DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS ANALYSIS

12 NOVEMBER 2024

1 – Shri Ram Temple:

GS I

Indian Culture:

- **About:**

- The Nagara Style of temple architecture is used in the design of the Ram temple.
- The Ramayana is well-known outside of India, having spread from Laos, Cambodia, and Thailand in Asia to Guyana in South America and Mauritius in Africa.

- **What is the Ram Janmabhoomi Movement's timeline?**

- Beginning in 1751, when the Marathas requested authority over Ayodhya, Kashi, and Mathura from the Nawab of Awadh (Nawab Shuja-ud-Daula).
- The Marathas aspired to rule over major religious and cultural hubs like Ayodhya, Kashi (Varanasi), and Mathura since they had assisted the Nawab of Awadh in defeating the Pathan (local chieftain) forces in the Doab Region.

- The northern Indian region between the Ganges and Yamuna rivers is referred to as the "Doab Region."

- The initiative picked up steam in the 19th century after a mosque on Lord Ram's birthplace was mentioned in court documents as early as 1822.

- **Fight Close to Babri Mosque:**

- When Hindus and Muslims engaged in a bloody skirmish close to the Babri Masjid in 1855, tensions increased and the Hindus went on to conquer Janmasthan.
- Setting up the Ram Lalla idol:
- The installation of the Ram Lalla deity in the mosque in 1949 led to calls for the construction of a large temple.

- **Court Cases:**

- A movement for the 'liberation' of Ram Janmabhoomi, Krishna Janmabhoomi, and Vishwanath temple was started in the 1980s by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP).
- After several legal disputes, the Babri Masjid's locks were opened in 1986 to permit Hindus to pray there.
- Significant events occurred in the years that followed, including as the 1989 foundation-laying ceremony and the LK Advani-led Rath Yatra in 1990 that sparked extensive rioting.
- The Babri Mosque was demolished:
- A mob destroyed the Babri Masjid on December 6, 1992, which resulted in legal actions and political fallout.
- The government was granted permission to obtain the land claimed by Ram Janmabhoomi and Babri Masjid in 1993 when the Acquisition of Certain Area at Ayodhya Act was passed by Parliament.
- In 2009, the Liberhan Commission emphasised how planned the events of 1992 were.
- Verdict of the Allahabad High Court:
- In its Ayodhya title suit ruling in 2010, a special bench of the Allahabad High Court split the land in a 2:1 ratio, giving two-thirds of the 2.77 acres—including the garbha griha— to the petitioners seeking to build a Ram temple, Shri Ram Lala Virajman and Nirmohi Akhara.
- The Sunni Central Waqf Board was awarded one-third of the land.

- **Supreme Court Decision:**

- After many years of litigation, the Supreme Court granted the Hindu petitioners full ownership of the contested site in 2019 so they could build a Ram temple there, while allocating land for a mosque elsewhere.

- **Finalisation:**

- The Indian Prime Minister performed the Shilanyas of the Ram temple on August 5, 2020, marking the establishment of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust, marking the culmination of this historic journey.

- The Nagara-style Ram temple at Ayodhya was scheduled to open on January 22, 2024, bringing an end to a 200-year-old tale that had a significant influence on India's sociopolitical climate.

- **What Makes Ram Temple Special?**

- **Conventional Construction and Architecture:**

- Constructed in the classic Nagara style, this three-story temple rises majestically from the pink sandstone of Mirzapur and the hills of Bansi-Paharpur, Rajasthan.
- Temple is a magnificent architectural work of art spanning 71 acres.

- **Temple Size:**

- The main temple area is 2.67 acres in size, measuring 250 feet in width and 161 feet in height. It has 390 pillars, 46 doors, and 5 mandaps.

- **Special Features Within:**

- Ram Lalla idols are housed in the main Garbh Griha along with several mandaps, such as the Rang and Nritya mandaps.

- **New Tradition of Anointing:**

- Every Ram Navami at midday, the sun's beams are directed towards Ram Lalla's idol by a system of mirrors and lenses. This special salve doesn't need power because brass is used in place of iron or steel.

- **The Sculptor's Input:**

- Mysuru sculptor Arun Yogiraj created the 51-inch-tall idol of five-year-old Ram Lalla, which was dedicated in a unique ceremony.

- **Resilience and Significance:**

- The temple was built without the use of iron and is meant to last for at least a millennium.

