

PLACES IN NEWS: WEEK 6

Topic 1: Prambanan Temple

Context: Why is it in the News?

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto recently inaugurated a massive joint conservation project for the ancient Prambanan Temple complex in Indonesia.

The decade-long restoration (2026–2036) will be spearheaded by the **Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)**. The ASI will deploy the **anastylosis technique**—a highly specialized archaeological method that involves reassembling the monument's original, scattered stones back into their authentic locations, heavily aided by modern technologies like Artificial Intelligence.

Geographical Location Matrix

- **Location:** The temple compound sits in the fertile **Kewu Plain** (Opak River valley) and uniquely straddles the boundary between the Special Region of Yogyakarta and the Central Java province in Indonesia.
- **Volcanic Proximity:** It lies in the direct shadow of **Mount Merapi**, one of Indonesia's most active and dangerous stratovolcanoes. The volcanic ash has historically shaped the local agriculture but also poses a persistent threat to heritage sites.



Historical and Cultural Significance

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- **Origins and Architecture:** Built in the 9th century during the reign of the **Sanjaya dynasty** (Mataram Kingdom), it is Indonesia's largest Hindu temple complex and the second-largest in Southeast Asia (after Cambodia's Angkor Wat).
- **Dedication to the Trimurti:** The complex originally consisted of 240 structures arranged in a cosmic *mandala* layout. The towering central temples (reaching up to 47 meters high) are dedicated to the **Trimurti**: Lord Shiva (the Destroyer, occupying the central and tallest shrine), Lord Vishnu (the Preserver), and Lord Brahma (the Creator).
- **Religious Harmony:** Prambanan was built in close proximity to major 8th-century Buddhist temples like Candi Sewu and Borobudur. This geographical closeness reflects the deep religious syncretism and harmony between Hinduism and Buddhism in ancient Java.
- **Global Heritage Recognition:** It was designated a **UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1991**. The temple walls are world-renowned for their intricately carved bas-reliefs depicting scenes from the Hindu epic, the **Ramayana**.
- **Geopolitics & India's Act East Policy:** This project serves as a major pillar of India's cultural diplomacy and shared civilizational heritage in Southeast Asia. It reinforces India's successful track record of restoring regional heritage sites, including Angkor Wat (Cambodia), Mỹ Sơn (Vietnam), and Bagan (Myanmar).

Practice MCQ

Q. Consider the following statements regarding the Prambanan Temple complex recently in the news:

1. It is the largest Buddhist temple complex in Southeast Asia, located in Cambodia.
2. The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) is undertaking its restoration using the *anastylosis* technique, which involves rebuilding the monument using its original stones.
3. The temple complex was built by the Mataram Kingdom and is dedicated to the Hindu Trimurti.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A) 1 and 2 only
- B) 2 and 3 only
- C) 1 and 3 only
- D) 1, 2, and 3

Correct Answer: B

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Explanation: Statement 1 is incorrect because Prambanan is the largest *Hindu* temple complex in *Indonesia* (not Cambodia). Statements 2 and 3 are correct. The ASI is leading the decade-long restoration using the anastylosis technique, and it was built in the 9th century by the Mataram Kingdom dedicated to Shiva, Vishnu, and Brahma.

Topic 2: Auckland

Context: Why is it in the News?

In a major diplomatic milestone, the Indian Prime Minister made a historic visit to **Auckland**, New Zealand. This marked the **first visit by an Indian Prime Minister to New Zealand in four decades**.

During this landmark visit, the bilateral relationship between the two nations was officially upgraded to a "**Strategic Partnership**". The discussions heavily focused on enhancing cooperation in maritime security in the Indo-Pacific, boosting bilateral trade, and strengthening digital and defense ties.

Geographical Location

- **Location:** New Zealand is an isolated island nation located in the southwestern Pacific Ocean. It sits southeast of Australia, separated by the Tasman Sea.



