



DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 13-07-2024

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Moidams

Syllabus: GS-1: Indian Art and Architecture.

Context:

- *The Ahom era 'Moidams' in Assam's Charaideo district have **been recommended for inclusion** in the UNESCO World Heritage List by the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS).*

Description:

- *These Moidams are the **burial grounds of Ahom royalty**.*
- *Constructed by **creating earth mounds** over hollow vaults topped by shrines.*

History and Significance:

- *The **Tai-Ahom clan migrated from China** and established their capital in different parts of the Brahmaputra River Valley between the 12th and 18th centuries CE.*
- ***Chau-lung Siu-ka-pha established** the first capital of the Ahoms at the foothill of Patkai hills, naming it Che-rai-doi or Che-tam-doi, meaning "a dazzling city above the mountain." The site was consecrated with a ritual.*
- *While the clan moved from city to city, Choraideo continued to be the most sacred site where the departed souls of the Royals could transcend into the afterlife.*
- *Their **unique system of vaulted mounds** persisted for 600 years until many Tai-Ahoms converted to Buddhism, and others adopted the Hindu system of cremation.*

Moidam Structure:

- ***Moidams are vaulted chambers** (chow-chali), often double-storied, entered through an arched passage.*
- *Atop the **hemispherical mud-mound**, layers of bricks and earth are laid, with the base of the mound reinforced by a polygonal toe-wall and an arched gateway on the west.*
- *The mounds **eventually get covered by vegetation**, transforming the area into an undulating landscape resembling a group of hillocks.*
- ***Excavations reveal that each vaulted chamber** has a centrally raised platform where the body was laid.*

- **Several objects used by the deceased during their life**, such as royal insignia, objects made of wood, ivory, iron, gold pendants, ceramic ware, weapons, clothes, and even human beings (from the Luk-kha-khun clan), were buried with the king.

Materials and Construction:

- There is **great variety in the materials and systems** of construction used in building a moidam.
- Between the 13th and 17th centuries CE, **wood was the primary material for construction.**
- From the 18th century onwards, **stone and burnt bricks of various sizes** were used for the inner chambers.
- The *Changrung Phukan* (canonical text developed by the Ahoms) records the materials used to construct a Moidam, including bricks and stones cemented by a mixture of black pulse, molasses, duck eggs, barali fish, lime (from limestone and snail shell), boulders, broken stones, bricks, and broken bricks for the superstructure, and large stone slabs for the sub-substructure.

Crematory Rituals:

- The **Changrung Phukan** also documents the number of laborers, duration of work, votive offerings made, and rituals followed during the cremation of Royals.
- The crematory rituals of the Royal Ahoms were conducted with **great pomp and grandeur, reflecting their hierarchy.**

National Commission for Minorities (NCM)

Syllabus: GS-2; Non- Constitutional Bodies

Context

- The National Commission for Minorities (NCM) has advised the state governments to hold '**Sarv Dharma Samvad**' meetings with all communities at sub-divisional level every month to curb incidents of hate crimes against minority communities.

About

- *The National Commission for Minorities (NCM) is a **statutory body** in India established to safeguard and protect the rights of minority communities as defined in the Constitution of India.*

Establishment

- *The NCM was set up by the Government of India under the **National Commission for Minorities Act, 1992**.*
- *It officially started functioning in 1993.*

Composition

- *The Commission consists of a **Chairperson, a Vice-Chairperson, and five Members**, who are nominated by the central government.*
- *The Chairperson and Members are chosen from amongst persons of eminence, ability, and integrity.*

Mandate and Objectives

The primary objective of the NCM is to safeguard and protect the interests of minorities in India. Its key functions and powers include:

- **Monitoring Safeguards:** *To monitor the working of the safeguards provided in the Constitution and laws enacted by Parliament and the state legislatures.*
- **Investigations and Inquiries:** *To conduct studies, research, and analysis on the issues related to the socio-economic and educational development of minorities.*
- **Recommendations:** *To make recommendations for the effective implementation of safeguards for the protection of the interests of minorities by the central government or state governments.*
- **Complaints Handling:** *To look into specific complaints regarding deprivation of rights and safeguards of minorities and take up such matters with the appropriate authorities.*
- **Advisory Role:** *To advise the central government on matters pertaining to the socio-economic and educational development of minorities.*
- **Annual Reports:** *To present annual reports to the President of India on the implementation of safeguards for minorities and other measures taken by the government for their welfare.*

Key Activities

- **Educational Initiatives:** *The NCM emphasizes the educational upliftment of minority communities by recommending policies and schemes to ensure equal opportunities in education.*

- **Social Welfare:** *It works towards improving the social welfare of minorities by advocating for better health facilities, housing, and employment opportunities.*
- **Legal Support:** *The Commission provides legal assistance to minorities in cases of discrimination or violation of rights.*
- **Community Outreach:** *Conducting awareness programs and workshops to educate minority communities about their rights and available government schemes.*

Challenges and Issues

- **Implementation Gaps:** *Despite the policies and safeguards, there are gaps in the implementation at the ground level.*
- **Discrimination:** *Addressing ongoing issues of discrimination and ensuring equal treatment of minorities in various sectors.*
- **Awareness:** *Ensuring that minority communities are aware of their rights and the safeguards available to them.*

CBI

Syllabus: GS-2: Non-constitutional bodies.

