



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

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.

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