SOMNATH TEMPLE: HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL HIGHLIGHTS

1. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

- **Jyotirlinga:** According to the Shiva Purana, Somnath is the **first among the twelve Jyotirlingas** in India.
- **Location:** Situated at **Prabhas Patan** on the Saurashtra coast of Gujarat.
- **Destruction & Reconstruction:** The temple faced its first recorded invasion in 1026. Despite being destroyed multiple times over centuries, it was rebuilt each time.
  - **King Kumarapala:** Rebuilt the temple in the 12th century.
  - **Ahilyabai Holkar:** Consecrated a new temple site in the 18th century.
- **Modern Temple:** Reconstructed after Independence through the resolve of **Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel**.
  - **Architectural Style:** Built in the **'Kailash Mahameru Prasad'** style.
  - **Consecration:** Ceremonially dedicated to the nation on May 11, 1951, by India's first President, **Dr. Rajendra Prasad**.

2. SOMNATH SWABHIMAN PARV (2026)

- **Milestones:** This celebration commemorates two major historical events:

1. **1000 Years** since the first recorded attack in 1026.
2. **75 Years (Platinum Jubilee)** of the temple's reopening in 1951.

- **Veer Hamirji Gohil:** A local warrior who sacrificed his life defending the temple in 1299. He is revered as a symbol of '*Rajadharma*' (duty to protect heritage).
- **Chalo Chalein Somnath:** A special yatra (pilgrimage train) flagged off from Safdarjung Railway Station, Delhi, to mark the centenary and jubilee celebrations.

3. ARCHITECTURE AND STATISTICS

- **Shikhar (Spire):** 150 feet high, topped with a 10-tonne **Kalash**.
- **Dhwajdand (Flag Pole):** 27 feet tall.
- **Artisanship:** The complex features 1,666 gold-plated Kalash and 14,200 Dhwajas (flags).

4. ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIAL INITIATIVES (CURRENT AFFAIRS)

- **Swachh Iconic Place:** Somnath was declared a "Swachh Iconic Place" in 2018.
- **Mission LiFE:** Plastic waste is recycled into **paver blocks** (approx. 4,700 blocks produced monthly).
- **Miyawaki Forest:** A dense forest of 7,200 trees covering 72,000 sq. ft. to aid carbon sequestration.
- **Somganga Jal:** Purified *Abhishek* water is bottled and distributed to devotees.
- **Women Empowerment:** Out of 906 employees, 363 women are directly employed, managing sectors like the Bilva Van and prasad distribution.

5. SHREE SOMNATH TRUST

- **Chairman:** The current Prime Minister, **Narendra Modi**, serves as the Chairman of the Trust.
- **Welfare:** Operates initiatives like **'School on Wheels'** (digital literacy for rural students), health camps, and disaster relief (e.g., significant contributions during COVID-19).

KEY KEYWORDS FOR EXAMS:

- **Jyotirlinga:** 1st of 12.
- **Style:** Kailash Mahameru Prasad.
- **Key Figures:** Sardar Patel, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Ahilyabai Holkar.
- **Timeline:** 1026 (First attack), 1951 (Reopening), 2026 (75th Anniversary).

PM-SETU SCHEME & AERONAUTICS CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE (KEY POINTS)

Based on the industry consultation held at the National Skill Training Institute (NSTI), Kanpur, regarding the establishment of a **National Centre of Excellence (NCoE)** for Aeronautics and Allied Sectors under the **PM-SETU** scheme, here are the key points for competitive exams.

1. PM-SETU SCHEME (PRADHAN MANTRI SETU)

- **Full Name:** Pradhan Mantri Skilling and Employability Transformation through Upgraded ITIs.
- **Ministry:** Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (**MSDE**).
- **Objective:** To modernize Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) across the country, improve skill training in alignment with industry requirements, and enhance employability.
- **Execution:** Overseen by the **Directorate General of Training (DGT)**.

2. NATIONAL CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE (NCOE) FOR AERONAUTICS

- **Location:** National Skill Training Institute (**NSTI**), Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh.
- **Sectors:** Aeronautics, Defence Aerospace, Civil Aviation, and Precision Engineering.
- **Collaboration:** This project is envisioned with **Indo-French** bilateral support and strong industrial co-investment.
- **Significance:** It aims to train thousands of professionals annually to support India's evolving aerospace ecosystem, contributing to **Self-reliance (Atmanirbhar Bharat)** and global competitiveness in aerospace technologies.

3. HUB-AND-SPOKE MODEL

Component-I of the PM-SETU scheme adopts a **Hub-and-Spoke model** to strengthen regional skilling.

- **Hub ITIs:** Identified clusters in Uttar Pradesh include Aliganj, Saket, Pandu Nagar (Kanpur), Muzaffarnagar, Agra, Naini (Prayagraj), Varanasi, and Chargawan (Gorakhpur).
- **Mechanism:** A central 'Hub' ITI mentors a network of 'Spoke' ITIs to improve training quality and strengthen industry linkages.

