STATE PCS CA CONSOLIDATION

MAHARASHTRA

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Content

Tourism Security Force

Why in News?

The Maharashtra government has created a **'Tourism Security Force (Paryatan Mitra)'** to improve **tourism** and ensure **tourist safety**.

- 💡 The pilot launch will take place during the **Mahabaleshwar festival** from **1st - 4th May** in **Satara district**.

Key Points

- 💡 **About the Tourism Police:**
  - ✦ The Tourism Department will **appoint tourism police on a contractual basis** to instill a sense of security among tourists visiting Maharashtra.
  - ✦ The **Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation** will bear the project's expenses in coordination with the **Maharashtra State Security Corporation** and the **Satara police department.**
- 💡 **Objectives:**
  - ✦ The State Tourism Minister stated that the **force will safeguard tourists** and act as a **knowledge guide**, providing valuable information on **Maharashtra's cultural heritage, historical landmarks, major tourist attractions, legal norms, and sustainable tourism practices.**
    - 🖉 Under this initiative, the government aims to **attract Rs 1 lakh crore in private investment** and **generate 18 lakh direct and indirect employment opportunities** in the tourism sector.
  - ✦ This initiative will **rejuvenate the tourism sector** and simultaneously generate **employment opportunities at the local level.**

Mahabaleshwar

- 💡 **About:**
  - ✦ It is located in **Sahyadri Hills (Western Ghats)**, at 4500 ft above sea level.
  - ✦ Origin of **five rivers: Krishna, Venna, Koyana, Savitri, and Gayatri** – at Panchganga Temple.
  - ✦ It is known for dense forests, deep valleys, and waterfalls; key viewpoints include **Arthur Seat, Echo Point, and Bombay Point.**
  - ✦ Famous for **Venna Lake**, built in **1842 by Chhatrapati Appasaheb Maharaj of Satara.**
  - ✦ It was the **summer capital of the Bombay Presidency during British rule.**
  - ✦ It is home to **Krishnabai Temple (13th century)** and **Mahabali (Shiva) Temple** in Old Mahabaleshwar.
  - ✦ Renowned for **strawberry farming** and local produce like **jams, honey, Kolhapuri items.**
- 💡 **The Mahabaleshwar Festival:**
  - ✦ It is a **three-day celebration** showcasing the region's natural beauty, cultural heritage, and local cuisine to promote tourism.
  - ✦ It features folk performances, a **Strawberry and Agrotourism Festival**, adventure sports, **heritage walks**, and sightseeing to nearby attractions like Kaas Plateau and Koynanagar.
  - ✦ **Exhibitions of local handicrafts and a regional food fest** further highlight the area's traditional arts and community participation.

Coastal States Fisheries Meet 2025

Why in News?

The **"Coastal States Fisheries Meet: 2025"** was held **in Mumbai**, chaired by the Union Minister for Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying (MoFAH&D) and the Ministry of Panchayati Raj.

- 💡 Earlier, the Maharashtra government **decided to give agriculture status to fisheries business**.

> **Note:** As of April 2024, Maharashtra stands at **6th position in marine fishing** while **17th position in inland fishing**.

Key Points

- 💡 **Highlights of the Meet:**
  - ✦ Union Minister Shri Rajiv Ranjan Singh **inaugurated and laid the foundation for key projects** across seven coastal states and Union Territories, with a total outlay of **Rs. 255 crores** under the **Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY)**.

- The meeting marked the commencement of the **5th Marine Fisheries Census (MFC) operations**, which will include training supervisors, recruiting and training village-level data enumerators, and conducting the census over a three-month period.
  - The entire operation is expected to be **completed by December 2025**.
- The Union Minister **also distributed tablets equipped with the Digital Application VyAS-NAV** and presented the first-ever aqua insurance under the **Pradhan Mantri Matsya Kisan Samridhi Sah-Yojana (PM-MKSSY)**, along with the **One-Time Incentive Sanction-cum-Release Order to beneficiaries**.

