Bhutan builds 108 stupas for new city

LEVEL A2/B1


Photo: Boris Busorgin / Unsplash

I. WARM-UP

1. Have you ever helped as a volunteer? What did you do?
2. What comes to mind when you hear the word mindfulness?
3. Why do people move from small towns to big cities?

II. KEY VOCABULARY

volunteer
a person who works without pay to help

monument
a large structure built to remember or honour something

ceremony
a formal event with special actions or speeches

border
the line where two countries meet

architect
a person who designs buildings or cities

investment
money put into a project to help it grow

unemployment
the state of not having a job

migration
the movement of people to live or work in another place

III. READING

Tens of thousands of volunteers built 108 Buddhist stupas in Bhutan for a new mindfulness city. The 15-metre monuments were set along 12km of riverbank near the Indian border, at Gelephu. About 200,000 people joined a ceremony, and King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck thanked the workers.

The city in southern Bhutan was created as a special zone by royal charter in 2024. It was conceived by the king and designed by Danish architects. Leaders say it will boost growth and attract investment in green business and services, so more young people stay.

Bhutan faces rising unemployment and migration of skilled workers. Plans include a link to India's railway in Assam and an international airport due in 2029. The landlocked nation also promotes Gross National Happiness alongside economic growth.

Reading text adapted from reporting by **Al Jazeera***: "Tens of thousands build 108 Buddhist stupas...". Original article linked at theenglishwire.com.*

IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What did the volunteers build, and how many did they build?
2. Where were the stupas installed?
3. Who conceived the Gelephu Mindfulness City?
4. What is one main goal of the new city?
5. What two transport links are planned for the area?

V. DISCUSSION

1. Would you visit a city designed for mindfulness? Why or why not?
2. What could keep young people in your town or country?
3. How can a new city protect local culture and nature?
4. Is building monuments a good way to unite people? Explain.

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Past simple

Use the past simple for finished actions in the past. Form: regular verbs + -ed; irregular forms change (built, was/were). Time words often show the past: yesterday, last year, in 2024, ago.

> *"Tens of thousands of volunteers* **built** *108 Buddhist stupas in Bhutan."*
>
> *"The city in southern Bhutan* **was created** *as a special zone in 2024."*

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Complete each sentence with the past simple form.

1. Danish architects (design) ___ the city plan. _____
2. At the ceremony, the king (thank) ___ the workers. _____
3. The monuments (set) ___ along the riverbank. _____
4. About 200,000 people (come) ___ to the ceremony. _____
5. At the ceremony, the king (say) ___ he was truly grateful. _____

Teacher's Notes

TEACHERS ONLY

These notes are designed to help you get the most out of this lesson. Please do not share this page with students.


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I. LESSON GUIDE

- Timing: 8–10 minutes warm-up, 8 minutes vocabulary, 10–12 minutes reading, 10 minutes comprehension, 10 minutes grammar, 10 minutes discussion.
- Pre-teach place names (Bhutan, Gelephu) and check numbers (108, 12km, 2029) before reading. Clarify stupa with a simple picture if possible.
- Run a first silent read for gist, then a second read for details. The story includes religion and migration; open discussion in pairs first, keep the focus on the news, and say students may answer about the article rather than personal beliefs or plans.
- Differentiate: stronger students summarise paragraph two in 2–3 sentences; others highlight past simple verbs in paragraph one and retell with support.

II. DISCUSSION FACILITATION TIPS

1. Start with a quick definition check of mindfulness, then ask for one benefit and one worry.
2. Have pairs list two ideas each (jobs, housing, culture). Share top ideas on the board.
3. Use think–pair–share. Ask for one example each of culture and nature in their answers.
4. Take a quick show of hands, then mix opposing views in pairs and have each argue the other side with one example.

III. EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Writing: Write a 70-word visitor note for Gelephu Mindfulness City, including the stupas and nature.

Presentation: In groups, sketch a simple plan showing the riverbank stupas, rail link to Assam, and 2029 airport, then give a 2-minute pitch.

IV. ANSWER KEY OVERVIEW

Comprehension questions: short factual answers from the text.

Grammar exercise: Past simple

Discussion: open-ended. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

Answer Key

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IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What did the volunteers build, and how many did they build?
   They built 108 Buddhist stupas.
2. Where were the stupas installed?
   Along 12km of riverbank near the Indian border, at Gelephu.
3. Who conceived the Gelephu Mindfulness City?
   King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck.
4. What is one main goal of the new city?
   To boost the economy and help more young people stay.
5. What two transport links are planned for the area?
   A link to India's railway in Assam and an international airport.

V. DISCUSSION

Open answers. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Key point: Use the past simple for finished actions in the past. Form: regular verbs + -ed; irregular forms change (built, was/were). Time words often show the past: yesterday, last year, in 2024, ago.

> *"Tens of thousands of volunteers* **built** *108 Buddhist stupas in Bhutan."*
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VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Complete each sentence with the past simple form.

1. Danish architects ___ the city plan. **designed**
2. At the ceremony, the king ___ the workers. **thanked**
3. The monuments ___ along the riverbank. **were set**
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5. At the ceremony, the king ___ he was truly grateful. **said**