



Milkweed Fiber | Rajasthan | 24 Dec 2024

Why in News?

Recently, the [Ministry of Textiles](#) has strengthened collaboration in developing [India's textile industry](#) by extending its **research and development efforts** into new [natural fibers](#), including **milkweed fiber**.

Key Points

- **Strategic Engagement:**
 - The Minister of Textiles, in a meeting facilitated by Invest India, engaged with Uniqlo's senior officials to **reaffirm the commitment to strengthening India's textile sector**.
 - This also focuses on improving cotton production capabilities, productivity, and quality in India.
- **Uniqlo's Contribution to India's Textile Ecosystem:**
 - Uniqlo operates **15 stores across India**, achieving a **retail revenue of Rs 814 crore as of 31st March 2024**, with a growth rate of 30%.
- **Alignment with India's Textile Growth Goals:**
 - India targets a textile market size of USD 350 billion and USD 100 billion in exports by 2030.
 - The Ministry has invited Uniqlo to invest in the [Prime Minister's Mega Integrated Textile Region and Apparel \(PM MITRA\) Parks](#), offering a ready-to-perform ecosystem with sustainable operations.
- **Upcoming Collaboration Opportunities:**
 - Uniqlo will participate in the ["Bharat Tex" Global Textile Expo](#) in February 2025 highlighting innovation, sustainability, and traceability.
- **Milkweed Fiber:**
 - **About:**
 - It is the **seed fiber obtained from milkweed plants**.
 - Milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca L*) plant **belongs to the genus Asclepias of the family Asclepiadaceae** and is **also known as stubborn weed**.
 - In India, it is found as a wild plant in the states of **Rajasthan, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu**.
 - Milkweed contains an **abundance of milk sap in its leaves, stems and pods**.
 - **Properties:**
 - It contains **oily material and lignin, a woody plant substance**, which makes them too brittle for spinning.
 - It has a **hydrophobic-oleophobic surface due to the natural waxes** found on the surface of the fiber.
 - **Applications:**
 - It is used in **paper industries**.
 - In addition, it is also used as an **insulative filling material**.
 - It is used in such **water-safety equipment as life jackets and belts**.
 - Researchers discovered that it **readily absorbs oil while simultaneously repelling water**, thus making it an effective fiber to help clean up oil spills.

PM MITRA Scheme

- PM MITRA Park will be developed by a **Special Purpose Vehicle** which will be owned by the Central and State Government and in a **Public Private Partnership (PPP) Mode**.
- Each MITRA Park will have an **incubation centre, common processing house and a common effluent treatment plant** and other textile related facilities such as design centres and testing centres.

IGNCA Regional Centre Inaugurated in Jammu | Jammu & Kashmir | 24 Dec 2024

Why in News?

Recently, the Lieutenant Governor of J&K, **Manoj Sinha**, inaugurated the regional center of the **Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA)** in Jammu.

Key Points

- **Role of Folk Traditions and IGNCA's Contribution:**
 - **Jammu's folk traditions** have been a source of enduring values and ideals, sustaining society through generations.
 - The IGNCA regional centre will nurture cultural virtues, enhance quality of life, and support the preservation and **promotion of Jammu's rich art and cultural heritage**.
 - The intelligentsia was urged to collaborate with organisations like IGNCA to **promote Jammu and Kashmir's artistic heritage and to preserve and propagate the Vedic oral tradition**.
 - India's civilisational ethos of **"Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" (the world is one family)** and its ongoing relevance globally was highlighted.
- **Role of Youth in Cultural Preservation:**
 - The L-G called on enlightened citizens and stakeholders to encourage artistic thinking in the younger generation, leveraging their creative potential to benefit society.
 - He stressed the importance of making **regional literature, folk music, drama, and Pahari art accessible in every household through articles, monographs, and books**.
- **'Toycathon' Initiative:**
 - The L-G commended **'Toycathon 2024'**, an initiative aimed at grassroots innovation by **designing toys based on local cultural ethos and the lives of regional heroes**.

Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA)

- It was **established in 1987** as an **autonomous institution under the Ministry of Culture**, as a centre for research, academic pursuit and dissemination in the field of the arts.
- The **IGNCA has a trust (i.e. Board of Trustees), which meets regularly to give general direction** about the Centre's work. The Executive Committee, drawn from among the Trustees, functions under a Chairman.
- It is a research unit under **Project Mausam**.
 - Project 'Mausam' is a Ministry of Culture project with **Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)**, New Delhi as the nodal agency.
 - The central themes that hold Project 'Mausam' together are those of **cultural routes and maritime landscapes that not only linked different parts of the Indian Ocean littoral, but also connected the coastal centres to their hinterlands**.

Infrastructure Development at J&K Tourist Sites | Jammu & Kashmir

| 24 Dec 2024

Why in News?

Recently, the [World Bank](#) has enlisted **four places in Jammu and Kashmir** to be developed as **international tourist destinations**.

- **These places are** Bhaderwah in Doda, Bradari in Reasi, Kokernag in Anantnag and Dodapathri in Budgam.

Key Points

- **World Bank's Intention in Development:**
 - The World Bank intends to fund infrastructure in **specific locations in Jammu and Kashmir to meet international tourism standards.**
- **Planned Projects and Funding:**
 - The World Bank plans to fund infrastructure projects, including:
 - Development of **Bhal Padri meadow and Guldanda meadow**
 - Upgradation of **Jai Valley**
 - Establishment of **Gondola cable car services at Seoz meadows in Bhaderwah**
 - Interest has been shown in developing [the Kailash Yatra](#) route to leverage its significant pilgrimage tourism potential.
- **Broader Revamp in J&K:**
 - Other locations to benefit from the initiative include:
 - Dodapathri in Budgam district
 - Kokernag in Anantnag district
 - Bradari in Reasi district
- **Collaboration and Approval:**
 - The project will be executed in **collaboration with the central government.**
 - **Final approval for funding rests with the World Bank**, which will assess the potential of these locations before proceeding.
- **Significance of the Initiative:**
 - The initiative **aims to boost pilgrimage [tourism](#), [handicrafts](#), [herbal tourism](#), and [adventure tourism](#) in the region.**

World Bank

- **About:**
 - It was **created in 1944**, as the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) along with the [International Monetary Fund \(IMF\)](#). **The IBRD later became the World Bank.**
 - The World Bank Group is a unique global partnership of five institutions working for sustainable solutions that reduce poverty and build shared prosperity in developing countries.
 - The World Bank is one of the [United Nations](#)' specialized agencies.
- **Members:**
 - It has **189 member countries.**
 - **India is also a member** country.
- **Major Reports:**

- [Ease of Doing Business \(Stopped publishing\)](#).
- [Human Capital Index](#).
- [World Development Report](#).
- **Its Five Development Institutions:**
 - [International Bank for Reconstruction and Development \(IBRD\)](#)
 - [International Development Association \(IDA\)](#)
 - International Finance Corporation (IFC)
 - [Multilateral Guarantee Agency \(MIGA\)](#)
 - International Centre for the Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID)
 - **India is not a member of ICSID.**

Rise in Forest Fires in Uttarakhand | Uttarakhand | 24 Dec 2024

Why in News?

According to the report by [the Forest Survey of India \(FSI\)](#), Uttarakhand has recorded a **74% rise** in [forest fires](#).

