



Vikramshila University

Why in News?

A decade after establishing [Nalanda University in Rajgir](#), Bihar has intensified efforts to revive another ancient center of learning—**Vikramshila University**.

- Since December 2024, [the Archaeological Survey of India \(ASI\)](#) has been developing the Vikramshila site to enhance its appeal as a tourist destination.

Key Points

- **About the Project:**
 - The **Centre approved the Vikramshila University project in 2015 and sanctioned Rs 500 crore**, but progress stalled due to delays in land identification by the Bihar government.
 - On 24th February 2025, Prime Minister reaffirmed the government's commitment to reviving Vikramshila, emphasizing its historical significance as a global center of knowledge.
- **Archaeological Conservation and Preservation:**
 - Workers are actively engaged in clearing vegetation and exposing architectural **features at the ruins of Vikramshila Mahavihar**.
 - The site has been divided into grids as part of ASI's systematic conservation efforts.
 - A cruciform brick stupa, the centerpiece of Vikramshila, stands surrounded by **208 monastic cells** where student-monks once practiced [Tantrayana Buddhism](#).
- **Historical Significance of Vikramshila:**
 - **Founded by [Pala King Dharmapala \(late 8th-early 9th century AD\)](#)**, Vikramshila thrived alongside Nalanda University.
 - While Nalanda gained fame for its broad academic disciplines, **Vikramshila specialized in tantric and occult studies**.
 - During Dharmapala's reign, Vikramshila was the dominant institution, even overseeing Nalanda's affairs.
 - Both universities had a common patron and exchanged scholars known as Acharyas.
- **Academic Excellence and Global Influence:**
 - Vikramshila offered **courses in theology, philosophy, grammar, metaphysics, and logic**, but its primary focus was on Tantrayana Buddhism.
 - **Atisa Dipankara, one of Vikramshila's most renowned scholars**, played a pivotal role in spreading Buddhism to Tibet.
 - The university flourished for nearly four centuries before **declining in the 13th century**, due to the resurgence of Hinduism, the decline of Buddhism, and **invasions by [Bakhtiyar Khalji](#)**.
- **Modern Revival Efforts:**
 - The Bihar government has approved Rs 87.99 crore for land acquisition in Antichak village, located 3 km from the ancient Vikramshila site.
 - Bhagalpur district administration has identified 202.14 acres for the new Central university, of which 27 acres belong to the state but are occupied by local families.

Nalanda University



- **Gupta Emperor** Kumaragupta (Shakraditya) of the **Gupta dynasty** founded Nalanda University in **427 CE** in modern Bihar in the early 5th century, and it flourished for 600 years until the 12th century.
- During the era of **Harshavardhana** and the **Palas monarchs**, it rose to popularity.
- During **King Harshavardhana's reign (606-647 AD)** Chinese scholar **Xuan Zang** (also known as **Hiuen Tsang** and **Moksadeva**, a **7th-century Chinese Buddhist monk**, scholar, traveller, and translator) came here and studied for about 5 years.
 - He also carried back many scriptures from Nalanda, which were later translated into Chinese.
- In **670 AD**, another Chinese pilgrim **I-Tsing** visited Nalanda. He stated that Nalanda housed 2,000 students and was supported by money from 200 villages.
 - A large number of students have come to study from **China, Mongolia, Tibet, Korea**, and other Asian countries.
- Archaeological evidence also indicates contact with the **Indonesian Shailendra dynasty**, one of whose kings built a monastery in the complex.
- Spiritual divines like **Lord Buddha** and **Lord Mahavira** meditated in this region, adding to the positive vibrancy of the area.
- Great masters such as **Nagarjuna, Aryabhatta**, and Dharmakirti contributed to the scholarly traditions of ancient Nalanda.
- The university was **destroyed in 1193** by **Bakhtiyar Khilji**, a general of the **Turkish ruler Qutbuddin Aibak**.
- It was rediscovered in 1812 by Scottish surveyor **Francis Buchanan-Hamilton** and later identified as the ancient university by **Sir Alexander Cunningham** in 1861.