DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 22-05-2025

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Golden Temple

Syllabus: GS-1: Art and Architecture.

Context:

The Indian Army has denied media reports about deploying air defence guns at the Golden Temple during Operation Sindoor.

Golden Temple (Sri Darbar Sahib), Amritsar

What is it?

The Golden Temple, also known as Sri Darbar Sahib or Harmandir Sahib, is the **holiest shrine in Sikhism**, located in **Amritsar, Punjab**. It symbolizes **Sikh values** of **equality, humility, service**, and **interfaith harmony**.

Historical Background

- **Foundation Laid:** 1577 CE by **Guru Ram Das Ji**, the 4th Sikh Guru.
- **Constructed by:** Guru Arjan Dev Ji, the 5th Guru, completed in **1604**.
- **Land Acquisition:** Bought from local landlords (zamindars).
- **Foundation Ceremony:** Performed by **Hazrat Mian Mir**, a Muslim saint from Lahore, highlighting **interfaith unity**.

Key Personalities

- **Guru Arjan Dev Ji:** Visionary behind the shrine's construction.
- **Baba Budha Ji:** Appointed as the **first granthi** (reader of Guru Granth Sahib).
- **Maharaja Ranjit Singh (19th century): Gold-plated** the shrine, giving it its iconic look.

Architectural Features

- **Design Philosophy:** Built at a **lower level** to express **humility**.
- **Entrances:** Four gates in all directions signifying **universal acceptance**.
- **Structure:** Located on a **67 ft square platform** in the **Amrit Sarovar** (holy pool).
- **Materials:** Combination of **white marble** and **gold plating** with intricate inlay work.
- **Dome: Fluted lotus-shaped**, topped with a **kalash** and **canopy**.

Langar (Community Kitchen)

- Serves **free meals** to over **1 lakh people daily** irrespective of caste, creed, or religion.
- Reflects the **Sikh doctrine of selfless service (seva)** and **social equality**.

Historical Significance

- **18th Century:** Suffered repeated attacks during **Mughal** and **Afghan invasions**.
- **Operation Blue Star (1984):** Indian Army operation to remove armed militants led to severe damage and large-scale public unrest.

Current Issue (2025): Indian Army **denied reports** of deploying air defence guns at the temple during **Operation Sindoor**, refuting recent media claims.

India's Global Outreach Against Terrorism from Pakistan

Syllabus: GS-2: International Relations

Context:

India is intensifying its diplomatic efforts to garner international support against terrorism emanating from Pakistan.

India's Global Diplomatic Outreach Against Terrorism Linked to Pakistan

Background

- **Pakistan's UNSC Seat (2025–2026):** Pakistan will hold a non-permanent seat on the UNSC, which may allow it to influence discussions, especially those concerning terrorism.
- **India's Response:** India is intensifying global diplomatic efforts to isolate Pakistan and counter its narrative on terrorism at the UNSC.

Key Strategic Objectives

- Isolate Pakistan diplomatically on the issue of terrorism.
- Build a coalition of nations within the UNSC that support India's anti-terrorism stance.
- Ensure upcoming UNSC debates reflect India's priorities and concerns.

Targeted Outreach

1. UNSC Permanent Members

- **Engaging:** United States, United Kingdom, France, Russia
- **Excluded:** China (due to its strategic alignment with Pakistan)

2. Current & Incoming Non-Permanent Members

- **Incoming Members (from Jan 2026):**
  - Latvia
  - Democratic Republic of Congo
  - Bahrain
  - Liberia
  - Colombia
- **Outgoing Members (2024–2025):**
  - Algeria
  - Guyana
- **Other Incoming Members to be Engaged:**
  - Denmark
  - Greece

3. Engagement with Muslim-Majority Countries

- **Focus Regions:** West Asia & Southeast Asia
- **Key Nations:**
  - **Saudi Arabia**
  - **United Arab Emirates (UAE)**
  - **Qatar**
  - **Egypt**

These countries, once sympathetic to Pakistan, are now seen as possible allies amid changing geopolitical equations.

4. Outreach to G7 and BRICS Nations

- **G7 Countries Targeted:**
  - Germany
  - Italy
  - Japan
- **BRICS Members Engaged:**
  - Brazil
  - South Africa
  - Ethiopia (also hosts African Union HQ)

Diplomatic Mechanism

- **Leaders of Delegations:**
  - India's Foreign Secretary
  - Senior officials from Ministry of External Affairs (MEA)
- **Engagement Channels:**
  - Bilateral meetings with political leadership
  - Strategic briefings to think tanks
  - Media interactions to shape global narratives

Conclusion: India's Broader Strategy

India is undertaking a **multi-tiered diplomatic campaign** aimed at:

- Countering Pakistan's influence at the UNSC
- Building consensus on global counter-terrorism
- Securing a favorable international environment in the run-up to and during Pakistan's UNSC term

India's proactive diplomacy underscores its commitment to presenting terrorism as a global threat and shaping multilateral dialogue accordingly.

