



Ramna Kali Temple: Bangladesh

For Prelims: Ramna Kali Temple, Bangladesh Liberation War.

For Mains: 50th anniversary of the victory of Bangladesh and India in the Liberation War, India-Bangladesh Ties.

Why in News

Recently, the Indian President has inaugurated the **reconstructed Ramna Kali temple in Ramna, Dhaka (Bangladesh)**, where the **landmark Suhrawardy Udyan** (the former Ramna Race Course) is located.

- The inauguration of the reconstructed Ramna Kalibari **coincided with the 50th anniversary of the victory of Bangladesh and India in the Liberation War**, which also marks the **golden jubilee of the bilateral relations** between the two sides.



Key Points

- **About:**
 - The temple was destroyed by Pakistani forces **during their Operation Searchlight in March 1971**, the brutal crackdown that led to the genocide and the [Bangladesh War of Liberation](#).
 - In March 1971, West Pakistan led a genocide in East Pakistan to suppress calls for Bengali self-determination. East Pakistan fought and won to establish the People's Republic of Bangladesh. India played a crucial role in Bangladesh's freedom struggle.
 - After Bangladesh got rid of Pakistan, a small temple was set up at the site for people to

offer prayers.

- A **reconstruction of the complex was announced in 2017**, when then Indian External Affairs Minister inaugurated 15 development projects in Baridhara, Dhaka.
- The historic Ramna Kali temple is **a symbol of the spiritual and cultural bonding among the people of India and Bangladesh.**

▪ **Ramna Kali Temple:**

- The temple in the area, dedicated to the Goddess Kali, **is believed to have been built during the Mughal period.** It is believed to be 400 years old, even though it is difficult to pinpoint a year in which it was built.
- The temple was built by a Hindu sect, but it is difficult to identify exactly who built it. However, it is said that **it was built by a certain Haricharan Giri** who was a mahant in the temple.
- It was not a very large temple, and was fairly ordinary in terms of its architecture. However, it is **the second oldest Hindu temple in Bangladesh**, the Dhakeshwari Temple being the oldest.
- The temple gained prominence in the **early 20th century when the renowned saint Ma Anandamayi built her ashram in its precincts.**
 - Anandamayi was popularly addressed as “Shahbag-er ma”, or the Mother of Shahbag.

▪ **The Temple and the War:**

- On 27th March 1971, the **Pakistani army destroyed the temple and massacred 85 Hindus**, including priests and devotees.
- On 7th March 1971, Days before the temple was razed, **[Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman](#) delivered his historic speech at the Ramna Race Course maidan**, in which he exhorted Bengalis for the struggle for independence.
 - Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (1920-1975) is the founding leader of Bangladesh and the country's first Prime Minister.

India-Bangladesh Relations

▪ **Military Cooperation:**



- The Bangladesh government has uprooted **anti-India insurgency elements from its borders**, making the India-Bangladesh border one of the region's most peaceful.
- This has allowed India to **make a massive redeployment of military resources** to its more contentious borders elsewhere.

▪ **Land Boundary Agreement:**

- Bangladesh and India **have achieved the rare feat of solving their border issues peacefully** by ratifying the historic Land Boundary Agreement in 2015.

▪ **Trade Relations:**

- Bangladesh today is **India's biggest trading partner in South Asia** with exports to Bangladesh in **FY 2018-19 at USD 9.21 billion and imports at USD1.04 billion.**
- Also, India has offered duty free access to multiple Bangladeshi products.

▪ **Development Sector:**

- India extended three **lines of credit to Bangladesh in recent years** amounting to **USD 8 billion for the construction** of roads, railways, bridges, and ports.
- **Improved Connectivity:**
 - A direct bus service **between Kolkata and Agartala runs a route distance of 500 km**, as compared to the 1,650 km if it ran through the Chicken's Neck to remain within India.
 - **Bangladesh allows the shipment of goods** from its Mongla and Chattogram (Chittagong) seaports carried by road, rail, and water ways to Agartala.
- **New Areas of Engagement:**
 - Bangladeshis make up **a large portion of tourists in India, outnumbering all tourists arriving from western Europe in 2017**, with one in every five tourists being a Bangladeshi.
 - Bangladesh accounts for **more than 35% of India's international medical patients** and contributes more than 50% of India's revenue from medical tourism.
- **Recent Development:**
 - Earlier, a 122-member contingent of the Bangladesh Armed Forces had participated in the **72nd Republic Day parade, commemorating 50 years of the 1971 India-Pakistan war that led to the liberation of Bangladesh.**

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