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- **The Two Islands:** The country primarily consists of two main landmasses:
 - **The North Island (Te Ika-a-Māui):** Known for its volcanic activity and geothermal hotspots. **Auckland**, the country's most populous city and major economic hub, is situated here. The capital city, Wellington, is also located at the southern tip of this island.
 - **The South Island (Te Waipounamu):** Larger than the North Island, it is dominated by the majestic **Southern Alps**.
- **Cook Strait:** This is the highly vital and often turbulent strait of water that separates the North and South Islands, connecting the Tasman Sea to the South Pacific Ocean.

Geopolitical and Strategic Significance

The elevation to a "Strategic Partnership" is not just ceremonial; it holds deep geopolitical weight for India:

- **The Indo-Pacific Strategy:** New Zealand is a crucial Pacific nation. As India expands its "Act East Policy" into a broader Indo-Pacific vision, securing strong partnerships with democratic nations in the Pacific is essential to counterbalance growing Chinese naval influence in the region.
- **Supply Chain Resilience:** Both nations are focusing on building resilient supply chains, specifically in agriculture, dairy technology, and high-tech digital services, reducing regional dependencies.
- **Diaspora Diplomacy:** Auckland is home to a massive and vibrant Indian diaspora, which plays a pivotal role in strengthening people-to-people and economic ties between the two democracies.

Practice MCQ

Q. Consider the following statements regarding the geography and geopolitics of New Zealand:

1. The country primarily consists of two main landmasses separated by the Bass Strait.
2. Auckland, the most populous city in New Zealand, is situated on the South Island.
3. India and New Zealand recently elevated their bilateral ties to a "Strategic Partnership."

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A) 1 and 2 only
- B) 3 only
- C) 2 and 3 only

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D) 1, 2, and 3

Correct Answer: B

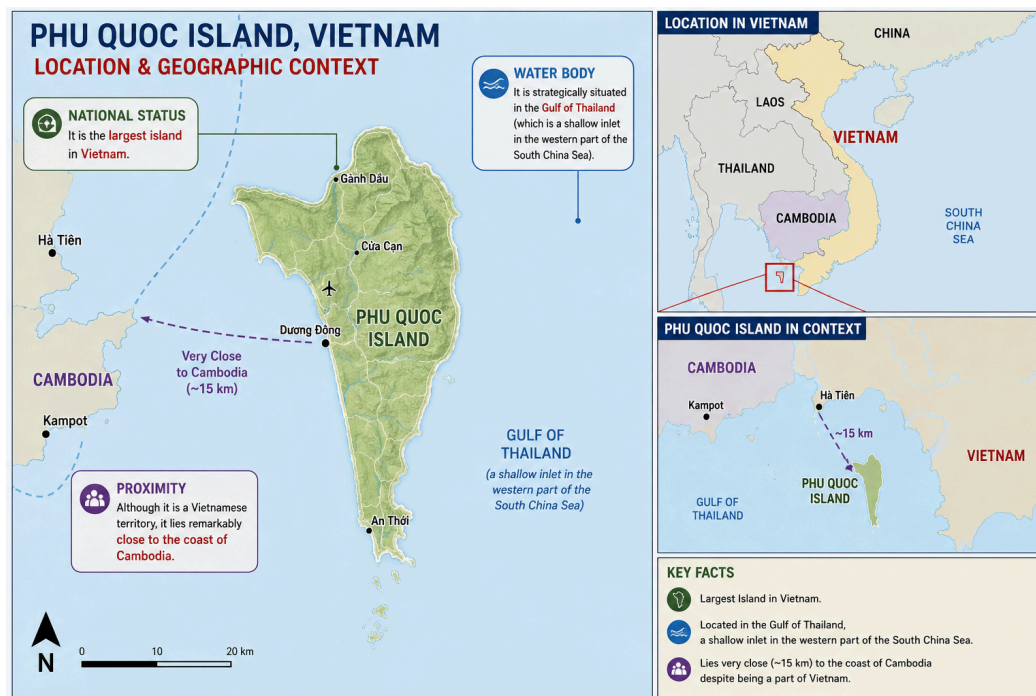
Explanation: * Statement 1 is incorrect: The North and South Islands of New Zealand are separated by the **Cook Strait** (the Bass Strait separates mainland Australia from Tasmania).