Context:

- *UGC-NET 'paper leak': Evidence was doctored, finds CBI investigation.*

About Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI)

- *The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) is **India's premier investigative agency**, primarily responsible for combating corruption, economic crimes, and serious criminal offenses.*

Establishment and Historical Background

- **Founded:** *1941 as the Special Police Establishment.*
- **Renamed:** *1963 as CBI under the Delhi Special Police Establishment Act, 1946.*
- **Mandate:** *Originally set up to investigate bribery and corruption in the defense sector.*

Legal Framework

- **Primary Legislation:** *Delhi Special Police Establishment Act, 1946.*
- **CBI Act, 1946:** *Empowers the agency to investigate cases referred by the Central and State governments.*

- **Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988:** *CBI has the authority to investigate offenses under this Act.*

Structure and Organization

- **Director:** *Head of the CBI, appointed by the Central Government based on recommendations from the Prime Minister and the Home Minister.*
- **Special Units:**
 - **Anti-Corruption Division:** *Investigates cases of corruption.*
 - **Economic Offences Wing:** *Focuses on economic crimes, including fraud and financial scams.*
 - **Cyber Crime:** *Investigates cyber-related offenses.*
 - **Special Task Forces:** *Formed for specific investigations or cases.*

Functions and Responsibilities

- **Investigative Functions:**
 - *Investigate serious crimes including corruption, organized crime, and terrorism.*
 - *Probe cases referred by State Governments and the Supreme Court.*
- **Preventive Functions:**
 - *Conduct preventive vigilance and promote integrity in public life.*
- **Assistance to State Police:** *Collaborate with state police forces in investigations and capacity building.*

Powers of CBI

- **Arrest and Detain:** *Authority to arrest without a warrant in specific cases.*
- **Search and Seizure:** *Power to conduct searches and seize evidence in connection with investigations.*
- **Coordination with Other Agencies:** *Collaborates with various law enforcement agencies, both domestic and international.*

Key Challenges Faced by CBI

- **Political Interference:** *Allegations of political influence in investigations, affecting autonomy.*
- **Resource Constraints:** *Limited manpower and financial resources for extensive investigations.*
- **Dependence on State Governments:** *Need for consent from states for investigations in certain cases.*

International Collaborations

- **Interpol:** *Collaboration with Interpol for transnational crimes.*
- **Capacity Building:** *Engaging in training programs with international agencies to enhance investigative capabilities.*

22nd India-Russia Annual Summit India-Russia Relations

Syllabus: GS-2: Bilateral Relations – India – Russia.

Context:

- **22nd India-Russia Annual Summit:** *Held in Moscow, bringing together Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Vladimir Putin to discuss various issues aimed at solidifying the strategic partnership between India and Russia amidst ongoing geopolitical tensions.*
- **Russia's Economic Milestone:** *Russia has been upgraded from an upper-middle-income to a high-income country by the World Bank despite ongoing Western sanctions.*

Key Highlights of the 22nd India-Russia Annual Summit

Diplomatic Achievements

- **Highest Civilian Honour:** *President Vladimir Putin conferred the "Order of Saint Andrew the Apostle" on Prime Minister Narendra Modi for promoting strategic partnership and friendly relations between Russia and India. This award was established by Tsar Peter the Great in 1698 and reinstated in 1998.*
- **Notable Recipients:** *Other foreign leaders such as Chinese President Xi Jinping and former Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev have also received this award.*

Economic Cooperation

- **New Trade Target:** *A new bilateral trade target of USD 100 billion by 2030, up from the previous target of USD 30 billion by 2025, which was nearly doubled in 2023.*
- **Programme-2030:** *Agreement to prepare a comprehensive "Programme-2030" for developing promising areas of economic cooperation, coordinated by the India-Russia Intergovernmental Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technical and Cultural Cooperation (IRIGC-TEC).*
- **Free Trade Agreement:** *India and the Eurasian Economic Union have commenced negotiations for a Free Trade Agreement on goods, and plan to explore a bilateral free-trade agreement in services and investments.*
- **Investment Participation:** *Encouragement for Russian businesses to participate in India's "Make in India" and "Atmanirbhar Bharat" programs, and for Indian companies to invest in Russian projects.*

Defence and Technology

- **Joint Research and Development:** *Transition from a buyer-seller relationship to joint research, development, co-development, and joint production of advanced defence technology and systems.*
- **Make-in-India Initiative:** *Encouragement for joint manufacturing of spare parts and components for Russian-origin arms and defence equipment in India under the Make-in-India program.*
- **Technological Cooperation:** *Establishment of a new Working Group on Technological Cooperation to discuss its provisions in the next meeting of the Intergovernmental Commission on Military and Military Technical Cooperation (IRIGC-M&MTC).*
- **Military Recruitment:** *President Putin agreed to discharge Indian military recruits serving in the Russian military on the Ukrainian war front who wish to return to India.*

