

UPSC CURRENT AFFAIRS NOTES 27-01-2024

GYANVAPI MOSQUE



The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) in its scientific survey report on the Gyanvapi mosque complex has concluded that “there existed a Hindu temple prior to the construction of the existing structure” at the site.

Details

The Gyanvapi Mosque is located in Varanasi, India, near the Vishwanath Temple. It has historical and religious significance, and its history is intertwined with the Hindu-Muslim dynamics in the region.

Key points from the report

Destruction During Aurangzeb's Reign: The report mentions that the pre-existing structure, believed to be a Hindu temple, was likely destroyed in the 17th century during the reign of Aurangzeb. This destruction is said to have occurred as part of Aurangzeb's orders to demolish schools and temples.

Inscriptions in Different Scripts: The survey recorded a total of 34 inscriptions, including those in Devanagari, Grantha, Telugu, and Kannada scripts. These inscriptions were found on stones from the pre-existing Hindu



temples, which were reused during the construction or repair of the existing mosque.

Reuse of Temple Parts: Parts of the pre-existing temple, such as pillars and plasters, were reused for the expansion of the mosque and the construction of the sahan (courtyard). The report notes that Vyala figures (Hindu mythological creatures) carved on these pillars were mutilated during reuse.

Central Chamber Integration: The central chamber of the pre-existing temple now forms the central hall of the existing mosque structure. The report describes the integration of the central chamber, main entrance, and other architectural components from the original temple into the current mosque.

Sculptural Remains in Cellars: The survey found that pillars from the pre-existing temple were reused to create cellars in the eastern part of the platform. These cellars, along with the platform, were constructed in front of the mosque to accommodate a large number of people for prayers. Sculptures of Hindu deities and architectural members were discovered under the soil in one of the cellars.

Pre-Mosque History

Vishweshwar Temple:

The site originally housed a Vishweshwar Temple dedicated to Lord Shiva.

Built by Todar Mal during the late 16th century, it contributed to making Banaras a significant center for Brahminic assembly.

Debates on Pre-Temple History:

Scholars debate the existence of a Vishweshwar temple in early medieval Banaras.

Different accounts describe the repeated destruction and reconstruction of the temple, attributing it to various rulers.

Establishment of Gyanvapi Mosque

Aurangzeb's Demolition:

In 1669, Aurangzeb ordered the demolition of the Vishweshwar Temple.

The mosque was constructed in its place, utilizing parts of the temple structure, and named the Alamgiri Mosque.



Political Motives:

Scholars argue that Aurangzeb's demolition had political motivations rather than just religious zealotry.

The act was seen as a warning to local Hindu leaders and zamindars who resisted Aurangzeb's rule.

Muslim Counter-Claims

Some Muslims reject the idea that Aurangzeb demolished the temple due to religious reasons.

Alternate narratives include the temple's collapse, destruction by a Hindu merchant, or communal rioting.

Late-Mughal India

In the late 17th and 18th centuries, there were attempts by rulers like Bishan Singh and Malhar Rao Holkar to rebuild the temple, but these were unsuccessful.

British Raj

Under British rule, the Gyanvapi site became a center of contention between Hindus and Muslims.

Legal disputes and riots occurred, with restrictions on access and rituals at the site.

Independent India

In the late 20th century, the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) campaigned to reclaim temples and included Gyanvapi in their efforts.

Legal battles ensued, and tensions escalated, especially after the Babri mosque demolition in 1992.

The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has declared the Gyanvapi Mosque as a protected monument.

The site is under the administration of a trust that manages its affairs.



Ayodhya Parallel

The controversy surrounding Gyanvapi Mosque is often compared to the Ayodhya dispute, where the Babri Masjid was demolished, leading to the construction of the Ram Janmabhoomi Temple.

AISHE

AISHE

All India Survey on Higher Education

The All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2021-22, released by the Ministry of Education, provides a comprehensive picture of the higher education landscape in India.

Key findings of the All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2021-22

Enrollment Trends

Overall Enrollment Increase: Total enrollment in higher education increased from approximately 4.14 crore in the previous session to nearly 4.33 crore in 2021-22, marking an increase of around 19 lakh students.

Female Enrollment Growth: Female enrollment increased from 2.01 crore in 2020-21 to 2.07 crore in 2021-22. The increase in female enrollment from 2014-15 (1.57 crore) to 2021-22 (2.07 crore) accounts for around 50 lakh students.

Enrollment by Stream: In 2021-22, 57.2 lakh students were enrolled in the science stream, with female students outnumbering male students (29.8 lakh versus 27.4 lakh).



