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## National and 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

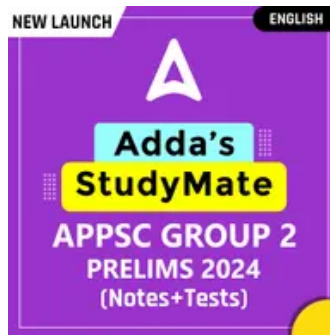


	<p>lakh crore.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Union government is likely to bear the entire cost of setting up rooftop solar systems.</li> <li>• Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman mentioned the potential benefits of <b>₹15,000 to ₹18,000</b> annually for beneficiary households.</li> <li>• India currently has <b>6.7 lakh households</b> with rooftop solar systems, and the scheme aims for an exponential expansion to reach one crore households.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Exercise Vayushakti-2024</b></p>	<p><b>Context:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Indian Air Force will conduct <b>Exercise Vayu Shakti-24 on 17 February 2024</b> at the Pokhran Air to Ground Range near Jaisalmer.</li> </ul> <p><b>Key points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The last edition of Exercise Vayu Shakti took place on <b>16 February 2019</b>.</li> <li>• Vayu Shakti will demonstrate the offensive and defensive capabilities of the Indian Air Force, including both day and night operations.</li> <li>• The exercise will showcase <b>joint operations with the Indian Army</b>.</li> </ul> <p><b>Participating Aircraft:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Diverse Fleet:</b> This year, <b>121 aircraft</b> 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.</li> <li>• The indigenous Surface to Air Weapon systems Akash and Samar will demonstrate their capability to track and shoot down intruding aircraft.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Thanthai Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary</b></p>	<p><b>Context:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Tamil Nadu government officially declares <b>Thanthai Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary as the 18th wildlife sanctuary in the state</b>.</li> <li>• Designation covers 80,114.80 hectares of reserve forests in <b>Bargur Hills, Erode district</b>.</li> </ul>



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	<p><b>Geographical Significance:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Functions as a critical corridor linking the <b>Nilgiris Biosphere Reserve with the Cauvery South Wildlife Sanctuary.</b></li> <li>• Occupies a strategic position in the Eastern Ghats, merging with the Western Ghats at the Nilgiris.</li> </ul> <p><b>Role in Conservation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Functions as a corridor connecting the <b>Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve (STR) to the Male Mahadeshwara Hills Tiger Reserve</b> and the Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary.</li> <li>• It plays a crucial role in maintaining a viable tiger population, identified as a tiger corridor by the National Tiger Conservation Authority.</li> <li>• It is a part of the Nilgiris Elephant Reserve, home to a healthy population of large herbivores, including elephants and the Indian Gaur.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Champai Soren's Swearing-in as 12th CM of Jharkhand</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Champai Soren, a leader of <b>Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM)</b>, took oath as the <b>twelfth Chief Minister of Jharkhand.</b></li> <li>• Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) MLA Satyanand Bhokta and Congress MLA Alamgir Alam were sworn in as Cabinet Ministers in the new government.</li> </ul>



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