

Santiniketan added to UNESCO World Heritage List

Context: Santiniketan, the home of late Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore, has been added to the UNESCO World Heritage sites list, the world body announced on Sunday.

- The town's name means "abode of peace" and was originally called "Bhubandanga," named after a local dacoit named Bhuban.
- Located in the Birbhum district of West Bengal, it was established by Maharshi Debendranath Tagore, the father of Rabindranath Tagore.
- Rabindranath Tagore later transformed it into a university town known as Visva-Bharati University, starting as Brahmachary Ashram.
- The recommendation came from the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), a France-based organization dedicated to global architectural and heritage conservation.

Contributions of Rabindranath Tagore

- **Literary and Artistic Contributions:**
 - Authored the national anthems of India and Bangladesh.
 - Left a significant impact on art by ushering in modernism and creating over 2000 paintings.
 - Drew inspiration from Expressionism in European art and ancient primitive cultures for his artwork.
 - Became the first Indian to receive a Nobel Prize in Literature in 1913 for his collection of poems, 'Geetanjali.'
- **Role in the Freedom Struggle:**
 - Criticized British imperialism but had nuanced views on Gandhi's Non-cooperation Movement.
 - Voiced support for Indian nationalists and wrote patriotic songs, including 'Amar Sonar Bangla.'
 - Composed 'Banglar Mati Banglar Jol' to unite Bengalis after the 1905 Bengal partition.
 - Initiated the Rakhi Utsav to promote unity between Hindu and Muslim communities.
 - Renounced his knighthood in protest of the Amritsar massacre by the British in 1915.
 - Advocated for the incorporation of the best aspects of Western culture into Indian culture as a means of anti-colonialism.

World Heritage Site

- A World Heritage Site is a location recognized by UNESCO for its exceptional cultural or physical significance, with the list of these sites being managed by the international 'World Heritage Programme' under the supervision of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee.
- The UNESCO World Heritage Committee consists of 21 member states from UNESCO, elected by the General Assembly.
- UNESCO, which stands for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, aims to promote the identification, safeguarding, and preservation of cultural and natural heritage worldwide, recognized as having exceptional value for humanity.
- This mission is enshrined in an international agreement known as the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, adopted by UNESCO in 1972.

How is a site selected?

- The first step in the World Heritage listing process involves a country's government nominating a site.
- To be eligible for nomination, the site must possess Outstanding Universal Value (OUV).
- There are ten criteria established to assess OUV, and the nomination must meet at least one of these criteria.
- The International Council on Monuments and Sites and the World Conservation Union evaluate the Nomination File.
- Based on their recommendations, the World Heritage Committee convenes annually to decide whether to add nominated properties to the World Heritage List.
- Sometimes, the Committee defers a decision to request additional information from the nominating country.





18 September, 2023

PM Vishwakarma Scheme

Context: On the occasion of Vishwakarma Jayanti, Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the PM Vishwakarma scheme in New Delhi.

Objectives of the Scheme

- Granting recognition to artisans and craftspeople as Vishwakarma, enabling them to access all scheme benefits.
- Enhancing their skills through skill development programs and training opportunities.
- Providing modern tools and equipment to improve productivity and product quality.
- Facilitating access to collateral-free credit and reducing credit costs through interest subvention.
- Encouraging digital transactions among beneficiaries to promote digital empowerment.
- Creating a platform for brand promotion and market connections to help them explore new growth opportunities.

Benefits of Scheme

- **Recognition:**
 - Artisans receive recognition as Vishwakarma through a Certificate and ID Card.
- **Skilling:**
 - Artisans undergo skill verification and basic training lasting 5-7 days (40 hours).
 - Advanced training for 15 days (120 hours) is available for interested candidates.
 - Trainees receive a stipend of Rs 500 per day.
- **Toolkit Incentive:**
 - Artisans receive a grant of Rs 15,000 for toolkits.
- **Credit Support:**
 - **Collateral-free Enterprise Development Loans:**
 - First Tranche: Rs 1 lakh with an 18-month repayment period.
 - Second Tranche: Rs 2 lakh with a 30-month repayment period.
 - A concessional interest rate of 5% is charged from beneficiaries, with an interest subvention cap of 8% paid by MoMSME.
 - Credit guarantee fees are covered by the Government of India.
- **Incentive for Digital Transactions:**
 - Artisans receive Re 1 per transaction, up to a maximum of 100 transactions per month.
- **Marketing Support:**
 - The National Committee for Marketing (NCM) offers services like Quality Certification, Branding & Promotion, E-commerce linkage, Trade Fairs, advertising, publicity, and other marketing activities.

