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National & International News

Martand Sun Temple



Context:

Recently, members of a lesser-known Hindutva group forcibly entered the **Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)-protected Martand Sun Temple**, raising concerns about the temple's security.

About:

Historical Significance

- Built in the **8th century by King Lalitaditya Muktapida of the Karkota Dynasty**, the Martand Sun Temple serves as a testament to the ruler's political ambitions and desire to showcase his authority through grand construction.
- Reflecting **Kashmiri architecture**, the temple seamlessly integrates Greek, Roman, Iranian, and Indian styles, creating a masterpiece celebrated for its grandeur and artistic excellence.
- Situated atop a plateau, the temple offers breathtaking views, designed as a **colonnaded mandapa encircled by a courtyard**.
- The central shrine dedicated to the **Sun God**, originally surrounded by **84 smaller shrines**, features intricately carved columns illustrating scenes from Hindu mythology, including deities, celestial beings, and mythological figures.
- Noteworthy is the **influence of Greek, Gandharan, Gupta, and Chinese architectural styles**, creating a unique fusion that reflects the cultural assimilation of the region.

Pradhan Mantri Suryoday Yojana

Context:

- The government plans to promote **household rooftop solar systems (h-RTS)** through the Pradhan Mantri Suryoday Yojana.
- The focus is on households consuming less than 300 units of electricity monthly.
- The scheme aims to provide up to **300 units of free electricity to one crore families**.
- Estimated cost of the scheme is at least ₹1 lakh crore.
- The Union government is likely to bear the entire cost of setting up rooftop solar systems.
- Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman mentioned the potential benefits of **₹15,000 to ₹18,000** annually for beneficiary households.



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">India currently has 6.7 lakh households with rooftop solar systems, and the scheme aims for an exponential expansion to reach one crore households.
Exercise Vayushakti-2024	<p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">The Indian Air Force will conduct Exercise Vayu Shakti-24 on 17 February 2024 at the Pokhran Air to Ground Range near Jaisalmer. <p>Key points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">The last edition of Exercise Vayu Shakti took place on 16 February 2019.Vayu Shakti will demonstrate the offensive and defensive capabilities of the Indian Air Force, including both day and night operations.The exercise will showcase joint operations with the Indian Army. <p>Participating Aircraft:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Diverse Fleet: This year, 121 aircraft will participate, featuring indigenous aircraft like Tejas, Prachand, and Dhruv, as well as other notable aircraft such as Rafale, Mirage-2000, Sukhoi-30 MKI, Jaguar, Hawk, C-130J, Chinook, Apache, and Mi-17.The indigenous Surface to Air Weapon systems Akash and Samar will demonstrate their capability to track and shoot down intruding aircraft.
Thanthai Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary	<p>Context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">The Tamil Nadu government officially declares Thanthai Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary as the 18th wildlife sanctuary in the state.Designation covers 80,114.80 hectares of reserve forests in Bargur Hills, Erode district. <p>Geographical Significance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Functions as a critical corridor linking the Nilgiris Biosphere Reserve with the Cauvery South Wildlife Sanctuary.occupies a strategic position in the Eastern Ghats, merging with the Western Ghats at the Nilgiris. <p>Role in Conservation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Functions as a corridor connecting the Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve (STR) to the Male Mahadeshwara Hills Tiger Reserve and the Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary.



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• It plays a crucial role in maintaining a viable tiger population, identified as a tiger corridor by the National Tiger Conservation Authority.• It is a part of the Nilgiris Elephant Reserve, home to a healthy population of large herbivores, including elephants and the Indian Gaur.
Champai Soren's Swearing-in as 12th CM of Jharkhand	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Champai Soren, a leader of Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM), took oath as the twelfth Chief Minister of Jharkhand.• Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) MLA Satyanand Bhokta and Congress MLA Alamgir Alam were sworn in as Cabinet Ministers in the new government.

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