Inflation Moderation in India

Syllabus: GS-3: India Economy – Inflation.

Context:

India has recently witnessed a significant moderation in inflation at both the retail and wholesale levels. This development is a welcome relief for consumers, businesses, and policymakers, as persistent inflation undermines purchasing power, disrupts investment planning, and fuels economic uncertainty.

Understanding Inflation Indicators

- **Consumer Price Index (CPI):** Measures changes in the prices of essential goods and services consumed by households—reflecting retail inflation.
- **Wholesale Price Index (WPI):** Captures price changes at the wholesale level, i.e., prices at the producer or factory gate before reaching consumers.

April 2025 Inflation Data

- **CPI Inflation:** 3.2% (lowest in six years)
- **WPI Inflation:** 0.9% (14-month low)

Key Drivers of Inflation Moderation

1. Decline in Food Prices

- **Vegetables:** Prices dropped by 11%, playing a major role in reducing CPI.
- **Pulses:** Fell by 5%, easing pressure on household food budgets.

2. Favourable Climatic and Agricultural Conditions

- Good weather facilitated robust production of vegetables and pulses.
- Absence of major natural disasters ensured stable crop output.

3. Government Interventions

- **Buffer Stock Releases:** Food grains released from government reserves helped stabilize prices.
- **Open Market Sales Scheme (OMSS):** FCI released wheat and rice to boost availability.
- **Import Policy Easing:** Lowered tariffs and lifted import restrictions on key food commodities.

4. Statistical Base Effect

- High inflation in April 2024 (due to global supply shocks) created a favorable base, making current inflation appear lower even with moderate price increases.

5. Tight Liquidity and Monetary Policy

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) maintained a cautious stance, limiting excess liquidity and thereby moderating inflation expectations.

Macroeconomic Implications of Lower Inflation

1. Relief for Households

- Enhanced purchasing power, especially benefiting low- and middle-income groups.

2. Boost in Consumer Confidence

- Lower prices may spur discretionary spending, aiding domestic demand and recovery.

3. Impact on Interest Rates and Credit

- With inflation easing, the RBI has room to reduce the **repo rate**, making borrowing cheaper for:
    - Housing and infrastructure projects
    - MSMEs and consumption-driven sectors

4. Investment Climate Improvement

- Stable inflation promotes long-term business planning and attracts foreign investment.

RBI's Policy Response and Shift Toward Growth

Recent RBI Actions

- Repo rate cut by **25 basis points** in April 2025.

Future Outlook

- **June MPC Meeting:** Another 25 basis point cut anticipated.
- **August MPC Meeting:** Possible further easing.

Shift Toward Growth Focus

- With inflation below the 4% target, policy emphasis can pivot to supporting growth and employment.

Inflation Outlook for FY 2025–26

Projected Rate: Around 3.5%, down from the average 6% in recent years**.**

Favorable Factors

- Declining Global Oil Prices
- Above-Normal Monsoon Forecast (per IMD)
- Stable Rupee helping manage import costs

Risks and Challenges Ahead

Despite recent improvements, inflation risks persist:

1. **Geopolitical Tensions:** Middle East instability or Russia-Ukraine war escalation could spike oil prices.
2. **Climate Risks:** Unfavorable monsoon (e.g., due to El Niño) could trigger food inflation.
3. **Global Commodity Volatility:** Fertilizer, metal, and crude oil price swings impact production costs.
4. **Wage-Price Spiral:** If wage growth outpaces productivity, demand-driven inflation may resurface.

Multi-Pronged Strategy for Inflation Management

1. Supply-Side Measures

- Continue buffer stock management and improve food logistics (cold chains, warehouses).

2. Monetary Policy

- RBI's flexible, data-driven approach to balance inflation control with growth support.

3. Structural Reforms

- Boost agricultural productivity through:
    - Crop diversification
    - Climate-resilient seeds
    - Better irrigation

4. Consumer Empowerment

- Leverage platforms like **ONDC** to increase price transparency and reduce intermediary costs.

5. Data Quality Enhancement

- Improve real-time data collection and inflation measurement, especially for perishables, to inform better policy responses.