- Statement 2 is incorrect: Auckland is situated on the **North Island**.
- Statement 3 is correct: During the recent historic visit by the Indian PM, relations were officially elevated to a "Strategic Partnership".

Topic 3: Phu Quoc Island, Vietnam

Context: Why is it in the News?

Phu Quoc Island recently gained international attention due to a tragic maritime incident. A speedboat carrying Indian tourists capsized off the coast of the island, resulting in several fatalities.



Geographical Location Matrix

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- **National Status:** It is the **largest island in Vietnam**.
- **Water Body:** It is strategically situated in the **Gulf of Thailand** (which is a shallow inlet in the western part of the South China Sea).
- **Proximity:** Although it is a Vietnamese territory, it lies remarkably close to the coast of **Cambodia**.

Topic 4: Kamarajar Port (Ennore Port)

Context: Why is it in the News?

Kamarajar Port (formerly known as Ennore Port), located in Tamil Nadu, recently made headlines after successfully completing its **Capital Dredging Phase VI project**.

This massive infrastructure upgrade has officially made it **India's second major port** (following Visakhapatnam) to achieve a deep operational draft capability of **18 meters**. This milestone allows the port to dock massive, fully loaded cargo ships, dramatically altering the logistics and maritime dynamics on India's eastern seaboard.

Geographical Location Matrix

Kamarajar Port's location is highly strategic:

- **Location:** The port is situated on the **Coromandel Coast** of the Bay of Bengal, about 24 km north of the Chennai Port.
- **Decongestion Role:** It was originally conceptualized as a satellite port to decongest the highly trafficked Chennai Port, specifically intended to handle bulk cargo like coal, iron ore, and LNG.
- **Hinterland Connectivity:** Its placement allows it to serve the massive industrial hinterland of Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, and Karnataka, providing a vital maritime gateway for automotive exports, energy imports, and general cargo.

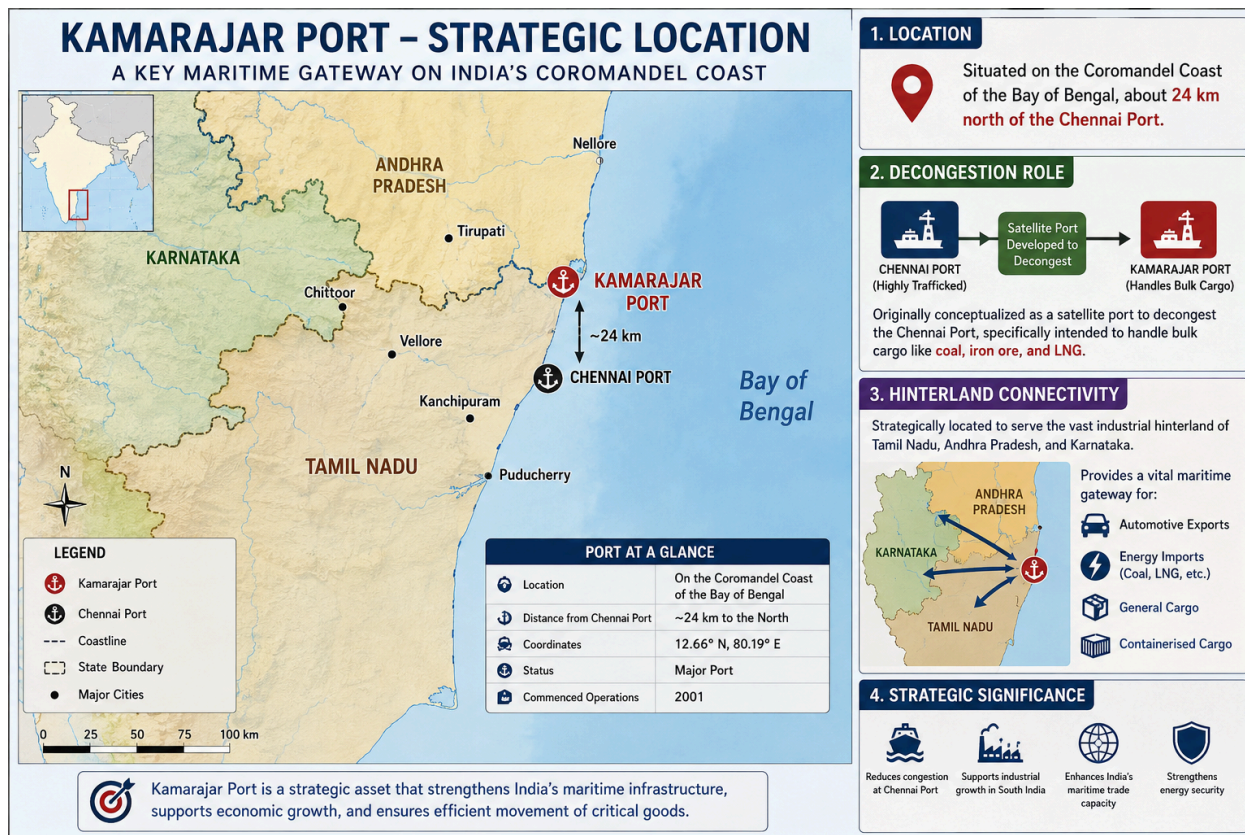
Economic Significance & The Landlord Port Model