- **What kind of temple architecture is Nagara style?**

- The late Gupta era in northern India around the fifth century CE saw the emergence of the Nagara style of temple architecture.
- It is compared to the Dravida style, which also originated in southern India at that same time period.

- **Set Apart by a Soaring Shikhara:**

- The Garbha Griha (sanctum sanctorum), which houses the idol of the deity, is the most sacred area of Nagara temples, which are constructed on raised plinths.
- The most defining feature of Nagara-style temples is the shikhara, which means "mountain peak" and towers over the Garbha Griha.
- Shikharas, as their name implies, are man-made depictions of the natural and cosmic order as they are understood in Hinduism.
- A mandapas (halls) on the same axis as the garbha griha and a circumambulatory corridor around it are further features of a typical Nagara-style temple. Rich murals and reliefs frequently cover its walls.

- **How Did the Ramayana and Shri Ram Gain Prominence Outside of India?**

- **Trade Paths and Intercultural Dialogue:**

- Through land and maritime trading channels, the Ramayana was disseminated. Indian traders brought cultural artefacts, such as religious tales, along with them when they travelled for business.
- Land routes helped spread the Ramayana to places like China, Tibet, Burma, Thailand, and Laos. Examples of these routes are the northern one, which passes through Punjab and Kashmir, and the eastern one, which passes through Bengal.

- The epic was disseminated through maritime routes, especially the southern route from Gujarat and South India, to locations such as Java, Sumatra, and Malaya.

- **Indian Communities' Transmission of Culture:**

- Indian traders were instrumental in introducing Indian culture, customs, and philosophy to the people of Southeast Asia, as were Brahmin priests, Buddhist monks, academics, and explorers.
- The Ramayana eventually shaped art, architecture, and religious rituals in numerous Southeast Asian nations, becoming an essential component of their cultures.

- **Adaptation to the Local Culture:**

- In many respects, the Ramayana blended in with the indigenous civilizations. For instance, it is thought that the Ayodhya of the Ramayana served as the model for the Ayutthaya empire in Thailand.
- The Angkor Wat temple complex in Cambodia has murals that depict episodes from the Ramayana. The temple complex was initially dedicated to Vishnu.

- **The Epic's Development:**

- In several places, the Ramayana was given unique regional flavours and adaptations. For example, Thailand's national epic is the Ramakien, which was inspired by the Tamil epic Kamban Ramayana.
- Unique aspects were introduced into many versions in other nations. For example, characters with Tamil names were depicted in the Thai Ramakien.

- **Proliferate Through Migration of Indentured Labour:**

- The Girmitiya Migration of the 19th century led to the Ramayana's dissemination to areas such as Fiji, Mauritius, Trinidad & Tobago, Guyana, and Suriname.
- The Ramcharitmanas was one of the cultural and religious customs that indentured labourers brought with them to their new homes.

- **Universality and Lasting Themes:**

- For Indian groups residing distant from their own land, the Ramayana provided a sense of cultural identification and longing. It gave them a feeling of familiarity in strange places and a link to their heritage.
- The epic is relevant to many cultures because of its universal themes, which include the victory of good over evil, the idea of dharma, and the story of exile and return.

- **Sustained Cultural Customs:**

- Many Southeast Asian nations still consider the Ramayana to be an important component of their national cultures. It is preserved through a variety of artistic mediums, such as puppet shows, dance dramas, plays, and religious rituals.

Source → The Hindu

2 - Advisory Body for Social Audits:

GS II

Government Policies and Interventions:

- **A Social Audit: What Is It?**

- A social audit is a methodical, impartial evaluation of the ethical performance and social impact of a programme or organisation.
- It assesses the degree to which their claimed beliefs and objectives are reflected in their activities and policies, with a focus on how they fit with the environment, workers, and communities.
- The phrase "social audit" was first used by Howard Bowen in his 1953 book Social Responsibilities of the Businessman.

- **Important Social Audit Features:**

- Finding the facts, not the faults.
- establishing the forum and place for communication between stakeholders at different levels.
- timely resolution of grievances.
- bolstering democratic institutions and processes.
- increasing public demand for improved project delivery.

- **Social Audit Types:**

- Organisational: Evaluating the total social responsibility initiatives of a business.
- Program-specific: Concentrating on the influence and efficacy of a specific programme.
- Financial: Examining how financial decisions affect society and the environment.
- Including a range of stakeholders in the auditing process is known as stakeholder-driven.

