

UN SECRETARY-GENERAL, PM TO LAUNCH INITIATIVE ON ENVIRONMENT IN GUJARAT

Relevant for: Environment | Topic: Environmental Conservation, Sustainable Development, and EIA

The programme will be organised by the Niti Aayog. PTIPTI

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres will travel to India next week to attend the launch of a special environmental programme along with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and External Affairs Minister (EAM) S. Jaishankar at the Statue of Unity in Kevadia, Gujarat, in the presence of hundreds of officials, and over a hundred diplomats and heads of Indian missions worldwide. The programme, which is part of the “Lifestyle for Environment” (LiFE) initiative announced by Mr. Modi in June this year, will be organised by the NITI Aayog.

Sources confirmed that Mr. Guterres, who will be in India from October 18 to 20 for his second visit during his tenure, will participate in the LiFE event, and also visit a field project to highlight climate change challenges and solutions for the world. In addition, the UN Secretary-General will deliver a public address to students at the Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay, where his focus is expected to be on global environmental crises.

During a visit to Pakistan last month, where he called those affected by devastating floods in that country as victims of a “grim calculus of climate injustice”, Mr. Guterres said, “Climate chaos is knocking on everyone’s door”, and needed a global response.

The event at Kevadia will kick off a number of other governmental plans to mark Sardar Patel’s birthday on October 31 as National Unity Day. From October 25 to 31, the government will launch “Unitea” marches in all 750 districts of the country to highlight health and environment issues as well.

Prior to the LiFE event, Indian Ambassadors and High Commissioners are expected to congregate in Kevadia for the annual Heads of Mission (HoM) conference. The HoM conference is expected to include several special programmes to celebrate India’s 75 years of Independence, the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, and will mark the second visit by Dr. Jaishankar this month. The Minister had invited more than 50 foreign diplomats based in Delhi to Vadodara to participate in Navratri festivities and Dandiya in the city in early October, and had also taken them for a tour of Kevadia and the Statue of Unity.

An official told *The Hindu* at least 120 HoMs would participate in the Kevadia conference from October 19 to 22. According to the official, Dr. Jaishankar will be in Gujarat from October 17 and will attend the inauguration of the Defence Expo being held in Gandhinagar, before travelling to Kevadia. The events in Gujarat are seen as a special attempt by the government to highlight the State in the run-up to Assembly election due in December this year. Mr. Modi, who completed a three-day visit to various Gujarat cities where he addressed public rallies and inaugurated a number of infrastructure projects.

In October 2019, World Bank President David Malpass had visited to address probationers of the Civil Services at the Tent City in Kevadia near the statue.

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