



Annual Free Train Scheme to Ayodhya Ram Mandir

Why in News?

Recently, the Chhattisgarh government sanctioned **an annual free train travel scheme for devotees who want to visit the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Temple in Uttar Pradesh's Ayodhya.**

- It will be **implemented by the Chhattisgarh Tourism Board and the state tourism department** would allocate a necessary budget for the same.

Key Points

- **Not everyone can avail this scheme as of now** as a committee would be set up under the collectors to select pilgrims.
 - As per a state government release, those **eligible to avail this scheme** should be fit individuals **aged between 18 and 75 years** and those **above 55 years will be given priority in the initial phase.**
- **Around 20,000 people** would be **taken to Ayodhya on yearly pilgrimage by train.**
 - Stations for boarding are **Raipur, Durg, Raigarh, and Ambikapur**, with the 900-km journey culminating in Ayodhya.
 - There is also a **stopover at Varanasi** for devotees **to visit the Kashi Vishwanath temple and attend the Ganga Aarti.**
- **A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** will also be signed **with the Indian Railways Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC)** to implement the scheme.
- **A weekly special train will also be arranged for pilgrims** wanting to visit Ayodhya.

Note

- The state government had declared **January 22 as a dry day in the entire state**, given the **consecration of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya.**
- **Chhattisgarh** is the '**nanihal**' (the place of his maternal grandparents) of Lord Ram.
 - **Chandkhuri**, a village located 27 km from Chhattisgarh capital Raipur, is **considered as the birthplace of Mata Kaushalya, mother of Lord Ram.**
 - The ancient **Mata Kaushalya temple situated in the village** was given a magnificent look during the previous government in the state.