
Prelims Exam Topics

ABATHSAHAYESWARAR TEMPLE

Context

The Abathsahayeswarar Temple was recently in the news after its **UNESCO Asia-Pacific Award of Distinction (2024)** for heritage conservation was highlighted.

About Abathsahayeswarar Temple

- **Type:** A 12th-century Chola-era Hindu temple and a living heritage monument.
- **Location:** Tamil Nadu.
- **Patronage:** Associated with the later Chola rulers Kulottunga I and Vikrama Chola.
- **Architectural Style:** Built in the rare Kara Kovil style (temple designed in the shape of a chariot).
- **Unique Feature:** Houses one of the oldest known stone idols of Lord Sarabeshwarar.

CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION (CAC)

Context

At the 49th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC49) in Geneva, India secured the adoption of seven international food standards and guidelines developed under its leadership.

About Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC)

- **Nature:** An intergovernmental body that develops international food standards.
- **Established By:** Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO).
- **Established In:** 1963.
- **Objective:** To protect consumer health, ensure fair practices in food trade, and develop international food standards, guidelines, and codes of practice.

RAVIDASSIA COMMUNITY

Context

The Ravidassia community recently renewed its demand for recognition as a separate religion in the upcoming Census.

About Ravidassia Community

- **Nature:** A Dalit socio-religious community that follows the teachings of Guru Ravidas, a 15th–16th century Bhakti saint.

- **Primary Concentration:** Mainly concentrated in the **Doaba region** of **Punjab**.
- **Spiritual Centre:** **Dera Sachkhand Ballan**, located in **Jalandhar, Punjab**.
- **Sacred Text:** **Amritbani Guru Ravidas Ji**, comprising **200 hymns** attributed to **Guru Ravidas**.
- **Core Philosophy:** Advocates **social equality, caste-free society, and universal brotherhood**, centred on the concept of **Begampura (an ideal society free from sorrow, caste, and discrimination)**.
- **Religious Identity:** Declared a **separate faith (Ravidassia Panth)** in **2010** following the **2009 Vienna attack** on a Ravidassia congregation.
- **Pilgrimage Site:** **Shri Guru Ravidas Janam Asthan, Seer Goverdhanpur, Varanasi (Uttar Pradesh)**, the birthplace of **Guru Ravidas**.

Guru Ravidas

- A **15th–16th century Bhakti saint, poet, and social reformer** known for advocating **equality, devotion (Bhakti), and the rejection of caste discrimination**.
- **Contemporaries:** **Kabir, Guru Nanak, and Meera Bai**.
- Several of his hymns are included in the **Guru Granth Sahib**, the holy scripture of **Sikhism**.

DIRECT C–H BOND FUNCTIONALISATION

Context

Researchers at **IIT Bombay** have developed a **single-step method** to convert **straight-chain organic compounds into complex ring-shaped molecules**, enabling faster and more efficient synthesis of bioactive chemicals.

About Direct C–H Bond Functionalisation

- **Nature:** A **synthetic chemistry technique** that selectively converts **carbon–hydrogen (C–H) bonds** in organic molecules into new chemical bonds without requiring prior modification.
- **Developed By:** Researchers from **IIT Bombay**, led by **Prof. Debabrata Maiti**, in collaboration with **Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC)**.
- **Applications:** Enables the rapid synthesis of **bioactive molecules, natural products** such as **Muricatacin (an anticancer compound found in soursop)**, and **industrial chemicals** including **flavours, fragrances, and specialty chemicals**.

JU LANG (JL) MISSILE SERIES

Context

China recently conducted its **first submarine-launched intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) test in international waters**, drawing attention to the **Ju Lang (JL) series** of submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs).

