

UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation 2024

The winners of the 2024 UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation have been announced.

Key Points

- ❖ Eight outstanding projects from across the region were recognized for their efforts in restoring and conserving heritage structures.
- ❖ This year's awards attracted 52 entries from 14 countries, with the jury evaluating projects based on their understanding of place, technical achievements, and sustainability.
- ❖ **Award of Excellence:** The Inari-yu Bathhouse Restoration Project in Tokyo, Japan, received the Award of Excellence for its exceptional work in preserving heritage while promoting social cohesion and community resilience. It is UNESCO's highest honor.



- ❖ **Award of Distinction:** Two projects earned the Award of Distinction:
 - The Gunan Street Historic Block Conservation Project in Jiangsu province, China, and
 - The Abathsahayeshwarar Temple Conservation Project in Tamil Nadu, India.
- ❖ **Award of Merit:** Four projects received the Award of Merit, including:
 - Guanyin Hall Teahouse in China
 - Helou Pavilion in China,
 - BJPCI in Mumbai, India, and
 - Observatory Tower in Christchurch, New Zealand.
- ❖ **Award for New Design in Heritage Contexts:** The Award for New Design in Heritage Contexts was presented to the Rabinhorn Building in Bangkok, Thailand, for transforming a school gymnasium into a functional and visually striking space.
- ❖ The jury also gave special recognition to the Gunan Street Historic Block and Helou Pavilion projects for their contributions to socio-economic sustainability, aligning with UNESCO's focus on cultural heritage as a driver of sustainable development.

About Abathsahayeshwarar Temple

- ❖ It is a 1,300-year-old Temple located in Thukkatchi in Thanjavur district.
- ❖ It has been chosen for the award for keeping its heritage intact.
- ❖ The temple is believed to be constructed by Kings Vikrama Chola and Kulothunga Chola

About BJPCI (Sir Byramjee Jeejeebhoy Parsee Charitable Institution)

- ❖ It is a school building, located in Mumbai. It is one of the last remaining structures in Mumbai built in the Gothic architectural style.
- ❖ The building, established in 1890, stands out for its distinctive teakwood screens and coloured glass, exemplifying the Gothic Revival style.
- ❖ It was designed by Khan Bahadur Muncherji C Murzban.
- ❖ It was commissioned by Byramjee Jeejeebhoy, the institution's founder.

About UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation

- ❖ The awards recognize exemplary efforts by individuals and organizations in the region to restore or conserve structures, places or properties of heritage value.

- ❖ It was established in 2000.
- ❖ Since its inception, the Asia-Pacific Heritage Awards have acknowledged 906 projects from 27 countries, encouraging private efforts and public-private partnerships in heritage conservation.

India Maritime Heritage Conclave

The first India Maritime Heritage conclave was held from December 11 and 12, 2024.

Key Points

- ❖ The event took place at Yashobhoomi, Dwarka, New Delhi.
- ❖ It was organised by the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (MoPSW).
- ❖ It aims to bring together prominent speakers, maritime experts & thought leaders from across the globe to discuss & celebrate India's seafaring traditions.
- ❖ The conclave showcases India's advancements in shipbuilding, navigation, and trade, connecting it with Southeast Asia, West Asia, Africa, Europe, and beyond.

- ❖ It highlighted how ancient ports like Lothal and Muziris were hubs of commerce and cultural exchange, spreading philosophies like Buddhism and practices like Ayurveda and how Indian sailors pioneered navigation using monsoon winds and innovative tools, shaping global maritime routes.

Total Fertility Rate

India has achieved a total fertility rate of 2.0.

Key Points

- ❖ India has achieved a Total Fertility Rate (TFR) of 2.0 as per National Family Health Survey-5 (2019-21).
- ❖ This is aligned with the National Population Policy 2000 and the National Health Policy 2017 (TFR of 2.1).
- ❖ There are several schemes implemented by the Government under Family Planning programme: The Expanded Contraceptive Choices, comprises condoms, combined oral contraceptive pills, emergency contraceptive pills, intrauterine contraceptive device (IUCD) and sterilization are provided to the beneficiaries.