💡 **MFC 2025 & VyAS-NAV App:**

- In a significant preparatory move for MFC 2025, the VyAS-NAV mobile application **has been launched to facilitate digital-based data collection**, aimed at enhancing transparency and efficiency. This marks a shift from traditional methods to a **geo-referenced, app-based system**.
  - The **MFC 2025 will cover 1.2 million fisher households** nationwide, ensuring real-time validation of data.
- Coordinated by the Department of Fisheries (DoF) under the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, **the census is part of the PMMSY**.
- VyAS-NAV, developed by the ICAR-**Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI)**, the **nodal agency for implementing the marine fisheries census across nine coastal states**, will be used by supervisors for field verification of fishing villages, fish landing centres, and fishing harbours.

💡 **Aquaculture Insurance:**

- The PM-MKSSY, a **sub-scheme under the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana**, provides comprehensive aquaculture insurance aimed at mitigating risks and offering financial support, **especially to small and marginalized farmers**.
- This sub-scheme ensures digital accessibility through the **National Fisheries Digital Platform (NFDP)**, allowing seamless access to insurance for fishers and fish farmers, thereby safeguarding their incomes against unforeseen losses.

- **Eligible beneficiaries include** registered aquafarmers, firms, companies, societies, cooperatives, **Fish Farmer Producer Organizations (FFPOs)**, and other entities involved in the fisheries value chain, as identified by the DoF.
- For intensive aquaculture systems, such as recirculatory aquaculture systems, the **premium is capped at ₹1 lakh per farmer for 1800 m³**.
- Farmers can choose between two insurance options:
  - **Basic Insurance –** covers losses due to natural calamities and other parametric risks.
  - **Comprehensive Insurance –** includes Basic Insurance and additional disease coverage.
- Additionally, **Scheduled Caste (SC), Scheduled Tribe (ST), and women beneficiaries are eligible for an extra 10% incentive**, further promoting inclusivity. The insurance is valid for one crop cycle, providing stability to incomes and encouraging further investment in aquaculture.

State of India's Fisheries Sector

💡 As of 2023, India is the **3rd largest fish producer and 2nd largest aquaculture nation** in the world after China.

💡 India ranks **4th globally in fish exports**, contributing 7.7% to global fish production.

💡 **Top fish-producing states:** Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Karnataka.

💡 Government's Initiatives:
- Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana
- Fisheries and Aquaculture Infrastructure Development Fund (FIDF)
- Kisan Credit Card (KCC)
- Marine Products Export Development Authority

Legal Action on Dharavi Rehab Project

Why in News?

A legal notice has been sent to **the Maharashtra government** and **Mumbai Municipal Commissioner**, demanding cancellation of the cabinet decision to hand over **Deonar dumping ground** for the **Dharavi rehab project**, citing violation of **Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) guidelines**.

Key Points

- **About Dumping Ground:**
  - The State government has decided to **hand over 124 acres of Deonar dumping ground for the Dharavi Rehabilitation Project (DRP).**
  - The Mulund dumping ground is also being considered for inclusion in the DRP.
- **Environmental and Legal Concerns:**
  - Mulund-based activist issued a legal notice opposing the decision.
  - He flagged serious environmental risks highlighting that high-rises built on rotting mixed waste at Deonar and Mulund generate **methane**, which causes 21 times more **global warming** than **Carbon Dioxide (CO_2).**
  - He pointed out that these sites also produce **leachate**, a **toxic liquid that pollutes groundwater**, making them unsuitable for residential construction.
- **Active Methane-Emitting Site:**
  - The activist emphasized that **Deonar is not a closed landfill.**
  - It remains one of **India's top 22 methane hotspots**, releasing around 6,202 kg of methane per hour.

Central Pollution Control Board

- CPCB is a statutory organisation which was constituted in September, 1974 under the **Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974.**
- It was entrusted with the powers and functions under the **Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981.**
- It serves as a field formation and also provides technical services to the **Ministry of Environment and Forests of the provisions of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.**
- Principal Functions of the CPCB, as spelt out in the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974, and the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981.
  - to promote cleanliness of streams and wells in different areas of the States by prevention, control and abatement of water pollution.
  - to improve the quality of air and to prevent, control or abate air pollution in the country.

School Registration Portal Launched

Why in News?

