



Shri Mahakal Lok Corridor

For Prelims: Shri Mahakal Lok Corridor, Mahakal Temple of Ujjain, Kashi Vishwanath Corridor, Temple Architecture.

For Mains: Temple Architecture of India, Shri Mahakal Lok Corridor and its Significance.

Why in News?

Recently, the Prime Minister inaugurated the first phase of the **'Shri Mahakal Lok' corridor in Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh.**

- After Vishwanath temple in Varanasi and the Kedarnath shrine in Uttarakhand, **Mahakal temple is the third 'jyotirlinga' site to see a major upliftment exercise.**
- The Rs **800-crore Mahakal corridor is four times the size of the [Kashi Vishwanath Corridor.](#)**

What is the Shri Mahakal Lok Corridor?

- **About:**
 - **Mahakal Maharaj Mandir Parisar Vistar Yojna** is a plan for the **expansion, beautification, and decongestion** of the Mahakaleshwar temple and its adjoining area in Ujjain district.
 - Under the plan, the Mahakaleshwar temple premises of around **2.82 hectares is being increased to 47 hectares**, which will be **developed in two phases by the Ujjain district administration.**
 - This will include the **17 hectares of Rudrasagar lake.**
 - The project is expected to increase annual footfall in the city from the current 1.50 crore to nearly three crores.
- **First Phase:**
 - One of the aspects of the Vistar Yojna's first phase is a **visitor plaza with two entrances** or Dwaars i.e., the **Nandi Dwaar** and the **Pinaki Dwaar.**
 - The visitor plaza can **hold up to 20,000 pilgrims at a time.**
 - A **circulation plan to reduce congestion** has also been developed, keeping in mind the entry of visitors into the city and their movement up to the temple.
 - A **900-metre pedestrian corridor** has been constructed, **connecting the plaza to the Mahakal temple**, dotted with **108 murals** and **93 statues** depicting stories related to Lord Shiva, such as Shiv Vivah, Tripurasur Vadh, Shiv Puran, and Shiv Tandav Swaroop.
 - There are also **128 convenience points, eateries and shopping joints, florists, handicraft stores**, etc. along this pedestrian corridor.
- **Second Phase:**
 - This includes **expansion of the eastern and northern fronts** of the temple.
 - It also includes development of various areas of Ujjain city, such as **Maharajwada, Mahal Gate, Hari Phatak Bridge, Ramghat façade, and Begam Bagh Road.**
 - **Buildings in Maharajwada will be redeveloped** and connected to the Mahakal temple campus, while a **heritage dharamshala** and **Kumbh**

museum will be built.

- The second phase is being developed with funding from **Agence Francaise de Development (AFD)** under the **City Investments to Innovate, Integrate and Sustain (CITIIS)** programme.

What is the Significance of Shri Mahakal Lok Corridor?

- **Immense Cultural Beliefs:** The temple is believed to be governed by **Mahakaleshwar**, which means the '**Lord of time**' i.e., **Lord Shiva**. As per Hindu mythology, the temple was **constructed by Lord Brahma** and is presently located alongside the **holy river Kshipra**.
- **Only Jyotirlinga Facing South:** Mahakaleshwar Jyotirlinga in Ujjain is **one of the 12 jyotirlingas** considered the most sacred abodes of Shiva. The shrine is revered as **one of the 18 Maha Shaktia Peeth** in India.
 - It is the **only jyotirlinga facing the south**, while all the others face east. This is because the direction of death is believed to be the south.
 - In fact, people worship Mahakaleshwar to prevent an untimely death.
 - According to the Puranas, **Lord Shiva pierced the world as an endless pillar of light, called the jyotirlinga**.
 - Besides Mahakal, these include **Somnath** and **Nageshwar** in Gujarat, **Mallikarjuna** in Andhra Pradesh, **Omkareshwar** in Madhya Pradesh, **Kedarnath** in Uttarakhand, **Bhimashankar**, **Triyambakeshwar** and **Grishneshwar** in Maharashtra, **Viswanath** at Varanasi, **Baidyanath** in Jharkhand, and **Rameswaram** in Tamil Nadu.
- **Mention in Ancient Texts:** The Mahakal temple finds a **mention in several ancient Indian poetic texts**. In the early part of the Meghadutam (Purva Megha) composed in the **4th century**, **Kalidasa** gives a description of the Mahakal temple.
 - It is described as one with a **stone foundation, with the ceiling on wooden pillars**. There would be **no shikharas or spires on the temples prior to the Gupta period**.
- **Destruction and Rebuilt of Temple:** During the medieval period, Islamic rulers used to give donations to priests for offering prayers here.
 - In the **13th century**, the **temple complex was destroyed** by Turk ruler **Shams-ud-din Iltutmish** during his raid on Ujjain.
 - The **present-day five-storeyed structure** was built by the **Maratha general Ranoji Shinde in 1734**, in the **Bhumija, Chalukya and Maratha styles of temple architecture**.

What is the Historical Significance of the City of Ujjain?

- The city of Ujjain was one of the **primary centres of learning for Hindu scriptures, called Avantika** in the 6th and 7th centuries BC.
- Later, astronomers and mathematicians such as **Brahmagupta** and **Bhaskaracharya** made Ujjain their home.
 - In the 18th century, an **observatory was built here by Maharaja Jai Singh II**, known as the **Vedh Shala or Jantar Mantar**, comprising **13 architectural instruments to measure astronomical phenomena**.
- Also, as per the **Surya Siddhanta**, one of the earliest available texts on Indian astronomy dating back to the 4th century, **Ujjain is geographically situated** at a spot where the **zero meridian of longitude and the Tropic of Cancer intersect**.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q. With reference to Chausath Yogini Temple situated near Morena, consider the following statements: (2021)

1. It is a circular temple built during the reign of Kachchhapaghata Dynasty.
2. It is the only circular temple built in India.
3. It was meant to promote the Vaishnava cult in the region.
4. Its design has given rise to a popular belief that it was the inspiration behind the Indian Parliament building.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 4 only
(d) 2, 3 and 4 only

Ans: (c)

Exp:

- The Chausath Yogini temple is in Mitaoli village, near Padhaoli in Morena district 40 km from Gwalior. The Archaeological Survey of India has declared the temple an ancient and historical monument.
- According to an inscription dated to 1323 AD, the temple was built by the Kachchhapaghata king Devapala (reigned 1055 – 1075). It is said that the temple was the venue of providing education in astrology and mathematics based on the transit of the Sun. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- The Chausath Yogini Temple is also known as Ekattarso Mahadeva Temple. Standing atop an isolated hill of about a hundred feet high, this circular temple commands a splendid view of the cultivated fields below and is one among the very few such temples in India. This temple is so named because of the presence of a multitude of shiva lingas inside its cells. This is a yogini temple dedicated to sixty-four yoginis. **Hence, statements 2 and 3 are not correct.**
- It is externally circular in shape with a radius of 170 feet and within its interior part it has 64 small chambers. Within the main central shrine there are slab coverings which have perforations in them to drain rainwater to a large underground storage. The pipe lines from the roof leading the rain water to the storage are also visible.
- Many of the curious visitors have compared this temple with the Indian Parliament building (Sansad Bhawan) as both are circular in style. Many have drawn conclusions that this temple was the inspiration behind the Sansad Bhawan. **Hence, statement 4 is correct.**
- **Therefore, option C is the correct answer.**

Mains

Q. The rock-cut architecture represents one of the most important sources of our knowledge of early Indian art and history. Discuss. **(2020)**

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