Conclusion

India's successful moderation of inflation reflects a combination of prudent policy, favorable climatic conditions, and improved supply management. With inflation now within the RBI's comfort zone, focus can shift toward catalyzing growth and investment.

However, sustained price stability requires vigilance against external shocks, climate variability, and structural inefficiencies. If these challenges are managed effectively, India stands poised to enter a phase of stable prices, robust economic recovery, and inclusive development.

Jayant Narlikar's Hoyle-Narlikar Theory of Gravity

Syllabus: GS-3: General Science – Physics.

Context:

Eminent Indian astrophysicist **Jayant Vishnu Narlikar** passed away on **May 20, 2025**, leaving behind a legacy of profound contributions to **theoretical physics** and **cosmology**.

Renowned for his work on the **Hoyle–Narlikar theory of gravity**, Narlikar challenged conventional cosmological paradigms and provided a thought-provoking alternative to the **Big Bang theory**.

The Hoyle–Narlikar Theory of Gravity

- Developed in **1964** in collaboration with British astronomer **Fred Hoyle**, the Hoyle–Narlikar theory was an ambitious attempt to incorporate **Mach's Principle** into a new formulation of gravitational theory.
- Mach's Principle posits that the **inertia** of any object is determined by its interaction with the mass of the entire universe.
- While **Albert Einstein** drew inspiration from this idea, his **General Theory of Relativity** did not fully integrate it. Narlikar and Hoyle, however, extended the idea more literally, proposing that:
- Mass and inertia are not intrinsic properties but arise from an object's interaction with all other matter in the universe.

- This **interconnectedness** implies that no object exists in isolation, and even the mass of the Earth is shaped by its relationship with other celestial bodies like the Sun and distant galaxies.

The Concept of the Creation Field (C-Field)

A revolutionary aspect of the Hoyle–Narlikar theory is the postulation of a **Creation Field (C-field)**. This field introduces **negative energy** into the equations and enables the **continuous creation of matter** in the universe. The C-field was designed to support the **Steady-State Theory of the Universe**, which posits that the universe:

- Has **no beginning or end** in time.
- Maintains a **constant average density** despite expansion.
- Continuously creates **hydrogen atoms** to replenish matter as galaxies move apart.

This view stood in direct contrast to the **Big Bang theory**, which asserts that the universe began with a singular, dense explosion approximately **13.8 billion years ago**.

Big Bang vs. Steady-State: A Cosmological Debate

The Steady-State Theory, championed by Hoyle and Narlikar, was once a major contender in cosmology. However, the discovery of the **Cosmic Microwave Background (CMB)** in **1965**—a faint glow of radiation considered the afterglow of the Big Bang—provided compelling evidence supporting the Big Bang model. This led to a decline in the popularity of the steady-state hypothesis.

Still, the **Hoyle–Narlikar theory** is celebrated for:

- Offering a **unique interpretation of gravity and inertia**.
- Reviving philosophical discussions about **Mach's Principle**.
- Inspiring future generations of physicists to explore **alternative models of the universe**.

Legacy and Influence

Jayant Narlikar's work extended beyond cosmology. As a science communicator, educator, and founder-director of the **Inter-University Centre for Astronomy and Astrophysics (IUCAA)** in Pune, he was instrumental in advancing astrophysical research in India.

Though some of his theoretical models were later overtaken by observational data, Narlikar's courage to challenge dominant scientific ideas and his **commitment to rational thought** earned him enduring respect. His work remains a testament to the power of **curiosity-driven science**.

Urban Flooding – Bengaluru

Syllabus: GS-3: Disaster Management – Urban Floods.

Context:

- Battered by 130mm rainfall in about 12 hours, Bengaluru is scrambling to count its losses.

Bengaluru Urban Flooding: A Man-Made Deluge

What is Urban Flooding?

Urban flooding refers to the inundation of land or property in a city environment due to rainfall overwhelming the drainage capacity of the local infrastructure. Unlike rural floods, urban flooding is rapid, short-lived, and often catastrophic due to high population density and infrastructure concentration.

Causes of Urban Flooding in Bengaluru

Natural Causes:

- **Heavy Rainfall:** The city receives intense monsoon showers; 130 mm in 12 hours (July 2025) overwhelmed natural and built systems.
- **Topography:** Bengaluru's undulating terrain and natural valleys (e.g., Hebbal, Koramangala-Challaghatta) serve as drainage channels but are often blocked.

