Outrage over new ‘National Emblem’

What is the issue?

The first look at the new emblem atop the new Parliament House has disappointed many with its alleged inaccuracies in depiction.

What are some details about the new emblem?

- This 6.5-metre new emblem, made up of bronze, is part of the Central Vista Project.
- It was designed by Sunil Deore and Romiel Moses.
- The new emblem is placed at the top of the Central Foyer of the new Parliament building.
- The lions on the new emblem is found to look ‘angry’, with their fangs visible, as opposed to the grace and glory of the original.



What is the history behind the national emblem?

- The National Emblem is an adaptation of the Lion Capital of Mauryan emperor Asoka at Sarnath.
- It was built in 250 BC to commemorate the first sermon of Gautama Buddha, where he is said to have shared the Four Noble Truths of life.
- In the original, there are four Asiatic lions, mounted back to back, on a circular abacus, which itself rests on a bell-shaped lotus.
- The 7-feet tall sculpture made of polished sandstone represented courage, power and pride.
- The frieze of the abacus has sculptures in high relief of an elephant, a horse, a bull and a lion, which are moving in a clockwise direction.
- These animals are separated by intervening **Dharma Chakras** or wheels, representing the Dharmachakra of Buddhism, on all four sides.
- This abacus was mounted on an inverted lotus, which is a symbol of Buddhism.
- **Historical significance** - Chinese traveller Hiuen Tsang has left a detailed account of pillar in his writings.
- The pillar was part of Asoka’s plan to spread Buddha’s teachings.

Why was the Sarnath pillar embraced as the national emblem?

- The Constituent Assembly decided on the Sarnath pillar as the national emblem as the pillar epitomised the power, courage and confidence of the free nation.
- The emblem depicts a 2-D sculpture with the words Satyameva Jayate (truth alone triumphs) written below it, taken from the Mundaka Upanishad, written in Devanagari script.

- Five students of renowned artist Nandalal Bose created the emblem.
- On January 26, 1950, the Lion Capital of Asoka at Sarnath officially became the national emblem of India.
- The emblem represents the seal of the Republic of India.

What is the controversy behind the latest replica?

- In the latest replica, the lions looked “too aggressive”, which amounted to tampering with the original in a hurry to meet the deadline of the Central Vista Project.
- The original emblem has a mild expression.
- The designers countered the criticism about the lions looking aggressive by insisting that it was a matter of perspective.
- The original structure was 1.6 m tall whereas the new depiction is 6.5 m high.
- Also, the original Lion Capital was at the ground level while the latest depiction is at a height of 33 metre from the ground.

Reference

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