The **Maharashtra government** launched a portal for private pre-schools to register, aiming to build a **unified database of all pre-schools in the state.**

Key Points

- **About the Portal:**
  - The State government has made pre-school registration voluntary for the time being.
    - A **dedicated Act to regulate pre-primary education** is currently in progress.
  - Until now, **formal education in Maharashtra began at Class 1**, after children turned 6.
    - **Pre-schools** (nursery to senior kindergarten, for ages 3–6) **were not part** of the mainstream system.
- **ECCE under NEP 2020:**
  - The **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020** includes **Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)** in formal schooling.
    - With Maharashtra implementing NEP in schools, **pre-schools will also be brought into the mainstream.**
  - The school education department has data on government-run **anganwadis** and **balwadis** (under Women and Child Development Department).

📎 However, there is **no formal data on the large number of privately run pre-schools.**

National Education Policy 2020

💡 **About:**
- ✦ The **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020** aims to address India's evolving development needs by overhauling the education system to meet 21st century goals and [Sustainable Development Goal 4](#) **(SDG4),** while preserving India's cultural heritage.
- ✦ It replaced the **National Policy on Education, 1986,** which was modified in 1992.

💡 **Salient Features:**
- ✦ **Universal Access:** Focuses on providing access to education from pre-school through secondary levels.
- ✦ **Early Childhood Education:** Transitions from the 10+2 to a 5+3+3+4 system, including children aged 3-6 in the school curriculum with an emphasis on **Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE).**
- ✦ **Multilingualism:** Promotes using mother tongues or regional languages as the medium of instruction up to Grade 5, with options for Sanskrit and other languages. [Indian Sign Language (ISL)](#) will be standardised.
- ✦ **Inclusive Education:** Emphasises support for **Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs),** children with disabilities, and the establishment of **"Bal Bhavans."**
- ✦ **Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) Enhancement:** Aim to raise the **Gross Enrolment Ratio** from 26.3% to 50% by 2035, adding 3.5 crore new seats.
- ✦ **Research Focus:** Establishes the **National Research Foundation** to enhance research culture and capacity.
- ✦ **Language Preservation:** Supports Indian languages through the **Institute of Translation and Interpretation (IITI)** and strengthens language departments.
- ✦ **Internationalisation:** Encourages international collaborations and the entry of top-ranked foreign universities.

📎 For example, in 2023 [UGC](#) released regulations to facilitate foreign universities to set up campuses in India.
- ✦ **Funding:** Targets increasing public investment in education to **6% of [GDP.](#)**
- ✦ **PARAKH Assessment Center:** Introduces [PARAKH](#) **(Performance Assessment, Review, and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development)** for competency-based and holistic assessments.
- ✦ **Gender Inclusion Fund:** Establishes a fund to promote gender equality in education and support initiatives for disadvantaged groups.
- ✦ **Special Education Zones:** Creates **Special Education Zones** to cater to the needs of disadvantaged regions and groups, reinforcing the commitment to equitable access to quality education.

Mahadev Koli Tribe

Why in News?

A new study highlights that **the Mahadev Koli tribe** has remained **largely excluded from mainstream environmental discussions**, despite holding **rich medicinal and ecological knowledge** that could significantly strengthen [global climate resilience.](#)

Key Points

💡 **About Mahadev Koli tribe:**
- ✦ The Mahadev Koli tribe is an indigenous forest-dwelling community in Maharashtra, mainly located in **the Akole block of Ahmednagar district,** part of the **North [Western Ghats](#).**
- ✦ Their name is derived from their **deity, Mahadev,** and they traditionally inhabit the Mahadev Hills in Maharashtra.
- ✦ They are officially recognized as a [Scheduled Tribe](#) **in India.**
- ✦ They speak Marathi and write in the [Devanagari script.](#)
- ✦ The **community comprises 24 exogamous clans**, with members adopting their clan names as surnames.