Man-Made Causes:

- **Encroachment of Lakes and Wetlands:** The city has lost nearly 79% of its water bodies in 40 years (IISc).
- **Poor Drainage Infrastructure:** Rajakaluves (stormwater drains) are clogged, encroached, or neglected.
- **Outdated Urban Planning:** Comprehensive Development Plans (CDPs) lack flood zoning and resilience strategies.
- **Unregulated Urbanization:** Tech parks and high-rises on floodplains defy environmental norms.
- **Institutional Fragmentation:** BBMP, BDA, BWSSB, and KSPCB function in silos, leading to poor coordination and crisis mismanagement.

Impacts of Urban Flooding

- **Loss of Life & Property:** 3 deaths, over 500 homes submerged in 2025 rains; major localities like Koramangala, Bellandur, and Outer Ring Road were flooded.
- **Economic Disruption:** Shutdowns in IT corridors affect India's $194 billion tech export economy.
- **Public Health Risks:** Stagnant water leads to outbreaks of dengue, cholera, and waterborne infections.
- **Infrastructure Breakdown:** Road cave-ins, metro delays, power outages, and blocked underpasses paralyze urban life.

India's Initiatives on Urban Flooding

Initiative	Implementing Agency	Key Features/Actions
1. NDMA Guidelines on Urban Flooding (2010)	NDMA (National Disaster Management Authority)	- Recognizes urban flooding as distinct disaster - Stormwater drainage master plans - Urban Flood Cells in municipalities - Rainwater harvesting and public awareness
2. AMRUT (Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation)	Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs	- Drainage system upgrades in 500 cities - Focus on waterlogging reduction - Integrated planning in flood-prone areas
3. Smart Cities Mission	MoHUA & Urban Local Bodies	- Real-time flood monitoring systems - GIS-based drainage mapping - Command & control centers for quick response
4. Urban Flood Mapping by ISRO & CWC	ISRO & Central Water Commission	- Satellite-based flood-prone area mapping - GIS flood vulnerability assessment - Used for planning & mitigation strategies
5. Urban Flood Forecasting by CWC	Central Water Commission	- Forecasting models for cities (e.g., Mumbai, Delhi) - Flood dashboards and alert apps - Hydrological forecasting support
6. National Mission on	MoEFCC under NAPCC	- Sustainable Urban Drainage

Initiative	Implementing Agency	Key Features/Actions
Sustainable Habitat (NMSH)		Systems (SUDS) - Permeable surfaces, green roofs - Decentralized stormwater management
7. Urban Climate Resilience Programs	100 Resilient Cities (with support from Rockefeller Foundation)	- City-specific climate resilience plans - Wetland restoration and flood risk planning - Adopted by cities like Chennai, Surat
8. Jal Shakti Abhiyan & Catch the Rain Campaign	Ministry of Jal Shakti	- Rainwater harvesting & tank rejuvenation - Pre-monsoon desilting & recharge wells - Community awareness and involvement
9. Draft Model Building Bye-laws (2016)	MoHUA	- Mandatory rainwater harvesting - Green building norms - "Zero runoff" from large plots
10. State/City-level Flood Action Plans	State Governments & Urban Local Bodies	- City-specific flood mitigation strategies - Floodplain zoning, water body restoration - Examples: Mumbai, Bengaluru, Chennai

Global Best Practices

- **Singapore:** SWAN system uses sensors and AI to detect flood risk and issue alerts.
- **Netherlands:** "Room for the River" policy allows controlled flooding in designated areas to prevent urban inundation.
- **China:** "Sponge Cities" integrate nature-based solutions like permeable pavements and bioswales.
- **USA:** FLOAT House in New Orleans demonstrates adaptive housing to fluctuating water levels.

Way Forward for Bengaluru

- **Restore Natural Drainage:**
  - Reconnect lakes, tanks, wetlands, and rajakaluves using a scientific approach (IISc, NDMA).
- **Regular Desilting and Maintenance:**
  - Annual desilting of tertiary drains with third-party monitoring.
- **Reform Urban Planning:**
  - Revise Bengaluru's CDP to include flood-zoning, blue-green infrastructure, and vertical expansion.
- **Smart Flood Management:**
  - Deploy IoT-based flood sensors, real-time dashboards, and automated alerts.
- **Accountability and Governance:**
  - Empower BBMP with autonomy, better coordination, and citizen-driven audits.

Conclusion

Bengaluru's recurring urban floods are not merely acts of nature—they are symptoms of systemic governance failure. The city must realign its urban growth with ecological intelligence. Without restoring its "city of lakes" identity, Bengaluru risks becoming a city under water. Sustainable urban resilience is not just desirable—it is imperative.