Somnath Temple

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

Why in News?

The Prime Minister commemorated the historic milestone of 1000 years since the first attack on Somnath in 1026 AD.

- It is believed to be the first among the ***12 Jyotirlinga shrines*** of ***Shiva***.
- **Located in –** Prabhas Patan near Veraval, Saurashtra, on the western coast of **Gujarat.**
- **Triveni Sangam –** It lies at the confluence of 3 rivers - ***Kapila, Hiran and Sarasvati rivers***.
- **Mythical Origins –** It was built first by Somraj (Moon God) in gold, was later rebuilt by Ravana in silver, by Krishna in wood, and by Bhimdev in stone.
- **Historical Accounts –** Al-Biruni's (Persian scholar) detailed description contributed to its fame across regions.
- **Invasions & Destruction**
  - In ***late 1025 or early 1026 CE***, the temple was attacked by ***Mahmud of Ghazni***, an invader from present-day Afghanistan.
  - At that time, the shrine was immensely wealthy; Mahmud seized the town and temple after a 2-day battle in which nearly 70,000 defenders lost their lives.
  - Following the conquest, he looted its vast treasures and demolished the structure.
- **Subsequent destructions –** The cycle of devastation and reconstruction that continued for centuries –
  - It was again destroyed in 1297 CE (Alauddin Khilji's forces), 1394, and 1706 by several Muslim rulers and the Portuguese.
- The present form was reconstructed in 1951.

Architectural Features

- The origins of the temple can be traced back to ***649 BCE***, though it is believed to be even older.
- The present temple was reconstructed in the ***Chaulukya (Solanki) style*** of Hindu temple architecture and completed in May 1951, which is the symbol of national revival & cultural pride.
- It is painted in a creamy colour and boasts fine sculpture.
- At its Central sanctum houses a ***large, black Shiva lingam***.

- **Other shrines** - Shri Kapardi Vinayak, Hanuman Temple, also Vallabhghat, the scenic sunset point is also present.

References

1. PIB | PM Pays Tribute to 1000 Years of Somnath's Resilience
2. Gujarat Tourism | Somnath Temple
3. Gir Somnath District | Somnath Temple

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