- **The Framework for Social Audit in India:**

- Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) 2005: The Act's Section 17 designates the gramme sabha as the entity in charge of overseeing the completion of work.
- Each state has mandated independent social audit units that are separate from the implementing authority and focus on community-driven programme implementation verification.
- The Meghalaya Community Participation and Public Services Social Audit Act, 2017 is a state-level law that made social audits a requirement. It is the first of its type in India.
- The Building and Other Construction Workers (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 2013 contains a framework for social audits that can be conducted in accordance with it. This framework was released by the Ministry of Labour & Employment.
- The Right to Information Act of 2005 has been instrumental in bolstering India's Social Audit system. It improves openness and information accessibility, which supports the efficacy of social audits by granting access to pertinent records and information.

- The Department of Social Justice and Empowerment established the National Resource Cell for Social Audit (NRCSA). At the state level, this organisation uses specialised Social Audit Units to guarantee social audits.

- **Issues Concerning Social Audit in India:**

- Lack of Standardisation: Different approaches and reporting are caused by the lack of established methods for social audits. The absence of consistency makes it challenging to compare outcomes between various programmes and geographical areas.
- Lack of Capacity and Awareness: Poor comprehension and awareness of social audit procedures among local communities and other stakeholders may impede its implementation.
- Evaluations produced by the social audit method are either biassed or incomplete due to the limited involvement of marginalised or vulnerable groups.
- Political Intervention: The independence and impartiality of social audits are affected by political intervention. The results' integrity may be jeopardised by pressure from political or municipal authorities.
- Resource Restrictions: Both human and financial resources are needed for social audits. The efficacy of social audits is limited because many local bodies lack the resources and knowledge required to carry out thorough assessments.
- Limited Capacity and Training: Due to a shortage of resources and qualified personnel, the social audit units, which are designed to identify any instances of misconduct, are struggling.

- **Way Ahead:**

- Blockchain for Transparency: Investigate how blockchain technology could improve social audits' integrity and transparency. Blockchain technology can offer a safe and impenetrable platform for audit data storage, guaranteeing data validity.
- Accessibility and Representation: Make information easily accessible in regional languages and formats, and streamline audit procedures.
- Targeted incentives should be used to ensure varied involvement from women, young people, and underprivileged groups.
- Standardisation and Protection of Whistleblowers: Create precise, consistent protocols for carrying out social audits across various programmes and states.
- Establish robust legal protections to shield people who disclose anomalies.

3 – Bangladesh India Relations:

GS II

International Relations:

- **How Have the Relations Between Bangladesh and India Grown?**

- **Historical Connections:**

- The Bangladesh Liberation War of 1971 served as the cornerstone for India and Bangladesh's relationship. India gave Bangladesh vital material and military backing in its struggle for independence from Pakistan.
- Despite this, when military governments came to power, ties deteriorated in a matter of years. The mid-1970s saw an increase in anti-Indian sentiment due to a variety of factors, including water sharing, insurgency, and boundary disputes.
- Before Sheikh Hasina came to power in 1996 and wrote a new chapter in bilateral ties with a deal on the sharing of Ganga waters, the instability persisted for a few decades.
- India and Bangladesh have since expanded their trade, energy, infrastructure, connectivity, and defence ties.

- **Collaboration in the Economy:**

- Over the past ten years, there has been a steady increase in bilateral commerce between Bangladesh and India.
- With bilateral commerce rising to USD 18 billion in 2021–2022, from USD 10.8 billion in 2020–21, Bangladesh has become India's most important South Asian trading partner. However, in 2022–2023 there was a decline in trade because of the Covid-19 pandemic and the Russia–Ukraine War.

- Bangladesh's second-largest trading partner, India, receives USD 2 billion in exports to Indian markets.
- A joint feasibility study on a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) was completed by both countries in 2022. Bangladesh is scheduled to lose its Least Developed Country (LDC) designation after 2026, which means it would no longer have duty-free and quota-free market access in India. This makes the CEPA even more significant.
- Bangladesh is keen to complete a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with India and to pursue the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), which is supported by China. For India, this dual strategy is concerning.