D. Enrollment: Female Ph.D. enrollment doubled from 0.48 lakh in 2014-15 to 0.99 lakh in 2021-22. The annual increase in female Ph.D. enrollment for the period 2014-15 to 2021-22 is 10.4%.

Enrollment by Category: The enrollment of Scheduled Tribe (ST) students increased from 16.41 lakh in 2014-15 to 27.1 lakh in 2021-22, marking a 65.2% increase.

Enrollment in North East States: Total student enrollment in North East States increased from 9.36 lakh in 2014-15 to 12.02 lakh in 2021-22. Female enrollment in North East States (6.07 lakh) surpassed male enrollment (5.95 lakh) in 2021-22.

Enrollment by Social Category: OBC student enrollment increased by 45% in 2021-22 (1.63 crore) compared to 2014-15 (1.13 crore). Minority student enrollment increased from 21.8 lakh in 2014-15 to 30.1 lakh in 2021-22, with female minority enrollment witnessing a 42.3% increase.

Discipline and Course Level Enrollment

Undergraduate vs. Postgraduate Enrollment: About 78.9% of total students are enrolled in undergraduate-level courses, while 12.1% are enrolled in postgraduate-level courses.

Discipline Enrollment: Enrollment is highest in Arts (34.2%) at the undergraduate level, followed by Science (14.8%), Commerce (13.3%), and Engineering & Technology (11.8%). At the postgraduate level, maximum students are enrolled in Social Science (21.1%), followed by Science (14.7%).

D. Enrollment: Ph.D. enrollment increased by 81.2% to 2.12 lakh in 2021-22 compared to 1.17 lakh in 2014-15.

Institutional and Faculty Trends

Establishment of Institutions: 341 universities and university-level institutions have been established since 2014-15.

Female Faculty Increase: Female faculty/teachers increased from 5.69 lakh in 2014-15 to 6.94 lakh in 2021-22, marking a 22% increase.

Implications and Future Directions

The increase in enrollment, particularly among females and marginalized communities, reflects efforts to improve access to higher education.

More focus may be needed on diversifying disciplines and promoting STEM education among underrepresented groups.

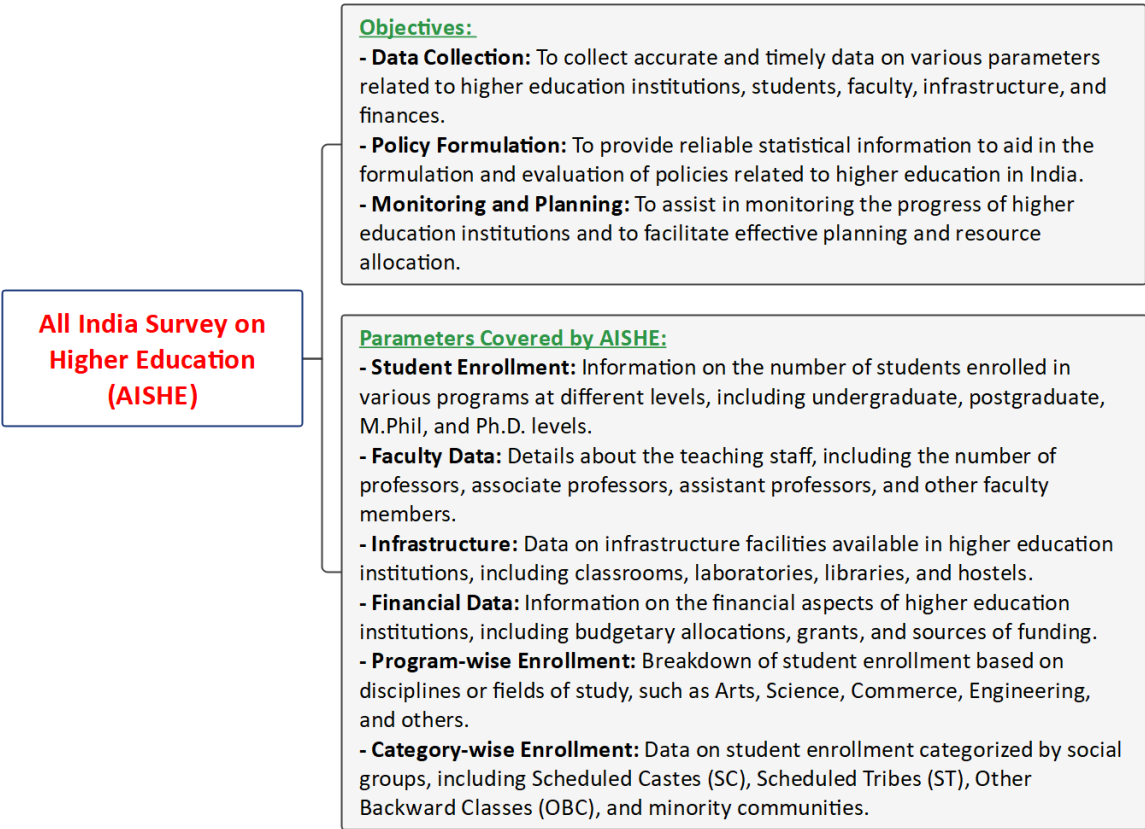
Strategies to support Ph.D. enrollment and research output can contribute to academic excellence and innovation.