About Ju Lang (JL) Missile Series

- **Nature:** A family of **Submarine-Launched Ballistic Missiles (SLBMs)** developed by **China** as the sea-based component of its **nuclear triad**.
- **Developer:** Developed by the **People's Liberation Army (PLA)** for deployment on **ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs)**.
- **Key Variants**
 - **JL-1:** China's first operational **SLBM**, with a range of **1,700–1,770 km**.
 - **JL-2:** Entered service around **2015**, with a range of **7,000–8,000 km**, enabling China's first credible sea-based nuclear deterrent.
 - **JL-3:** Operational since around **2022**, with an estimated range of **11,000–13,000 km**, capable of carrying **Multiple Independently Targetable Re-entry Vehicles (MIRVs)**.

KORKU COMMUNITY

Context

Members of the **Korku community** recently staged a protest in **Madhya Pradesh**, demanding protection of their forest and land rights.

About Korku Community

- **Nature:** A **Scheduled Tribe (ST)** belonging to the **Munda ethnic group**.
- **Distribution:** Primarily found in **Madhya Pradesh** and adjoining parts of **Maharashtra**, particularly around the **Melghat Tiger Reserve**.
- **Language:** Speaks **Korku**, an **Austroasiatic (Munda) language**, generally written in the **Devanagari script**. The **Korku language** is listed by **UNESCO** among India's **endangered languages**.
- **Traditional Occupation:** Traditionally **hunter-gatherers**, later transitioning to **settled agriculture**.
- **Conservation Practices:** Observes **Hari** and **Jitori** festivals, during which the community undertakes **tree plantation** and promotes environmental conservation.
- **Traditional Dance:** The community performs the **Gadli dance**, in which men wear **white attire with turbans**, while women wear **colourful Kinari sarees** and play a traditional percussion instrument called the **Chitkola**.
- **Tattoo Tradition:** **Tattooing** is an important cultural practice among Korku women, with the '**Kapar-Godai**' tattoo on the forehead being a distinctive traditional motif.
- **Traditional Governance:** The community follows a customary self-governance system known as **Chavadi Swashasan**, which resolves local disputes and manages village affairs.

CYCLOSPORIASIS

Context

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently issued a health advisory following a multi-state outbreak of cyclosporiasis across the United States.

About Cyclosporiasis

- **Nature:** A foodborne parasitic disease caused by a microscopic single-celled protozoan parasite.
- **Transmission:** Spreads through the faecal-oral route by consuming food or water contaminated with infective oocysts (the environmentally matured stage of the parasite).
- **Transmission Pattern:** Does not spread directly from person to person.
- **Common Sources:** Frequently associated with contaminated fresh produce, including leafy vegetables, basil, cilantro, raspberries, and snow peas.

GANDAK RIVER

Context

The Gandak River recently crossed the danger mark in Bihar following heavy rainfall in its catchment areas in Nepal.

About Gandak River

- **Nature:** A transboundary Himalayan river (India and Nepal) and one of the major left-bank tributaries of the Ganga.
- **Origin:** Originates from the Nhubine Himal Glacier in the Mustang region of Nepal, near the Tibet border.
- **Confluence:** Joins the Ganga near Hajipur, Bihar.
- **Gorge:** Flows through the Kali Gandaki Gorge, one of the world's deepest gorges, between the Dhaulagiri and Annapurna mountain ranges.
- **Ecological Importance:** Serves as a vital wildlife corridor connecting Chitwan National Park (Nepal) and Valmiki Tiger Reserve (Bihar).

CAPACITIES PROGRAMME

Context

The progress achieved under the CapaCITIES Programme over the past decade was recently highlighted during the event "Scaling Urban Climate Resilience: The CapaCITIES Legacy and Way Forward."

About CapaCITIES Programme

- **Nature:** A capacity-building initiative to promote low-carbon and climate-resilient urban development in Indian cities.

- **Launched In:** 2016.
- **Funding Agency:** Embassy of Switzerland to India and Bhutan.
- **Implementing Agencies:** ICLEI South Asia, South Pole, and econcept.
- **City Coverage:** Supported cities including **Ahmedabad, Rajkot, Vadodara, Udaipur, Siliguri, Coimbatore, Tiruchirappalli, and Tirunelveli**, along with the **Gujarat** and **Tamil Nadu** state governments.