- ✦ Besides agriculture, they engage in **cattle rearing, dairy and poultry farming, and wage labour.**
- ✦ **Traditional Knowledge:**
  - The Mahadev Koli community holds rich **Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK),** using over **50 native tree species** for treating various ailments.
    - They are particularly known for their use of **bark, leaves, and fruits**—especially from plant families such as **Fabaceae and Moraceae**—in traditional medicine.
  - The community has remarkable **expertise in observing and interpreting subtle changes in climate and biodiversity.**
    - They rely on **seasonal calendars, indigenous taxonomies, and forest-based ecological indicators** to monitor environmental shifts and guide their practices.
- ✦ **Key Findings of the Report:**
  - The Mahadev Koli tribe reside in the **Western Ghats, one of the top 8 global biodiversity hotspots,** known for its unique and endemic plant and animal species.
  - The research was conducted by the **Watershed Organisation Trust – Centre for Resilience Studies (W-CReS), Pune.**
- 💡 Findings are featured in **Springer's book: Mitigation & Adaptation Strategies Against Climate Change in Natural Systems.**
  - The research documents and validates the **tribe's Local and Traditional Ecological Knowledge (LEK/TEK)** on medicinal plants and climate variability detection.
  - Medicinal Knowledge:
- 💡 The Mahadev Kolis use 51 native tree species across 41 genera and 25 families to **treat ailments** like fevers, dysentery, coughs, joint pain, skin infections, and snake bites.
  - Scientific Contribution:
- 💡 Their TEK is presented as **adaptive, scientific knowledge, not mere folklore,** and is crucial for local climate response.

- 💡 Their observations form a **ground-level climate dataset** absent from standard meteorological systems.
- 💡 Their **ecological knowledge** spans plant taxonomy, healing systems, land-use patterns, seasonal calendars, and spiritual plant practices.

Maharashtra Withdraws Mandatory Hindi Rule

Why in News?

On 22nd April 2025, **Maharashtra School Education Minister Dadaji Bhuse** announced that the government would **no longer mandate Hindi for students.** According to him the Centre is simply implementing **the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020** and not imposing Hindi on the states.

Key Points

- 💡 **Government Resolution to Withdraw Hindi Mandate:**
  - ✦ The Minister announced that the government will issue a **Government Resolution (GR)** to remove the word 'mandatory' from the earlier directive making Hindi compulsory in **Classes 1 to 5.**
  - ✦ He assured that **new rules will be framed** after assessing **each school's student strength** and **availability of language teachers.**
- 💡 **Three-Language Formula:**
  - ✦ He reiterated that the **three-language formula will continue,** in line with the NEP 2020.
  - ✦ However, he stressed the **introduction of greater flexibility,** ensuring that **no language will be imposed on any state.**
  - ✦ Students will have the **freedom to choose the three languages,** as long as t**wo of them are native Indian languages.**
  - ✦ Schools must accommodate these choices based on available infrastructure and teachers.
- 💡 **NEP's Guiding Principles Emphasised:**
  - ✦ The Minister cited the **NEP 2020's emphasis on constitutional values, regional aspirations,** and the **need to promote multilingualism and national unity.**

✦ He underscored that Hindi is not mandated by the Centre but can be an option like English, used for broader communication.

Three-Language Formula (Kothari Commission 1964)

💡 **First language:** It will be the mother tongue or regional language.

💡 **Second language:** In Hindi speaking states, it will be other modern Indian languages or English. In non-Hindi speaking states, it will be Hindi or English.

💡 **Third Language:** In Hindi speaking states, it will be English or a modern Indian language. In the non-Hindi speaking state, it will be English or a modern Indian language.

National Education Policy 2020

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WAVES 2025

Why in News?

The **Ministry of Information and Broadcasting,** Government of India, is organizing the **WAVE (World Audio Visual & Entertainment) Summit in Mumbai** from 1-4 May 2025.

Key Points

💡 **About WAVES Summit 2025:**

✦ WAVES is **India's first global-scale platform** focused on the **Media and Entertainment (M&E) sector.**

- The summit will bring together industry leaders, innovators, investors, and policymakers to foster collaboration and shape the future of M&E.
- Key sectors in focus include **broadcasting, films, gaming, animation, visual effects, music, advertising, digital and social media, generative AI, AR/VR/XR, among others.**
- WAVES aims to position India as a global hub for creative content, IP generation, and M&E innovation.