- **Facilities:**

- Bangladesh has received lines of credit from India totaling more than USD 7 billion since 2010.
- Long-standing disputes between India and Bangladesh, such as the maritime border dispute and the 2015 Land Boundary Agreement (LBA), have been effectively settled.
- The Akhaura-Agartala Rail Link, which connects Bangladesh and the northeast through Tripura, was inaugurated by India and Bangladesh in 2023.
- India can now transit freight between the Bangladeshi ports of Chattogram and Mongla thanks to the connectivity.
- It is probably going to spur development of small-scale industries in Assam and Tripura.
- In order to create a maritime network, the main goal of the BIMSTEC Master Plan for Transport Connectivity is to connect significant transport projects in Thailand, Bangladesh, India, and Myanmar.
- India would concentrate on the Matarbari Port, which Bangladesh is building 100 kilometres from Tripura. By building this port, Dhaka and Northeast India will be connected by an important industrial corridor.

- **Power:**

- Bangladesh imports around 2,000 megawatts (MW) of electricity from India in the energy industry.
- A pact on collaboration in the implementation of the Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant project, Bangladesh's first nuclear power reactor, was signed in 2018 by Russia, Bangladesh, and India.

- Defence Collaboration:
- With Bangladesh, India has the longest shared land border among its neighbours, at 4096.7 kilometres.
- Bangladesh is bordered by Assam, West Bengal, Mizoram, Meghalaya, and Tripura.
- Additionally, they both run joint exercises: the Navy's Bongo Sagar and the Army's Sampriti.

- **International Collaboration:**

- Via multilateral organisations like the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic collaboration), and SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation), India and Bangladesh are actively involved in regional collaboration.

- **What are Bangladesh's and India's points of contention?**

- **Transboundary River Water Sharing:**

- There are 54 common rivers between Bangladesh and India, but only two treaties—the Kushiyara River Treaty and the Ganga Waters Treaty—have been signed thus far.
- There is ongoing discussion over the other great rivers, like the Feni and Teesta.

- **Unauthorised Migration:**

- The problem of undocumented migration from Bangladesh to India, which includes both refugees and economic migrants, remains a major concern.
- The surge puts pressure on border states in India, affecting security and resources. As more Rohingya refugees entered India through Bangladesh, the issue grew more serious.
- Bangladesh is concerned about the National Register of Citizens (NRC), which aims to stop this kind of migration.
- Bangladesh is looking to India for help in convincing Myanmar to repatriate the Rohingyas who were compelled to flee to Bangladesh.

- **Trafficking and Smuggling of Drugs:**

- Drug trafficking and smuggling across borders have occurred often. These boundaries are used for the trafficking of people, particularly women and children, as well as the poaching of numerous animal and bird species.

- **Chinese Influence in Bangladesh is Growing:**

- Bangladesh currently participates actively in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI); India is not a part of the BRI.
- China's growing influence in Bangladesh may jeopardise India's place in the region and obstruct its strategic goals.

- **Way Ahead:**

- To effectively combat cross-border drug smuggling and human trafficking, law enforcement officials from both nations must form coordinated task groups.
- Illegal networks can be disrupted by coordinated activities and shared intelligence.
- Streamlining cross-border movements while maintaining security and efficiency can be achieved by using smart border management solutions that make use of artificial intelligence (AI) and data analytics.
- A digital connection corridor that prioritises e-commerce, digital services, and high-speed internet connectivity must be established between the two nations. This may open up new channels for business, cooperation, and technology transfer.

4 - Impact of Funding Winter on Startups:

GS II

Government Policies and Interventions:

- **"Funding Winter": What Is It?**

- The phrase "funding winter" refers to a time when fewer venture capitalists are funding firms.
- There is a reduction in the total amount of capital available in the market when there is a funding winter because lenders and investors become more cautious and selective when extending financial support.
- Winters in funding can have a big influence on companies and business owners, especially those who are just starting out or want to grow.

- **Why Winter in India Is Funded:**

- **Variations in Start-up Funding in India:**

- 42 new unicorns were created in 2021 as start-up funding in India reached a record USD 42 billion. But 2022 saw a 40% reduction in investment, signalling a departure from optimism fueled by pandemics.
- Massive investments made in digital businesses during the Covid-19 outbreak drove the first boom.
- It was assumed that the digital trend would keep going at the same rate, but as things settled back to normal, investments were reevaluated.
- Data shows that in 2023, funding for tech startups in India was USD 8.3 billion, a 67% decrease from 2022.