Mains Exam Topics

TOURISM: UNLOCKING INDIA'S NEXT DEVELOPMENT FRONTIER

Context:

India's hospitality sector has recorded sustained post-pandemic growth, with rising occupancy, higher room tariffs and increasing investor confidence, highlighting tourism's growing role as a driver of economic growth and investment.

How is Tourism Reshaping India's Urban and Rural Landscape?

Urban Landscape

- **Catalyses the Growth of Tier-II and Tier-III Cities:** Tourism is emerging as a new growth engine for smaller cities by attracting investments in hospitality, transport and allied services, reducing excessive concentration of economic activity in metropolitan centres.
 - E.g. Expansion of **regional airports under the UDAN Scheme** has improved connectivity to destinations such as **Deoghar (Jharkhand)** and **Shirdi (Maharashtra)**, boosting tourism-led urban growth.
- **Drives Heritage-Led Urban Regeneration:** Tourism promotes the revitalisation of historic precincts through heritage conservation and improved civic infrastructure, while also contributing to **spatial gentrification** that may displace traditional communities and informal livelihoods.
 - E.g. The **Kashi Vishwanath Corridor** has transformed **Varanasi's** heritage core through integrated urban redevelopment.
- **Creates New Urban and Peri-Urban Pressures:** Rapid tourism expansion often exceeds the **carrying capacity** of destinations, leading to congestion, water scarcity, waste accumulation and unplanned **rurban development** along major tourism corridors.
 - E.g. **Shimla's recurrent water shortages** and increasing ribbon development along the **Rishikesh–Shivpuri** corridor illustrate tourism-induced infrastructure pressures.

Rural Landscape

- **Diversifies Rural Livelihoods:** Tourism generates supplementary income through homestays, handicrafts, agro-tourism, eco-tourism and cultural enterprises, reducing dependence on agriculture while driving **structural transformation** from primary-sector dependence towards diversified service-led rural economies.
 - E.g. **Sikkim's village homestay model** has created sustainable livelihoods while promoting community-based tourism.
- **Promotes Regional Integration and Cultural Revitalisation:** Tourism connects remote, tribal, coastal and hill regions with mainstream markets while creating economic incentives to preserve local crafts, cuisine and cultural traditions.

- **E.g.** The **Swadesh Darshan Scheme** develops thematic circuits such as the **Buddhist, Coastal and Desert Circuits**, expanding tourism-led regional development.
- **Transforms Rural Land Use and Ecological Landscapes:** Unregulated tourism can convert agricultural and ecologically sensitive land into commercial tourism infrastructure, increasing **disaster vulnerability** while encouraging the **commodification of local culture**.
 - **E.g.** Rapid resort expansion in **Himachal Pradesh** and **Uttarakhand**, alongside the ecological fragility highlighted by **Joshimath's land subsidence**, underscores the need for sustainable destination planning.

How Does Tourism Strengthen India's Global Competitiveness and Soft Power?

Global Competitiveness

- **Strengthens High-Value Service Exports:** Tourism complements sectors such as healthcare, hospitality, aviation and **MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions)** tourism, enhancing India's competitiveness in high-value service exports.
 - **E.g.** India's emergence as a **Medical Value Travel (MVT)** hub, alongside world-class convention centres such as **Bharat Mandapam** and **Yashobhoomi**, has strengthened its position in the global MICE market.
- **Improves Global Connectivity:** Seamless international air connectivity, simplified visa regimes and integrated multimodal transport improve India's accessibility, making it a more competitive tourism destination.
 - **E.g.** Expansion of **e-Visa** facilities to over 160 countries, along with growing international air connectivity, has significantly enhanced India's tourism competitiveness.
- **Builds Human Capital and Digital Competitiveness:** Tourism strengthens India's global competitiveness by developing internationally skilled hospitality professionals while leveraging **Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)** to deliver seamless visitor experiences.
 - **E.g.** Expansion of **UPI for international visitors**, **DigiYatra**, and globally benchmarked hospitality training have enhanced India's competitiveness as a technology-enabled tourism destination.