💡 **Anti-Piracy Challenge:**
- The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting also has announced the finalists of the **Anti-Piracy Challenge**, a flagship initiative under the **Create in India Challenge Season 1 of the WAVES Summit 2025.**
- **Objective:**
  - The challenge was launched on 12 September 2024, with the goal of **promoting Make in India technologies** to **combat digital piracy.**
  - It focused on **cutting-edge anti-piracy technologies** like **fingerprinting, watermarking, blockchain, and steganography.**
  - The initiative aims to strengthen India's digital ecosystem by encouraging homegrown innovation in content protection.
  - The **top 7 teams will present their solutions during the WAVES 2025** Summit in front of a live audience and a final jury panel.
  - **Winners will be honored at the Grand Finale**, with opportunities for national recognition, mentorship, and industry partnerships.

💡 **Anti-Piracy Innovation Importance:**
- According to Media Partners Asia, **90 million users in India engaged in video piracy in 2024**, causing losses of USD 1.2 billion. This number could surge to 158 million by 2029 without strong intervention.
- Digital content faces **increasing threats from piracy, illegal distribution, and manipulation**, which affects content creators, broadcasters, and IP rights holders.

- Criminal networks continue to evolve, making enforcement and detection more complex—hence the urgency for technological solutions.

💡 **Strategic Support and Industry Involvement:**
- The challenge was conducted by **Confederation of Indian Industry (CII)** with support from **IPHouse, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS)**, and Hack2Skill.
- These organizations played a key role in evaluation and industry engagement.

Confederation of Indian Industries
💡 CII is a **non-government, not-for-profit**, industry-led and industry-managed organization.
💡 It works to create and sustain an environment conducive to the development of India, partnering industry, Government and civil society, through advisory and consultative processes.
💡 Founded in **1895**, it is headquartered in **New Delhi.**

SC Upholds Use of Urdu Signboards in Maharashtra

Why in News?

On 17 April 2025, **the Supreme Court** upheld the **use of Urdu on the signboard** of a municipal council building in Maharashtra's Akola district, stating that a **language belongs to a community, a region, and its people—not to any religion.**

Key Points

💡 **About the Petition:**
- The petition was filed by a former municipal councillor, who argued that only Marathi should be used under **the Maharashtra Local Authorities (Official Languages) Act, 2022.**

💡 **Equal Constitutional Status:**
- The court ruled that **both Urdu and Marathi enjoy equal constitutional recognition.**
- It noted that the use of **Urdu does not violate any legal provision** and that the Municipal Council had been using it since 1956 due to its wide acceptance among the local population.

✦ The court denounced the colonial legacy of associating Hindi with Hindus and Urdu with Muslims.

✦ The court also observed that the Municipal Council used Urdu for effective communication with the local population, aligning with the Bombay High Court's earlier reasoning.

Urdu

💡 **Historical Background**

✦ Urdu had developed and flourished in Delhi during the period of **'Delhi Sultanate'** from 12th to 16th century and then during the period of **'Mughal Empire'** in Delhi from 16th century to 19th century when several court poets used this language in their great poetry and writings.

  ✎ Its first major folk poet **Amir Khusrau** (1253-1325), composed dohas (couplets) and riddles in the newly-formed speech, then called **Hindavi.**

✦ The **divide between Urdu and Hindi** occurred under the **colonial impact.**

  ✎ Hindi and Urdu got split along religious lines with Hindi in Nagari script becoming identified with Hindus, and Urdu in Persian script identifying with Muslims.

✦ **Contemporary Context:** Urdu is a **major language of South Asia.**

✦ It is spoken in countries including **India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Nepal.**

✦ It has become the **culture language and lingua franca** of the **South Asian Muslim diaspora** outside the sub-continent, especially in the Gulf and the Middle East, Western Europe, Scandinavia, USA and Canada.

💡 **Status in India:**

✦ **Scheduled Language:** Urdu is one of the languages mentioned in the **8th Schedule** to the Constitution.

✦ The **Constitutional provisions** relating to the **8th Schedule** are articles **344(1) and 351.**

✦ Presently, **8th Schedule consists of the 22 languages** namely (1) Assamese, (2) Bengali, (3) Gujarati, (4) Hindi, (5) Kannada, (6) Kashmiri, (7) Konkani, (8) Malayalam, (9) Manipuri, (10) Marathi, (11) Nepali, (12) Oriya, (13) Punjabi, (14) Sanskrit, (15) Sindhi, (16) Tamil, (17) Telugu, (18) Urdu (19) Bodo, (20) Santhali, (21) Maithili and (22) Dogri.