Continued investment in infrastructure and faculty development is essential to accommodate the growing student population and ensure quality education.

All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE)

The All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) is an **annual statistical exercise conducted by the Ministry of Education (formerly known as the Ministry of Human Resource Development) in India.**

The survey aims to collect comprehensive data on various aspects of higher education institutions (HEIs) and students in the country.



Methodology

Coverage: The survey covers all recognized universities, colleges, and institutions providing higher education in India.



Data Collection: Institutions are required to provide detailed information on various parameters through an online portal developed by the Department of Higher Education.

Annual Exercise: AISHE is conducted annually to ensure that the data collected is up-to-date and reflective of the current state of higher education in the country.

Significance

Policy Formulation: The data collected through AISHE serves as a crucial resource for policymakers to formulate and modify policies related to higher education.

Resource Allocation: The information gathered helps in the allocation of resources and funds based on the needs and requirements of different institutions.

Monitoring and Evaluation: AISHE enables the government to monitor the growth and development of higher education institutions and evaluate the effectiveness of policies implemented.

Research and Analysis: Researchers, analysts, and policymakers use AISHE data for in-depth studies, research, and analysis on various aspects of higher education.

Market Access Initiative (MAI) Scheme

Overview:

Ahead of the interim Budget 2024, exporters have urged the government to allocate funds worth \$3.88 billion for the Market Access Initiative (MAI) scheme.

About Market Access Initiative (MAI) Scheme

It is an export promotion scheme envisaged to act as a catalyst to promote India's exports on a sustained basis.

The scheme is formulated on focus product-focus country approach to evolve specific markets and specific products through market studies and surveys.



Assistance would be provided to Export Promotion Organizations/Trade Promotion Organizations/National Level Institutions/ Research Institutions/Universities/Laboratories, Exporters etc., for the enhancement of exports through accessing new markets or through increasing their share in the existing markets.

Under the Scheme, the level of assistance for each eligible activities has been fixed.

The following activities will be eligible for financial assistance under the Scheme:

Marketing Projects Abroad

Capacity Building

Support for Statutory Compliances

Studies

Project Development/Developing Foreign Trade Facilitation web Portal

To support Cottage and handicrafts units

Eligible Agencies: Departments of Central Government and Organisation of Central/State Governments including

Indian Missions abroad

Export Promotion Councils

Registered trade promotion Organisation

Commodity Boards

Apex Trade Bodies recognized under Foreign Trade Policy of Govt of India

Recognized Industrial & Artisan Clusters

Individual Exporters (only for statutory compliance etc.)

National Level Institutions (e.g. Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs), National Institute of design (NIDs), NIFT etc.)/ Research Institutions/Universities/ Recognized laboratories, etc.

The funding for each project will be on cost-sharing basis with the sharing pattern ranging from 65% to 50% at the minimum.

It is administered by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India, through the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT).

BrahMos

India is all set to begin the export of ground systems for the BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles to the Philippines.



About BrahMos

It is a supersonic cruise missile that can be launched from land, sea, and air.

It has been developed by Brahmos Aerospace, a joint venture of India and Russia.

It is named after the rivers Brahmaputra (India) and Moskva (Russia).

Features:

It is a **two-stage missile** with a **solid propellant booster engine** as its first stage, which brings it to supersonic speed and then gets separated. **The liquid ramjet, or second stage then takes the missile closer to 3 Mach speed in the cruise phase.**

It is one of the fastest cruise missiles currently operationally deployed, with a speed of Mach 2.8, which is nearly three times more than the speed of sound.

It has a launch weight of 2,200-3,000 kg.

The extended-range variant of the missile can strike land and sea targets at a maximum range of 400 to 500 kilometers with supersonic speed all throughout the flight.