Transport and Connectivity

- **Transport Corridors:** *Focus on developing stable and efficient transport corridors in Eurasia, including the Chennai-Vladivostok Eastern Maritime Corridor and the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC).*
- **Chennai-Vladivostok Maritime Corridor:** *Proposed in 2019, this sea link aims to transport various types of cargo and reduce transportation time to Russia by 40%.*

- **INSTC:** *A multi-modal transportation route established in 2000 to promote transportation cooperation among member states, connecting the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf to the Caspian Sea via Iran, and then to St. Petersburg and Northern Europe via Russia.*
- **Infrastructure Capacity:** *Aimed to increase infrastructure capacity and utilize the potential of the Northern Sea Route, working together to reduce time and cost of cargo transportation.*

International Cooperation

- **UN Security Council:** *Russia appreciated India's non-permanent membership in the UN Security Council (2021-22) and supported India's efforts in peacekeeping and counter-terrorism.*
- **BRICS Chairship:** *India expressed full support for Russia's BRICS Chairship in 2024 under the theme "Strengthening Multilateralism for Just Global Development and Security."*
- **Multilateral Forums:** *Emphasis on close cooperation in international forums such as the UN, G20, BRICS, and Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) to reinvigorate multilateralism.*
- **International Alliances:** *India looked forward to Russia joining the International Solar Alliance (ISA), the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI), and the International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA).*

Global Issues

- **Climate Change:** *Commitment to combating climate change and achieving the goals of the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement, including cooperation on low-carbon development and green financing.*
- **Multipolar World Order:** *Emphasis on the need for a multipolar world order and the development of an architecture of equal and indivisible regional security in the Eurasian space and the Indian and Pacific ocean regions.*
- **Counter Terrorism:** *Condemnation of terrorism and violent extremism in all forms, including the cross-border movement of terrorists and terrorism financing networks. Commitment to strengthening multilateral cooperation in combating transnational organized crime, money laundering, terrorist financing, and drug trafficking.*

Practice Question

Q. Discuss the strategic and economic significance of the 22nd India-Russia Annual Summit in the context of global geopolitical tensions and Russia's recent elevation to a high-income country status. (15 marks, 250 words)

Zombie Startups

Syllabus: GS-3; Science and Technology

Context

- *Homegrown micro-blogging platform Koo recently became the only fourth startup in 2024 to enter the dead pool club, which has seen a massive 99.8 per cent decline this year so far.*
- *Investors say the recent wave of startup shutdowns — exacerbated by the so-called funding winter — was a “necessary cleanup”, with founders now focusing on improving operational metrics.*
- *However, the startup world may not be completely out of the woods yet, as ‘zombie’ startups have emerged as a new threat, they said.*

About

- *“Zombie startups” refer to **companies that continue to operate but without significant growth or progress.***
- *These startups often have just enough revenue or funding to keep running but lack the momentum or innovation to scale up or become profitable.*

Characteristics

- **Stagnant Growth:** *Little to no increase in customer base, revenue, or market reach over an extended period.*
- **Minimal Innovation:** *Lack of new product developments or significant improvements to existing services.*
- **Limited Funding:** *Reliance on minimal investment, often just enough to cover operational costs without providing the resources needed for substantial growth.*
- **Operational Persistence:** *Continued operation due to sunk costs or founder commitment, despite low chances of significant success or exit.*
- **Market Saturation:** *Operating in a saturated market with intense competition and minimal differentiation.*

Causes of Zombie Startups

- **Market Misfit:** *Products or services that don't meet a significant market need.*
- **Poor Management:** *Ineffective leadership and business strategies.*
- **Insufficient Capital:** *Inability to secure adequate funding for expansion.*
- **Competitive Pressure:** *Overwhelming competition from better-funded or more innovative companies.*
- **Economic Downturns:** *Adverse economic conditions impacting growth opportunities.*

Risks and Challenges

- **Resource Drain:** *Continual consumption of financial and human resources without proportionate returns.*
- **Missed Opportunities:** *Inability to pivot or adapt to new opportunities due to limited resources.*
- **Founder Fatigue:** *Loss of motivation and burnout among founders and key team members.*
- **Reputation Damage:** *Diminished credibility and appeal to potential investors, partners, and customers.*

Potential Solutions

- **Pivoting:** *Shifting focus to a new product, market, or business model.*
- **Streamlining Operations:** *Reducing overheads and focusing on core strengths.*
- **Mergers and Acquisitions:** *Partnering with or being acquired by a more successful company.*
- **Refocusing on Innovation:** *Investing in research and development to rejuvenate the product offering.*
- **Securing New Funding:** *Attracting new investors to provide the necessary capital for growth.*