Mahabodhi Temple Complex

Prelims: *Current events of national and international importance | Art & Culture | History*

Why in News?

Recently, Prime Minister and Myanmar's President, U Min Aung Hlaing visited the Mahabodhi Temple, one of Buddhism's holiest sites and a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

- **Mahabodhi Temple Complex –** It is considered as the *Cradle of Buddhism* in history of mankind.
- It is *one of the 4 holy sites related to the life of the Lord Buddha*, and particularly to the *attainment of Enlightenment (Nirvana)*.
- **UNESCO Recognition –** 2002.
- **Situated in–** Bodh Gaya, Bihar (115 km south of Patna, 16 km from Gaya.)
- **Constructed–** 1st temple by **Emperor Asoka** (3rd century BCE); present brick temple dates to 5th –6th century CE (late Gupta period).
- **Architecture –** One of the earliest surviving *brick temples* in India; influenced later brick architecture.

Architectural Features

- **Main Temple –** 50 m high, classical Indian style; curvilinear shikhara topped by amalaka and kalasha.

- **Sanctum –** Houses gilded seated Buddha (over 5 ft), depicting Enlightenment.
- **Walls –** 11 m high, niches with Buddha images, chaitya motifs, honeysuckle and geese designs.
- **Vajrasana (Diamond Throne) –** Polished sandstone throne installed by Asoka to mark the site of Buddha's meditation.
- **7 Sacred Sites –** It refers to the places around Mahabodhi Temple Complex where Buddha spent seven weeks meditating after achieving enlightenment, these spots mark the 7 sacred weeks**.**
- The Bodhi Tree & Vajrasana, Animeshlochan Chaitya (prayer hall), Ratnachakrama (Jewelled Ambulatory), Ratnaghar Chaitya, Ajapala Nigrodh Tree, Muchalinda Lake (Lotus Pond, Rajyatana Tree.
- **Authenticity –** Documented in Buddhist texts and architecture is largely unaltered.

Reference

UNESCO | Mahabodhi Temple Complex

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