4. KEY STAKEHOLDERS & PARTICIPANTS

The consultation involved major organizations, which is significant for understanding the scale of the initiative:

- **Public Sector:** Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL), Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL).

- **Private Sector:** Tata Advanced Systems, Dassault Aviation India, L&T Precision Engineering, Adani Skill Development Centre.
- **Multilateral Institutions:** Asian Development Bank (**ADB**) and the **World Bank**.

IMPORTANT KEYWORDS FOR EXAMS:

- **PM-SETU:** Scheme for upgrading ITIs.
- **NCoE Kanpur:** Focus on the Aeronautics and Allied sectors.
- **MSDE Secretary:** Ms. Debashree Mukherjee (Chaired the consultation).
- **Strategy:** Active industry collaboration in curriculum design and infrastructure development.

BRICS MSME COOPERATION: INDIA'S CHAIRSHIP 2026 (KEY HIGHLIGHTS)

India is holding the **BRICS Chairship** for the year 2026. Under this leadership, India is driving a strategic agenda to enhance cooperation among Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). Here are the key points for competitive exams:

1. FRAMEWORK AND MANDATE

- **BRICS PartNIR:** India is spearheading MSME cooperation under the **Partnership on New Industrial Revolution (PartNIR)** framework.
- **Scheduled Events:** Under India's Chairship, the Ministry of MSME is mandated to host:
  - **Three** SME Working Group Meetings.
  - The inaugural **BRICS MSME Forum**.

2. 1ST SME WORKING GROUP MEETING (APRIL 24, 2026)

The first meeting was conducted via webinar with a specialized focus on **"Access to Finance for MSMEs."**

Core Themes of Discussion:

- **Bridging the Credit Gap:** Focus on achieving this through **Financial Inclusion**, Financial Literacy, and Credit Readiness.
- **Fintech-Driven Ecosystems:** Leveraging technology to expand credit for SMEs and ensure seamless **Global Trade Payments**.

3. SIGNIFICANCE AND KEY CHALLENGES

- **Economic Drivers:** BRICS nations recognized MSMEs as vital drivers of economic growth, employment generation, and innovation.
- **The "Credit Gap":** The persistent challenge of timely and adequate access to credit was identified as a major barrier to MSME growth.
- **Multi-pronged Approach:** The meeting emphasized strengthening institutional capacities and promoting **Innovative Financing Mechanisms** across member nations.

4. BASIC FACTS FOR EXAMS (BRICS & MSME)

- **2026 Chairship:** India.
- **BRICS Members:** Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa (and recently expanded members like Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, and UAE).
- **Key Terminology:**
  - **PartNIR:** Partnership on New Industrial Revolution.
  - **Financial Literacy:** Empowering small business owners with the knowledge to manage finances and seek formal credit.

QUICK REVISION POINTS:

- **Host Nation:** India (2026).
- **First Meeting Theme:** Access to Finance for MSMEs.
- **Strategy:** Using **Fintech** to solve global trade payment issues and credit readiness.

TARA WEAPON SYSTEM: MAIDEN FLIGHT-TRIAL SUCCESS (KEY HIGHLIGHTS)

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and the Indian Air Force (IAF) successfully conducted the first flight trial of the **Tactical Advanced Range Augmentation (TARA)**, an indigenous glide weapon system. Here are the essential points for competitive exams:

1. WHAT IS TARA?

- **Full Name:** Tactical Advanced Range Augmentation.
- **Type:** It is a **Modular Range Extension Kit**.
- **Function:** It is India's first indigenous system designed to convert conventional **unguided warheads** (dumb bombs) into **Precision Guided Weapons** (smart bombs).

2. DEVELOPMENT AND DESIGN

- **Developers:** Designed and developed by the **Research Centre Imarat (RCI)**, Hyderabad, in collaboration with other DRDO laboratories.
- **Production Partners:** Developed with Development cum Production Partners (DcPP) and various Indian private industries.
- **Trial Location:** The maiden flight trial took place off the **coast of Odisha** on May 07, 2026.

3. KEY FEATURES & BENEFITS

- **Precision and Lethality:** It enhances the accuracy of low-cost weapons to neutralize ground-based targets effectively.
- **Cost-Effective Technology:** It is the first glide weapon to utilize state-of-the-art, low-cost indigenous systems.
- **Strategic Impact:** This marks a significant milestone in **Atmanirbhar Bharat** (Self-reliant India) by advancing indigenous defense capabilities.

4. QUICK REVISION POINTS FOR EXAMS

- **Agencies Involved:** DRDO & IAF.
- **Testing Site:** Odisha Coast.
- **Core Technology:** Converting unguided warheads into precision-guided munitions.
- **Nodal Laboratory:** RCI, Hyderabad.