It operates on the "Fire and Forgets" principle, adopting varieties of flights on its way to the target.

Its cruising altitude could be up to 15 km, and its terminal altitude is as low as 10 meters.

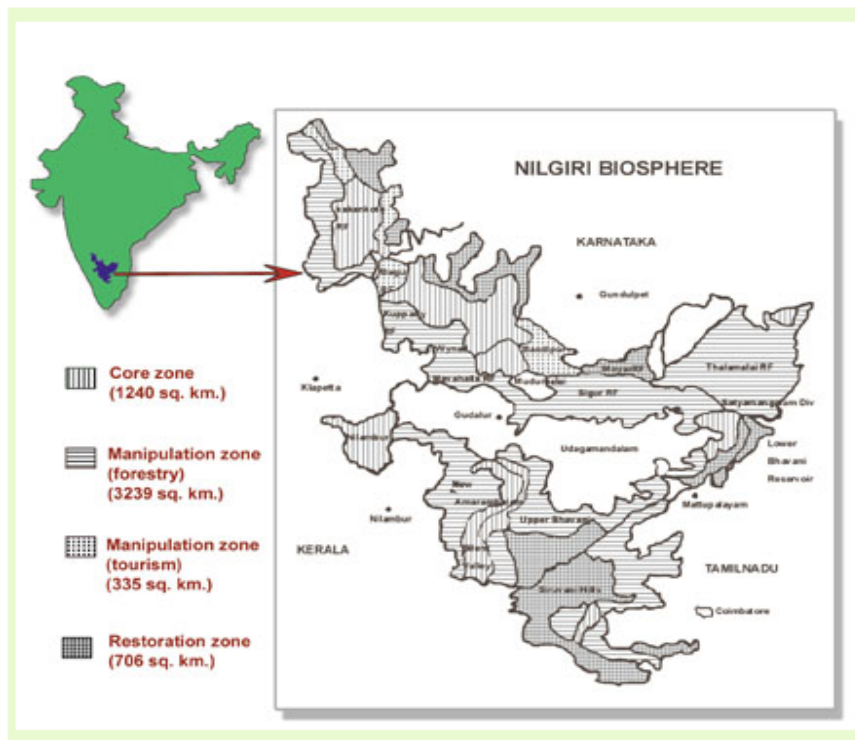
It carries a conventional warhead weighing 200 to 300 kg.

It is equipped with stealth technology designed to make it less visible to radar and other detection methods.

It has an inertial navigation system (INS) for use against ship targets, and an INS/Global Positioning System for use against land targets.

Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve (NBR)

More than 300 vultures were recorded in the recently completed synchronous vulture survey in the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve (NBR).





It is located in the Nilgiri Mountains of the Western Ghats.

It encompasses parts of **Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Karnataka.**

It was the first biosphere reserve in India, established in 1986.

The total area of the reserve is 5,520 sq. km. It is the largest protected forest area in India.

The Mudumalai Wildlife Sanctuary, Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary, Bandipur National Park, Nagarhole National Park, Mukurthi National Park, and Silent Valley are the protected areas present within this reserve.

Vegetation: It harbours a wide spectrum of ecosystem types, such as tropical evergreen forests, Montane sholas and grasslands, semi-evergreen forests, moist deciduous forests, dry deciduous forests, and thorn forests.

Climate: The annual rainfall of the reserve ranges from 500 mm to 7000 mm, with temperatures ranging from 0°C during the winter to 41°C during the summer.

Tribal Population: Tribal groups like the Todas, Kotas, Irullas, Kurumbas, Paniyas, Adiyans, Edanadan Chettis, Cholanaickens, Allar, Malayan, etc., are native to the reserve.

It is India's first biosphere reserve under UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Programme. (MAB)

Flora:

About 3,300 species of flowering plants can be seen here. Of the 3,300 species, 132 are endemic to the NBR.

Some of the plants entirely restricted to the NBR include species of Adenoon, Calacanthus, Baeolepis, Frerea, Jarodina, Wagatea, Poeciloneuron, etc.

Fauna:

It includes the largest known population of two endangered animal species, namely the Nilgiri Tahr and the Lion-tailed macaque and the largest South Indian population of elephant, tiger, gaur, sambar, and chital.

Nilgiri Tahr is the only Caprinae species found in the tropical mountains of the south. They are endemic to the Western Ghats and used to inhabit a large part of



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the Western Ghats between Kerala and Tamil Nadu. They are classified as
Endangered under the IUCN Red List.

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