Professions included:

- Armourers
- Barbers
- Basket/Mat/Broom Makers/Coir Weavers
- Blacksmiths
- Boat Makers
- Carpenters
- Cobblers (Shoemsmiths/ Footwear artisans)
- Doll & Toy Makers (Traditional)
- Fishing Net Makers
- Garland Makers
- Goldsmiths
- Hammer and Tool Kit Makers
- Locksmiths
- Masons (Rajmistri)
- Potters
- Sculptor, Stone Breakers
- Tailors
- Washermen

Critical Raw Materials Act

Context: The European Parliament has approved the Critical Raw Materials Act.

- **Landmark Decision:** The European Parliament has approved the Critical Raw Materials Act.
- **Strong Support:** 515 Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) voted in favour.
- **Reducing China Dependence:** The EU aims to decrease reliance on China for critical minerals.
- **Green Transition:** These minerals are vital for green technologies like solar panels and electric car batteries.
- **Current Dependence:** The EU is 99 percent dependent on China for rare earth metals.
- **Setting benchmarks by 2030 for domestic capacities:** The Act sets these benchmarks along the strategic raw materials value chain and for the diversification of EU supplies
 - at least 10% of the EU's annual consumption for extraction;
 - at least 40% of the EU's annual consumption for processing;
 - at least 15% of the EU's annual consumption for recycling;
 - no more than 65% of the EU's annual consumption from a single third country.
- **Security Concerns:** Dependence on a single source poses supply disruption risk.
- **Diversifying Imports:** The law aims to diversify imports, limiting any single country to 65 percent of supply.
- **Increased Production:** By 2030, the EU plans to produce 10 percent of its critical raw materials.
- **List of Materials:** Critical raw materials include aluminium, cobalt, lithium, and rare earth elements.
- **Processing Capacity:** The EU aims to process 40 percent of its critical materials by 2030.
- **Strategic Partnerships:** Collaboration with other nations, especially in developing regions, is encouraged.
- **Recycling Focus:** Emphasis on recycling and use of secondary raw materials.
- **Environmental Concerns:** Some are worried about environmental standards.

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- **Avoiding Disruptions:** The Act addresses supply risks following natural gas disruptions during the Ukraine conflict.

Critical Minerals

- Critical minerals are elemental components of vital significance in contemporary technologies, susceptible to potential supply chain interruptions, and play pivotal roles in the production of mobile phones, computers, batteries, electric vehicles, as well as environmentally friendly innovations like solar panels and wind turbines.
- **Declaration of Critical Minerals:**
 - **Dynamic Process:** Declaration of critical minerals is dynamic, subject to changes with evolving technologies, market dynamics, and geopolitical factors.
 - **Country-Specific Lists:** Different countries create their unique lists of critical minerals based on their specific needs and priorities.
 - **Examples:** The US has 50 critical minerals, Japan identified 31, the UK considers 18, the EU lists 34, and Canada recognizes 31.
- **Critical Minerals for India:**
 - **Indian Selection:** An Expert Committee under the Ministry of Mines in India has identified 30 critical minerals for the nation.
 - **India's List:** Antimony, Beryllium, Cobalt, Copper, Germanium, Gallium, Lithium, Niobium, Phosphorous, Silicon, Tantalum, Tellurium, Vanadium, Zinc, Zirconium, Graphite, Hafnium, Indium, Molybdenum, Nickel, Potash, Rhenium, Strontium, Selenium, Cadmium, Titanium, Tungsten, Tin, and Platinum Group Elements (PGE).
 - **Centre of Excellence:** The committee recommends the establishment of a Centre of Excellence for Critical Minerals (CECM) within the Ministry of Mines.
 - **CECM's Role:** CECM will regularly update India's list of critical minerals and develop a strategy for their secure supply.

NEWS IN BETWEEN THE LINES

Yashobhoomi



Recently, Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated Yashobhoomi at Dwarka in Delhi.

About Yashobhoomi:

- Yashobhoomi is a prominent convention center in Dwarka, Delhi, part of India International Convention and Expo Centre.
- It hosts national and international conventions and exhibitions.
- Yashobhoomi aligns with the 'vocal for local' campaign, promoting domestic products and supporting local artisans.
- It's a modern facility covering 73,000 square meters with 15 convention rooms, a main auditorium, a grand ballroom, and 13 meeting rooms, capable of hosting 11,000 delegates.
- Yashobhoomi prioritizes sustainability with features like wastewater treatment and rainwater harvesting, earning Platinum certification.
- It attracts tourism and business activities, benefiting the region's economy.

P-7 Heavy Drop Parachute System



About the P-7 Heavy Drop Parachute System:

- The P-7 Heavy Drop Parachute System is a military **Parachute** developed by DRDO for airdropping heavy equipment.
- Its purpose is to enhance armed forces' paradropping capabilities.
- It is designed and developed by DRDO (Defence Research and Development Organisation).
- Approximately 500 kg weight, airdrop heavy equipment and supplies, eight main canopies, three extractor parachutes, one drogue parachute, electrical, electronic, and mechanical systems.

