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## Justice Mahesh Sharadchandra Sonak Takes Oath as Chief Justice of Jharkhand High Court | Jharkhand | 15 Jan 2026

### Why in News?

Justice **Mahesh Sharadchandra Sonak** was sworn in as the **18th Chief Justice of the Jharkhand High Court**.

### Key Points

- **Appointment:** The appointment was made by the **President of India** under **Article 217** of the Constitution on the advice of the **Union Law Ministry**, following the recommendation of the **Supreme Court Collegium**.
- **Oath Administration:** The oath of office was administered by **Governor Santosh Kumar Gangwar** at a ceremony held in the **Birsa Munda Mandap** at Lok Bhavan, Ranchi.
- **Predecessor:** He succeeded **Justice Tarlok Singh Chauhan**.
- **Tenure:** He will serve as Chief Justice of the Jharkhand High Court until his retirement on **November 28, 2026**.
- **Previous Position:** He served as a **judge of the Bombay High Court** before elevation.

Read More: [Collegium System](#), [President of India](#), [Governor](#), [High Court](#), [Supreme Court](#), [Chief Justice of Jharkhand High Court](#)

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## Indian Lighthouse Festival Inaugurated in Visakhapatnam | National Current Affairs | 15 Jan 2026

### Why in News?

The **3rd Indian Lighthouse Festival** was inaugurated in **Visakhapatnam** on **January 9, 2026**, by Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal.

### Key Points:

- **Tourism Push:** The festival aims to transform historical lighthouses into vibrant **tourist hubs** to boost local economies.
- **New Projects:** Plans were unveiled for Andhra Pradesh's **first Lighthouse Museum in Vizag** and four new lighthouses in the riverine areas of Assam.
- **MGM Park:** The event featured cultural showcases, highlighting the maritime heritage of the "City of Destiny".
- **Maritime India Vision 2030:** The festival aligns with Maritime India Vision 2030 and the government's strategy for tourism-led coastal development.
- **Sagarmala Programme:** The transformation of lighthouses is a sub-component of port-led

development and coastal community empowerment.

- **Significance:** It reinforces the concept of **lighthouse tourism as a unique niche**, enhancing local livelihoods, cultural exchange, and **sustainable tourism** around India's extensive shoreline.

Read More: [Sagarmala Programme](#), [Maritime India Vision 2030](#), [Lighthouse Museum](#)

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## Aquatic Biodiversity Initiatives Launched under Namami Gange | National Current Affairs | 15 Jan 2026

### Why in News?

On 14 January 2026, Union Jal Shakti Minister **Shri C. R. Paatil** inaugurated a suite of **aquatic biodiversity conservation projects** under **Namami Gange** at the **Wildlife Institute of India (WII)** in Dehradun.

### Key Points:

- **New Center:** A dedicated national hub, **Aqua Life Conservation Monitoring Centre for Ganga and Other Rivers**, established to support scientific monitoring, research, and policy guidance for freshwater biodiversity.
  - **New Facilities:** The centre houses labs for ecotoxicology, aquatic ecology, spatial ecology, and microplastics analysis.
- **Dolphin Rescue Ambulance:** A specially equipped Dolphin Rescue Ambulance (operated by TSAFI) was launched to provide rapid, scientific emergency response for distressed Ganga dolphins.
- **Indian Skimmer Conservation Project:** Formally launched in collaboration with the **Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS)** to provide a structured conservation plan for this rare bird species along the Ganga basin.
- **Species Protection:** New conservation plans were launched for the **Gangetic Dolphin** and the **Hilsa fish**, focusing on habitat restoration.
  - **Biodiversity:** The Ganga basin is home to over 2,500 species of flora and fauna.
- **Namami Gange Phase II:** Shifts focus from just "Aviral" (continuous flow) and "Nirmal" (unpolluted flow) to include **Gyan Ganga** (research) and **Arth Ganga** (economic sustainability).
- **Significance:** It will serve as a scientific hub for long-term monitoring of aquatic species, research on freshwater ecology and policy support and evidence-based decision-making.

Read More: [Namami Gange](#), [Bombay Natural History Society](#), [Gangetic Dolphin](#), [Wildlife Institute of India \(WII\)](#)

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