



## Kushinagar International Airport

---

 drishtiias.com/printpdf/kushinagar-international-airport

### Why in News

---

The **Kushinagar Airport in Uttar Pradesh** is the **latest entrant in India's list of international Airports**. The airport is expected to provide seamless **connectivity to people from South east and East Asian countries for Buddhist Pilgrimage Tourism**.

Kushinagar is the **centre of the Buddhist circuit**, which consists of pilgrimage sites at Lumbini, Sarnath, Gaya and others.

### Key Points

---

#### **Kushinagar Airport and Cultural Diplomacy:**

- The inauguration of Kushinagar International airport is set to be a landmark in the **India-Sri Lanka relations**.
- On the occasion of Airport's inauguration, Sri Lanka will present to India photographs of two **mural paintings**:
  - One Mural Painting shows **Arahat Bhikkhu' Mahinda**, son of Emperor Ashoka delivering the message of the Buddha to **King Devanampiyatissa of Sri Lanka**.
  - The other shows the arrival of **'Theri Bhikkhuni' Sanghamitta**, the daughter of the Emperor, in Sri Lanka, bearing a sapling of the **'sacred Bodhi tree'** under which Siddhārtha Gautama is believed to have attained enlightenment.
- The Buddhist circuit reflects the **use of soft power in India's foreign policy**.
- The emphasis on **Buddhist diplomacy**, will help counter increasing **Chinese influence in Sri Lanka** and improve people to people relations (especially in the context of the aftermath of **Sri-lankan Civil War**).
- Further, the Buddhist faith, due to its **emphasis on peaceful co-existence and its wide pan-Asian presence**, lends itself well to soft-power diplomacy.

### Spread of Buddhism in Sri Lanka

- Buddhism was **first brought to Sri Lanka by a mission** sent out from eastern India **during the reign of the Mauryan emperor Ashoka** (c. 273–232 BCE).
- The **leader of the mission to Sri Lanka, Mahendra (Mahinda)**, is described as Ashoka's son.

### About Buddhist Circuit:

- In 2014-15, the **Ministry of Tourism** launched the **Swadesh Darshan scheme** with a vision to develop theme-based tourist circuits on the principles of high tourist value.
  - The Ministry has identified **Buddhist Circuit** as one of the **fifteen thematic circuits** for development under the scheme.
- The Buddhist circuit is a route that **follows in the footsteps of the Buddha** from Lumbini in Nepal to Kushinagar in Uttar Pradesh in India, where he died.
  - Buddhist pilgrims consider **Kushinagar** a sacred site where, they believe, Gautama Buddha delivered his last sermon and attained '**Mahaparinirvana**' or salvation.
- Investing in the Buddhist Circuit is the result of **first-time collaboration** between the Government of India's Ministry of Tourism, the State Governments of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, the private sector, Buddhist monasteries and sects, and the **World Bank Group**.

### Buddhist Circuit



### **Other Initiatives Taken to Promote Buddhist Sites:**

- **PRASHAD Scheme:** 30 projects for **development of infrastructure** have been undertaken under the PRASHAD Scheme.
- **Iconic Tourist Sites:** Buddhist Sites at **Bodhgaya, Ajanta & Ellora** have been identified to be developed as Iconic Tourist Sites.
- **Buddhist Conclave:** It is organised every alternate year with the objective of promoting India as a Buddhist Destination and major markets around the globe.
- **Diversity of Languages:** Signages have been installed in **Chinese** language at buddhist monuments in Uttar Pradesh and in **Sinhala** language (official language of Sri Lanka) at Sanchi monuments in Madhya Pradesh.

### **Buddha Path**

- Buddha was **born in 563 BC at Lumbini, in Nepal.**
- He preached that one should avoid the excess of both luxury and austerity. He advocated the “**madhyam marg**” (middle path).
- The **eight-fold path** (extraordinary Teachings of the Buddha) comprised the following:
  - Right view.
  - Right resource.
  - Right speech.
  - Right conduct.
  - Right livelihood.
  - Right effort.
  - Right mindfulness.
  - Right concentration.
- The ‘**Buddha Path**’ also refers to the **Eight Great Places of Buddhist Heritage** (referred in Pali as **Aṭṭhamahāṭhānāni**). They are:
  - **Lumbini (Nepal)**- Buddha was born.
  - **Bodh Gaya (Bihar)**- Attained enlightenment.
  - **Sarnath (Varanasi, U.P.)**- First sermon.
  - **Kushinagar (Gorakhpur, U.P.)**- Buddha died.
  - **Rajgir (Bihar)**- Where the Lord tamed a mad elephant.
  - **Vaishali (Bihar)**- Where a monkey offered honey to him.
  - **Sravasti (U.P.)**- The Lord took his seat on a thousand petaled lotus and created multiple representations of himself.
  - **Sankasya** (Farrukhabad, Uttar Pradesh)- He descended from heaven.

**Source: TH**