Disquieting Facts of Statue of Unity

Why in news?

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Colossal statue of India’s Independence leader Vallabhbhai Patel has been inaugurated in Gujarat.

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What is the significance of statue of unity?

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- The government has indicated that the 182-metre high statue, the world’s tallest, is in commemoration of Patel’s efforts.
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- The 182 meter height was decided to match the number of assembly constituencies in the state.
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- The statue is being built near the Sardar Sarovar Dam in the tribal-dominated Narmada district, close to 200 kilometres from Ahmedabad.
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- He was India’s first deputy prime minister to create the Union of India out of disparate provinces and princely states in the early years after Independence.
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What are few disquieting issues about the project?

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- **Huge investment -** The cost of the project is almost Rs 30 billion, it is hard to argue that this is the most important priority for a cash-strapped government.
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- The government would argue that the project is capable of earning significant amounts of revenue from tourism made possible by the

construction of the statue.
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- But it could also be argued that the money spent on the statue could instead have funded several modern institutes of higher education; or, for that matter, irrigated several tens of thousands of under-productive agricultural land.
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- **Social concerns -** The statue is located is controversial Sardar Sarovar project, which continues to be dogged by accusations of a failure to properly resettle and rehabilitate the members of the Scheduled Tribes, who were displaced.
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- **Political will -** The tallest statue in the world has been built in a relatively short time it was announced before 2014, but construction only took off in recent years. It has been delivered well before estimates.
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- This is another reminder, if any was in fact needed, that India can get its act together when it comes to projects if the political will indeed exists.
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- **Pressure of the government -** About 10 per cent of the funding for the statue came from the corporate social responsibility budgets of various public sector undertakings.
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- It is a classic example of government pressuring companies to pay up for the administration’s desire to put up grand projects, this will also lead to competitive statue-building in other states.
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Source: Business Standard

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