress**

- Shoko Noda, UNDP India's local representative, emphasized the organization's dedication. He acknowledged India's important role in making the SDGs a reality, citing significant reduction in multidimensional poverty.
- The scope of the partnership includes SDG localisation, data-driven decision making and promotion of various programs like Aspirational Districts and Block Initiative, SDG financing, women's livelihoods, innovation and Mission LiFE.

## **Period of Cooperation**

- The MoU establishes a five-year cooperation period.
- During this period, joint efforts between NITI Aayog and UNDP India will be engaged in various developmental initiatives and projects.

## **Roles of NITI Aayog and UNDP**

- NITI Aayog plays the role of the key coordination body for SDG implementation and monitoring at both national and sub-national levels.
- Conversely, UNDP takes on the important responsibility of integrating and harmonizing actions within the UN system to accelerate progress towards the SDGs.

## **8. Raja Anirudh Sriram won silver medal in Singapore Math Olympiad ( Aug. 23, 2023 )**

Raja Anirudh Sriram, a Class IV student from Tirupati, won a silver medal in the prestigious Singapore Maths Olympiad.

### **An Overview of the News**

- This achievement made his family, school, and the state of Andhra Pradesh proud.
- Among the 23 Indian participants in the Singapore International Math Olympiad Challenge (SIMOC), Raja Anirudh was the only representative from Andhra Pradesh.
- The SIMOC program hosted over 2000 students from 32 countries, providing a global platform for young math talents.
- At only four years old, he set a record by identifying 100 cars in 160 seconds, demonstrating an extraordinary memory.
- **At the age of six, he became the youngest Indian to earn the 'Microsoft Office Specialist Certificate', highlighting his technical prowess.**
- He achieved recognition at international forums such as the International Mathematics Olympiad and ABACUS Mental Mathematics competitions.
- Successive victories in the Singapore and Asian School Mathematics Olympiads at the age of seven and eight demonstrated his dedication.

Minister of Education of Singapore - **Chan Chun Sing**

## **9. CM MK Stalin launches construction of South East Asia's largest desalination plant at Perur, Chennai ( Aug. 23, 2023 )**

Chief Minister MK Stalin inaugurated the Rs 4,276.44 crore desalination plant at Perur on 21 August 2023.

### **An Overview of the News**

- Development of Southeast Asia's largest desalination plant begins.
- Funding is provided by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).
- The project covers 85.51 acres of land, which is targeted to be completed by 2026.

### **Innovative Water Treatment Technologies:**

- Advanced Methods: Dissolved Air Flotation and Dual Media Filtration.
- High-density polyethylene (HDPE) pipelines extend up to 1,150 meters into the sea.
- 59 km long drinking water pipeline up to Porur area.

### **Augmentation of water supply and distribution:**

- Enhanced supply: 400 MLD additional water after completion of the plant.
- To meet the water needs of: 22.67 lakh people in Chennai and surrounding areas.
- Beneficiary Areas: **Chennai, Tambaram, Kovilanchery, Perumbakkam, Kolappakkam, Vandalur.**

### **Desalination Plant Network of Chennai:**

- Fourth desalination facility for the water demands of Chennai.
- Inaugurated Plant: 100 MLD Capacity, Minjur, July 31, 2010.
- Nemmeli Desalination Plant: 100 MLD, foundation stone laid on 23 February 2010.
- Ongoing construction: 150 MLD desalination plant at Nemmeli.

### **Publicity and Communication:**

- CMWSSB made a video to highlight the characteristics of plants.
- Video shared with a wide consumer base for information dissemination.



## **10. Assam's International Airport Becomes 1st Airport In Northeast India To Launch 'Digi Yatra' Facility ( Aug. 23, 2023 )**

Guwahati's popular **Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport (LBBI)** has become the first airport in Northeast India to launch a 'Digi Yatra' facility.

### **An Overview of the News**

- The innovative service aims **to enhance the air travel experience in the region by streamlining airport processes.**

### **Cooperation and Objectives:**

- The 'Digi Yatra' initiative is a collaboration with the Ministry of Civil Aviation with the goal of modernizing and improving air travel.
- It aims to revolutionize passenger navigation through airports, making it more intuitive and convenient.

### **Major Areas of Implementation:**

- The 'Digi Yatra' service has been implemented in three main areas of the airport: entry points, check-in counters, and boarding zones.
- Traditional long queues and delays during check-in and security procedures are expected to come down significantly.

### **Facial Recognition Technology:**

- The core of the 'Digi Yatra' initiative is the use of facial recognition technology for seamless airport travel.
- This eliminates the need for traditional methods of ticket verification and ID checking.

### **Security and Privacy Measures:**

- Passenger data is encrypted and stored in the passenger's smartphone wallet, ensuring privacy.
- No personally identifiable information (PII) is stored during the process.
- Industries and Commerce Minister of Assam - **Chandra Mohan Patowary**

### **About Assam:**

- It is a state located in the northeastern region of India. It is bounded by Bhutan in the north, Arunachal Pradesh in the east, Nagaland in the northeast, Manipur in the southeast, Mizoram in the south, and West Bengal in the west.
- Formation (as a state) - **26 January 1950**
- Capital - Dispur

- Chief Minister - **Himanta Biswa Sarma**
- Governor - **Gulab Chand Kataria**