Soft Power

- **Projects India's Civilisational Heritage:** Tourism leverages India's civilisational assets through heritage, Buddhism, Yoga, Ayurveda and spirituality, strengthening cultural diplomacy and strategic partnerships across the Indo-Pacific.
 - **E.g.** The **Buddhist Circuit**, together with India's restoration of **Ta Prohm Temple (Cambodia)** through the **Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)**, reinforces India's civilisational leadership and reflects the enduring legacy of **Ashokan cultural diplomacy**.

- **Strengthens Diaspora Engagement:** Tourism deepens cultural and emotional ties with the Indian diaspora, transforming overseas Indians into ambassadors of India's heritage, investment potential and global influence.
 - **E.g. Pravasi Bharatiya Divas** and the **Know India Programme (KIP)** promote **Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR)** tourism while strengthening India's global cultural connect.
- **Enhances Brand India:** Tourism projects India as a destination of culture, creativity and innovation, strengthening its international reputation and expanding its influence beyond traditional diplomacy.
 - **E.g. India's vibrant film industry (Bollywood)** has popularised destinations such as **Ladakh, Kashmir and Rajasthan**, while attracting international film tourism and reinforcing Brand India.

How Can India Build a Future-Ready Tourism Ecosystem?

- **Strengthen Multi-Level Governance and Regulatory Agility:** Empower the Centre, States, Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) and Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) through integrated destination planning, supported by **Public-Private Partnerships (PPP)**, **Viability Gap Funding (VGF)**, simplified regulations and single-window clearances for tourism enterprises.
 - **E.g. The National Strategy for Sustainable Tourism (2022)** and the **Adopt a Heritage** initiative promote collaborative destination development through public-private partnerships.
- **Develop Integrated Tourism Infrastructure:** Align airports, highways, railways, digital infrastructure and accommodation with destination planning to improve accessibility, regional connectivity and seamless visitor experiences.
 - **E.g. PM Gati Shakti, Swadesh Darshan 2.0**, and **DigiYatra** integrate multimodal connectivity with technology-enabled travel.
- **Promote Sustainable and Community-Led Destination Management:** Adopt carrying-capacity-based planning, climate-resilient infrastructure and community participation to preserve ecological integrity while ensuring local ownership of tourism benefits.
 - **E.g. Travel for LiFE**, together with the **Rural Homestay Scheme** under **Swadesh Darshan 2.0**, promotes responsible and community-based tourism.
- **Strengthen Human Capital and Service Excellence:** Develop globally competitive hospitality professionals through continuous skilling, language proficiency, digital capability and customer-service standards to improve visitor experience.
 - **E.g. The Incredible India Tourist Facilitator (IITF) Certification Programme** promotes professional tourism service standards.

- **Build a Resilient Tourism Ecosystem:** Integrate tourism planning with **NDMA guidelines**, GIS-based destination mapping and disaster-risk reduction frameworks to safeguard tourism assets, visitors and local livelihoods against climate and health emergencies.
 - **E.g.** GIS-based hazard mapping and destination-specific disaster management plans for **Himalayan tourism circuits** can reduce disaster vulnerability and improve crisis preparedness.
- **Diversify Future Tourism Markets:** Develop emerging tourism segments such as **wellness, cruise, eco, accessible (Silver Tourism)** and **immersive digital heritage experiences (AR/VR)** to respond to evolving global travel preferences.
 - **E.g.** The **Heal in India** initiative and **AR/VR-enabled museum experiences** broaden India's tourism portfolio while enhancing visitor engagement.

