



# Inauguration of Nalanda University

## Why in News?

Recently, the campus of Nalanda University was formally inaugurated by the Prime Minister of India.

- It is spread across 455 acres, located in Rajgir, Bihar. The site is only 12 km away from the ruins of the ancient Buddhist monastery of the same name.

## What is the History and Revival Efforts of Nalanda University?

### ▪ History:

- [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 12<sup>th</sup> 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 **7<sup>th</sup>-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, Aryabhata**, 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 Outbuddin 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.

### ▪ Attacks:

- The first attack on Nalanda Mahavihara occurred between **455-470 AD** during the reign of Emperor **Samudragupta** of the Gupta Empire.
  - The attackers were the **Hunas**, a Central Asian tribal group, primarily motivated by the **desire to loot the university's valuable resources**.
  - [Emperor Skanda Gupta](#) later re-established the university. It was during his reign that the renowned Nalanda library was founded.
- The second attack on Nalanda Mahavihara occurred in the **early 7<sup>th</sup> century**, planned by **Goudas emperors** of Bengal.
  - The attack was driven by political tensions with **Emperor Harshavardhana** of Kannauj.
  - Despite destruction, the university was restored by Harshavardhana, allowing Nalanda to continue its mission of global knowledge dissemination.

### ▪ Revival:

- The idea for revival emerged in the early 2000s. Former President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, the **Singapore** government, and leaders of [East Asian Summit \(EAS\)](#) countries all advocated for Nalanda's return.
- The **Indian Parliament** passed the **Nalanda University Act in 2010**, providing a legal framework for the new institution.
- Nalanda University is envisioned as a **collaborative effort** between **India** and other **East Asian nations**, symbolising a renewed focus on regional knowledge exchange.
- The Bihar government provided a 455-acre site near the ancient ruins. The architect, **B.V. Doshi**, **designed an eco-friendly campus** reflecting the spirit of the past while incorporating modern amenities.
- The **university offers postgraduate programs in various fields**, including Buddhist Studies, Historical Studies, Ecology and Environmental Studies, and International Relations.
- The **Campus is a 'Net Zero' Green Campus**. It is self-sustainable with a solar plant, domestic and drinking water treatment plant, **water recycling plant for reusing wastewater**, 100 acres of water bodies, and many other environment friendly facilities.
- The ruins of Nalanda University was declared as a [UN Heritage Site](#) in 2016.

### East Asia Summit:

- The EAS was established in 2005 as an [Association of Southeast Asian Nations \(ASEAN\)](#)-led **initiative**.
- It is the only leader-led forum in the Indo-Pacific that brings together all key partners to discuss political, security and economic issues of strategic importance.
- It operates on the principles of **openness, inclusiveness, respect for international law, ASEAN centrality, and ASEAN's role as the driving force**.

### UNESCO's Heritage Sites Related to Buddhism:

- Archaeological Site of **Nalanda Mahavihara at Nalanda, Bihar**
- Buddhist Monuments at [Sanchi](#), MP
- [Mahabodhi Temple](#) Complex at Bodh Gaya, Bihar
- [Ajanta Caves](#) Aurangabad, Maharashtra.
- The **Buddhist chanting of Ladakh** was included in [UNESCO's Representative List of Humanity's Intangible Cultural Heritage](#) in 2012.

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