- **Worldwide Macroeconomic Elements:**

- International occurrences, such as the hostilities between Israel and Palestine and Russia and Ukraine, were a major factor in starting the funding winter.

- The resultant uncertainty in the prospects for commerce and the global supply chain made for a dismal investment environment for start-ups.
- The overall downturn in world economies has a domino effect on capital flow and investor confidence.

- **Focus on Return on Investments (ROI):**

- The market corrected as investors started to question the viability and profitability of start-ups.
- Investor trust in unicorns and late-stage start-ups that put expansion ahead of profitability has declined.
- Early-stage start-ups are now the centre of investor attention and activity, which emphasises caution and a focus on revenue models.
- Due to the lack of mergers and acquisitions and the underwhelming performance of public start-ups, investors were left with no practical way out.
- The lack of exit plans created a difficult climate for late-stage start-ups and investors alike.

- **Lack of Local Capital:**

- The financial situation is made worse in the Indian start-up ecosystem by a lack of domestic capital.
- There is a lost opportunity for the nation since domestic pension funds are not funding start-ups, venture capital, or technology.
- The regulatory framework and Union Ministry of Finance are antagonistic to start-ups' tax concerns.
- The Reserve Bank of India has implemented new regulations that limit banks' and non-banking financial companies' (NBFC) ability to invest in alternative investment funds (AIFs), a move that is perceived as authoritarian.

- **Challenges in Micro and Macroeconomics:**

- The issue was exacerbated by the macroeconomic environment as well as certain start-up founders' disregard for basic business ethics.
- The start-up ecosystem's own choices and tactics contributed to the crisis in addition to outside influences.

- **How does this affect employees and startups?**

- **Large-scale layoffs:**

- Mass layoffs have been one of the main effects of the financing winter. Data from the website internationallayoffs.fyi, which monitors tech startup layoffs, indicates that between January 2023 and January 2024, IT companies in India fired almost 17,000 employees.
- Layoffs without a word:
- Employers use "silent layoffs" as an alternative to overt layoffs, by lowering ratings and encouraging staff to quit.

- **Rates of Attrition:**

- 111 Indian unicorns saw an attrition rate (the rate at which people leave a company) of 4.72% between September 2022 and July 2023, with 41,208 employees leaving in Bengaluru alone.

- **India's Startup Ecosystem:**

- As of October 3, 2023, India had over one lakh startups recognised by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) spread throughout 763 districts, making it the third largest startup ecosystem in the world.
- Among middle-income economies, India ranks second for the quality of its innovations and first for the calibre of its universities and scientific publications.
- India's innovation is not confined to a few industries; it is found in 56 different industries, including 13% in IT services, 9% in healthcare and life sciences, 7% in education, 5% in agriculture, and 5% in food and drink.
- The Indian Startup Ecosystem has grown rapidly during the last several years (from 2015 to 2022).
- A fifteen-fold rise in startup investment overall.
- A nine-fold rise in the quantity of investors.
- An increase in incubators of seven times.

- There are 111 unicorns in India as of October 2023, valued at a combined USD 349.67 billion. Of the total number of unicorns, 45 were born in 2021 with a total worth of USD 102.30 billion, and 22 in 2022 with a total valuation of USD 29.20 billion.
- Zepto became the year's lone unicorn and most recent unicorn in 2023.

- **What Startup Initiatives Does the Indian Government Offer?**

- Bhagat Singh Mudra Yojana.
- Stand-Up India Programme.
- The second Atal New India Challenge.
- The National Initiative for Innovation Development and Harnessing (NIDHI).
- India Startup Action Plan (SIAP).
- States ranked according to their support for startup ecosystems (RSSSE).

- **Way Ahead:**

- The ecosystem as a whole needs to put an emphasis on future cycle planning, maintaining proper ratios and balances, and business principles.
- To achieve continued growth, fundamental financing reforms are required, including start-up loans without collateral.
- Sustained governmental assistance, such as that provided by Karnataka's ELEVATE programme, can be extremely important in reducing startup failures and building a robust ecosystem.
- Early-stage start-ups in Karnataka can apply for a one-time grant of up to ₹50 lakh through the ELEVATE programme. The government wants to encourage public procurement from start-ups through privileged market access.
- Policies encouraging domestic investments should be put in place by the government, particularly for pension funds.
- Startups must embrace efficiency, thrift, and organic business leads in order to adjust to the changing dynamics of the market.

Source → The Hindu