TFR refers to the average number of children a woman will have during her child bearing years.

World Largest Rangoli

In a historic endeavour, the world's largest "Rangoli" is being prepared in Uttar Pradesh's Prayagraj in view of the auspicious occasion of Maha Kumbh.

Key Points

- ❖ It spans over 55,000 square feet.
- ❖ Approximately 11 tons of vibrant, eco-friendly colours (crafted from natural colours, flower petals, and other eco-friendly materials) will be used.
- ❖ The rangoli will depict iconic scenes of Triveni Sangam, including its ghats, pilgrims, and cultural traditions.
- ❖ The rangoli design has been conceptualised by Shikha, a renowned artist from Indore, Madhya Pradesh.

3-D Images of Fetal Brain

Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IIT Madras) has released detailed 3D High-Resolution images of the fetal brain.

Key Points

- ❖ The research is led by Prof. Mohanasankar Sivaprakasam, Head, Sudha Gopalakrishnan Brain Centre, IIT Madras. This Data Set, termed 'DHARANI', is available as open source for all researchers worldwide.
- ❖ 5,132 Brain sections were captured digitally using cutting-edge Brain Mapping Technology developed by Sudha Gopalakrishnan Brain Centre in the Institute. This work will advance the field of Neuroscience and potentially lead to the development of treatment for health conditions affecting the brain, informed IIT Madras.
- ❖ The research was undertaken by a multidisciplinary team at IIT Madras with researchers from India, Australia, U.S., Romania and South Africa, and medical collaborations with Chennai-based Mediscan Systems and Saveetha Medical College Hospital.

DHARANI is now the largest publicly accessible digital dataset of the human fetal brain, created with less than one-tenth of the initial funds that powered the Allen Brain Atlas, and with a technology platform that was entirely custom-made in India between 2020 and 2022, during the COVID pandemic.

Champions of the Earth 2024

The UN Environment Programme (UNEP) announced the recipients of the 2024 Champions of the Earth.

Key Points

- ❖ UNEP's Champions of the Earth honours individuals, groups and organizations whose actions have a transformative impact on the environment. The award is the UN's highest environmental honour
- ❖ Since 2005, the award has recognized 122 laureates for outstanding and inspirational environmental leadership.
- ❖ UNEP's 2024 Champions of the Earth are:
 - Sonia Guajajara (Brazil)
 - Amy Bowers Cordalis (United States)
 - Gabriel Paun (Romania)
 - Lu Qi (China)
 - Madhav Gadgil (India)
 - SEKEM Initiative (Egypt)

Person In News- Sports



Tan Kim Her	The Badminton Association of India (BAI) reappointed Malaysian doubles specialist Tan Kim Her to work with the national team, marking his second stint in the country. Malaysian doubles coach Tan Kim Her previously worked in India from 2015 to 2019.
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Sports

Asian Women's Handball Championship 2024

- ❖ The 20th Asian Women's Handball Championship took place from 3 to 10 December 2024, in New Delhi, India.
- ❖ This was the first time the competition was hosted by the Handball Association India (HAI).
- ❖ Initially, the championship was planned to be held in Almaty, Kazakhstan, but it was later moved to New Delhi.
- ❖ India secured sixth place after a 41-30 loss to China.
- ❖ By defeating South Korea, Japan emerged as the winner of the championship.

Important News- Other States

Madhya Pradesh	Over 5,000 Acharyas collectively recited the third chapter of the holy Gita's 'Karma Yog', in unison, at Lal Parade ground in Bhopal to create the world record on the occasion of Gita Jayanti. Gita Jayanti was on December 11 this year (2024). The scripture Gita originated 5,000 years ago when Lord Shri Krishna imparted the teachings of Karma to Arjuna during the Kurukshetra war between the Kauravas and the Pandavas.
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Miscellaneous

- ❖ Pakistan's Haris Rauf (Men's) and England's Danni Wyatt-Hodge (Women's) won ICC Players of the Month (November).
- ❖ BMW and UNICEF join hands to empower children in rural India with STEM skills, focusing on gender equality and inclusive education in Assam, Jharkhand, Tamil Nadu, and West Bengal.



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