



Mukhya Mantri Tirth Yatra Scheme

Why in News?

Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini announced that the Haryana government is **facilitating pilgrims** to visit [Ayodhya and other sacred sites](#) through the [Mukhya Mantri Tirth Yatra scheme](#).

Key Points

- Under the scheme, members of **families with annual income less than ₹1.80 lakh** who are **more than 60 years of age** are taken for pilgrimages to **Ayodhya, Varanasi, and other holy sites**.
- According to the CM, the state government has taken several steps to boost religious tourism in the State.
 - **Kurukshetra is becoming a center for religious tourism**, attracting visitors from across the country and internationally.
 - There are **endeavors to explore the tourism opportunities** in other locations as well.

Varanasi

- Varanasi is in **southeastern Uttar Pradesh state**. It is located on the **left bank of the Ganges (Ganga) River** and is one of the seven sacred cities of Hinduism.
- It is one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world. Its early history is that of the **first Aryan settlement in the middle Ganges valley**.
 - Varanasi was the **capital of the kingdom of Kashi** during the time of the [Buddha \(6th century BCE\)](#), who gave his first sermon nearby at Sarnath.
 - The city remained a **centre of religious, educational, and artistic activities** as attested by the celebrated [Chinese Buddhist pilgrim Xuanzang](#), who **visited it in about 635 CE**.
- Varanasi subsequently **declined during three centuries of Muslim occupation**, beginning in 1194.
- Varanasi **became an independent kingdom in the 18th century**, and under subsequent British rule it remained a commercial and religious centre.
 - **In 1910, the British made Varanasi a new Indian state**, with Ramnagar (on the opposite bank) as headquarters but with no jurisdiction over the city of Varanasi.
- In 1947, **after Indian independence**, the Varanasi state became part of the state of Uttar Pradesh.