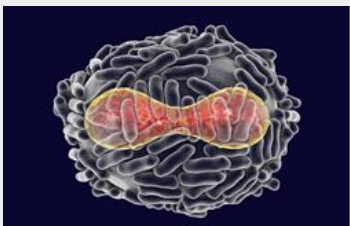
Load Capacity: Max 8,500 kg, payload limit 7,000 kg.

Speed: Drop speed 260 to 400 kph, landing speed 7 m/sec.

Reusability: Up to 5 times.

Compatibility: Integrates with various aircraft, including C-17, C-130, and other cargo aircraft of the IAF.

Smallpox



Recently, Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO), expressed optimism about eradicating smallpox from the South-east Asian region.

About Smallpox:

- Smallpox is a highly contagious and deadly infectious disease caused by the variola virus.
- The variola virus comes in two forms: Variola minor and Variola major.
- Smallpox spreads through airborne transmission, coughing, sneezing, direct contact, sharing drinks, body fluids, touching contaminated areas, and unclean syringes.
- It is characterized by a high fever, skin rash with distinctive pustules, and often leads to severe scarring and can be fatal.
- Smallpox vaccination was developed by Edward Jenner in the late 18th century.
- The World Health Organization (WHO) launched a global smallpox eradication campaign in 1967.
- Intensive vaccination and surveillance efforts led to the successful eradication of smallpox worldwide by 1980.

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<p>Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary</p> 	<p>Location: Situated in Madhya Pradesh, on the border of Mandsaur and Nimach districts, adjoining Rajasthan. Size: Covers 368.62 km² and falls within the Khathiar-Gir dry deciduous forest ecoregion. Establishment: Notified in 1974, designated a sanctuary in 1984. River: It's traversed by the Chambal River, dividing it into two parts. Topography: Diverse, including hills, plateaus, and the catchment area of the Gandhi Sagar Dam. Significant Sites: Contains historical, archaeological, and religious sites like Chaurasigarh, Chaturbhujnath temple, Bhadkaji rock paintings, Narsinghjar Hinglajgarh fort and Taxakeshwar temple. Flora: Dominated by tree species like Khair, Salai, Kardhai, Dhawda, Tendu and Palash. Fauna: Home to herbivores like Chinkara, Nilgai, Spotted Deer and carnivores like the Indian Leopard, Striped Hyena, and Jackal.</p>
<p>Moonquakes</p> 	<p>About Moonquakes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Moonquakes are seismic events or tremors that occur on the moon's surface. ➤ Extreme temperature variations create strain leading to moonquakes. ➤ Temperature differences of up to 250°C contribute to seismic activity on the moon. ➤ Lack of atmosphere makes even small meteor impacts powerful enough to deform the lunar surface. ➤ Thousands of craters on the moon testify to the impacts' potency. ➤ Apollo 17 lunar lander module, launched in 1972, may have triggered minor moonquakes.
<p>Place in News</p> <p>Burkina Faso</p>	<p>Burkina Faso (Capital: Ouagadougou)</p> <p>Recently, the military leaders of Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger signed a mutual defence pact, ministerial delegations from the three Sahel countries.</p> <p>Location: Burkina Faso is a landlocked country located in western Africa.</p> <p>Political Features: It shares its borders with several countries, including Mali to the north and west, Niger to the northeast, Benin to the southeast, and Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Togo to the south.</p> <p>Geographical Features: Burkina Faso is characterized by savanna grasslands.</p> <p>Major Rivers: The Black Volta, the Red Volta and the White Volta.</p> <p>Highest Peak: Mount Tenakourou is the highest peak in Burkina Faso.</p> 
<p>Personality in News</p> <p>Gita Mehta</p>	<p>Gita Mehta (1943-16 September 2023)</p> <p>Gita Mehta was a multi-talented personality known for her contributions as a journalist, writer and filmmaker.</p> <p>Contributions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Literary Works: Mehta gained recognition through her literary works, such as "Karma Cola" (1979) and "Raj" (1989), which offered unique perspectives on India and its culture. ➤ Documentaries: Her work as a documentary filmmaker, especially her coverage of the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War, earned her acclaim in the field of journalism. <p>Declined Padma Shri: In 2019, she declined the Padma Shri award, citing concerns about the timing of the award and its potential implications during a general election.</p> 
<h2>POINTS TO PONDER</h2>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Which state(s) is (are) the largest producer(s) of sugar and sugarcane? - Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh ❖ What is the name of the Indian Coast Guard Ship specially designed for pollution control? - Samudra Prahari ❖ Which city has decided to retire the double-decker buses after 8 decades of service? – Mumbai ❖ Where did the first "Mahakumbha of Divyangjan" take place? – Varanasi ❖ Scientists of which country have recently grown human kidneys inside pig embryos? - China 	

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