- **First Corporatized Major Port:** Unlike other major ports governed by port trusts under the Major Port Trusts Act of 1963, Kamarajar Port holds the distinction of being **the first corporatized Major Port in India** (registered as a company under the Companies Act).
- **The Landlord Port Model:** It operates dynamically under the **Landlord Port Model**. In this model, the government-owned port authority acts as a regulatory body and landlord, while private

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companies carry out all port operations—mainly cargo handling. This allows for faster decision-making, better efficiency, and massive private-sector investment.



Strategic Impact: Breaking Transshipment Dependency

The achievement of the 18-meter draft is not just an engineering feat; it is a major geopolitical and economic victory:

- **Docking "Capesize" Vessels:** An 18-meter draft is deep enough to allow fully loaded "Capesize" vessels to dock directly at the port. Capesize ships are among the largest bulk carriers in the world (originally named because they were too large to pass through the Suez Canal and had to travel via the Cape of Good Hope).
- **Eliminating Foreign Transshipment:** Previously, these massive ships could not dock at most Indian ports due to shallow drafts. They had to offload their cargo at foreign transshipment hubs

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(like Colombo in Sri Lanka or Singapore) onto smaller "feeder" vessels, which then sailed to India. Allowing direct docking slashes these transshipment costs and delays.

- **Maritime India Vision 2030:** By drastically lowering freight costs, speeding up turnaround times, and reducing India's reliance on foreign ports, this dredging project directly aligns with the central government's **Maritime India Vision 2030**—a blueprint aimed at establishing world-class mega-ports and boosting India's blue economy.

Practice MCQ

Q. Consider the following statements regarding Kamarajar Port, recently in the news:

1. It is the first corporatized Major Port in India, operating under the Landlord Port Model.
2. It is located on the Malabar Coast.
3. It recently became the first port in India to achieve an operational draft capability of 18 meters.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A) 1 only
- B) 1 and 2 only
- C) 2 and 3 only
- D) 1, 2, and 3

Correct Answer: A

Explanation: Statement 1 is correct: It holds the distinction of being the first corporatized Major Port operating under the Landlord Port Model.

- Statement 2 is incorrect: It is situated on the **Coromandel Coast** (north of Chennai), not the Malabar Coast.
- Statement 3 is incorrect: It is India's **second** major port to achieve an 18-meter draft, after Visakhapatnam.

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