Key Points

- **Satellite Observations and Fire Counts:**
 - In **Uttarakhand**, satellite data recorded a significant rise in fire incidents, with **21,033 fire counts from November 2023 to June 2024**, compared to 5,351 during the same period in 2022–2023.
 - A total of 1,808.9 sq km of forest area was impacted by fires during the season.
 - **Andhra Pradesh** reported the highest fire-affected area (5,286.76 sq km) followed by **Maharashtra** (4,095.04 sq km) and **Telangana** (3,983.28 sq km), **Himachal Pradesh** (783.11 sq km).
- **Top Affected States:**
 - **Chhattisgarh:** 18,950 incidents.
 - **Andhra Pradesh:** 18,174 incidents.
 - **Maharashtra:** 16,008 incidents.
 - **Madhya Pradesh:** 15,878 incidents.
 - **Telangana:** 13,479 incidents.
- **High-Risk Areas:**
 - **Uttarakhand**, Himachal Pradesh, and Jammu and Kashmir were declared as "**very high risk**" zones.
- **Nationwide Risk:**
 - Approximately 11.34% of India's forest cover and scrub area lies in extremely to **very highly fire-prone zones**, with vulnerable patches in **Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, and Uttarakhand**.
- **Fire Susceptibility:**
 - Climatic conditions like **extreme heat and availability of fuel wood** contribute significantly to forest fire susceptibility.
 - Fires often **spread rapidly** to other forest areas **due to the presence of combustible material**.
 - This data highlights the growing severity of forest fires in India, with **substantial ecological and environmental implications**.

Forest Survey of India

- **Established:** Established on **1st June 1981**, succeeding the **Pre Investment Survey of Forest Resources (PISFR) initiated in 1965**.
 - In **1976**, the **National Commission on Agriculture (NCA)** recommended establishing a **National Forest Survey Organization**, leading to the creation of **FSI**.
 - PISFR was initiated in **1965** by the Government of India with the sponsorship of **Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)** and **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)**.
- **Parent Organization:** **Ministry of Environment and Forests**, Government of India.
- **Primary Objective:** To **assess and monitor the forest resources** of India regularly.
 - In addition, it is also engaged in providing the services of **training, research and extension**.
- **Functioning:** FSI has headquarters at **Dehradun** and has pan India presence with four regional offices at **Shimla, Kolkata, Nagpur and Bangalore**.
 - The Eastern zone has a sub centre at **Burnihat (Meghalaya)**.

Ancient Stepwell Unearthed in UP | Uttar Pradesh | 24 Dec 2024

Why in News?

Recently, a stepwell **approximately 125 to 150 years old**, covering an area of 400 square meters, was unearthed during excavation in the **Laxman Ganj area of Chandausi**.

Key Points

- **Excavation Overview:**
 - The excavation follows the **reopening of the Bhasma Shankar temple in Sambhal** on 13th December 2024, **after 46 years of closure**.
 - Officials reported discovering the structure during the excavation, **including two damaged idols found in the temple's well**.
 - Locals claim the stepwell was **built during the reign of the maternal grandfather of the king of Bilari**.
- **Architectural Features:**
 - The **well's upper floor is made of bricks**, while the **lower two floors are constructed with marble**.
 - The structure also **includes four rooms and a well**.

MP High Court Give NOC to Slaughterhouse in Mandsaur | Madhya Pradesh | 24 Dec 2024

Why in News?

Recently, the **Madhya Pradesh High Court** has ordered a civic official in Mandsaur to grant a **No Objection Certificate (NOC) for a buffalo slaughterhouse**, calling the denial of permission

"unacceptable."

Key Points

- **Argument by Local Body:**
 - The local body **denied the NOC application**, citing that **Mandsaur is a religious city**, making it inappropriate to permit a slaughterhouse.
 - The court termed this reasoning as **"wholly unacceptable"** during the hearing.
- **Sacred Area:**
 - The State government, in a **notification dated 9th December 2011**, declared a **100-metre radius around Lord Shiva's Pashupatinath temple in Mandsaur** as a **"sacred area."**
- **Court's Observation:**
 - The Court clarified that the **entire city cannot be categorized as a sacred area** based on the notification.

Pashupatinath Temple

- It is also known as the **Mandsaur Shiva temple**.
- It is located on the **Shivna River** and is known for its **eight-faced Shiva Linga**. The temple's sculptures are dated to the **5th or 6th century**.
- It is **made of a smooth, dark coppery rock block**.
 - The temple also has a 100 kg gold-plated pitcher.

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