Hindi as Compulsory 3rd language in Maharashtra

Why in News?

The Maharashtra government has made **Hindi a compulsory third language for Classes I to V** in Marathi and English medium schools, aligning with **the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020**.

Key Points

💡 **National Education Policy 2020:**

✦ **About:**

  ✎ The **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020** aims to address India's evolving development needs by overhauling the education system to meet **21st century goals** and **Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4)**, while preserving India's cultural heritage.

  ✎ It replaced the **National Policy on Education, 1986**, which was modified in 1992.

✦ **Salient Features:**

  ✎ **Universal Access:** Focuses on providing access to education from **preschool through secondary levels.**

  ✎ **Early Childhood Education:** Transitions from the **10+2** to a **5+3+3+4** system, including children aged 3-6 in the school curriculum with an emphasis on **Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE).**

  ✎ **Multilingualism:** Promotes using **mother tongues or regional languages** as the **medium of instruction up to Grade 5**, with options for **Sanskrit** and other languages. **Indian Sign Language (ISL)** will be standardised.

- **Inclusive Education:** Emphasises support for **Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs),** children with disabilities, and the establishment of **"Bal Bhavans."**
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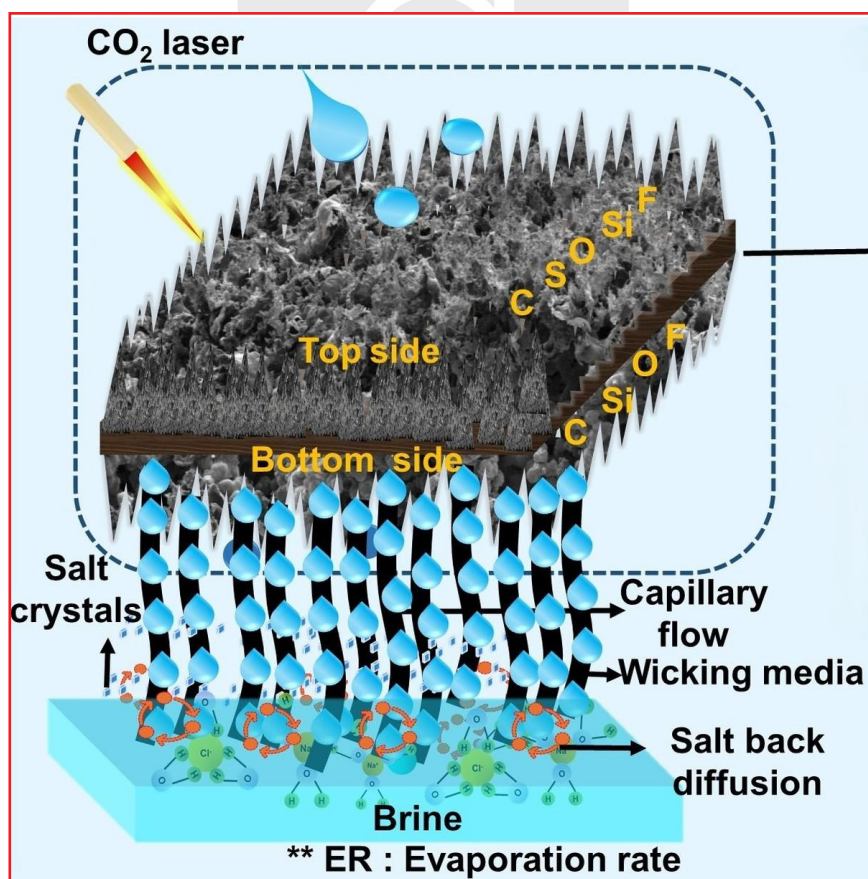
Hindi Language

💡 **Articles Related to Hindi:** **Article 210** states that the **language to be used in the legislature can be the official language of the state, Hindi, or English.**

  📌 **Article 351** states that it shall be the **duty of the Union to promote the spread of the Hindi language,** to develop it so that it may serve as a medium of expression for all the elements of the composite culture of India.

💡 Hindi is one of the 22 languages listed in the **eighth schedule** of the Constitution of India and It is not a **classical language.**

  📌 The language is named after the **Persian word 'Hind' meaning 'land of the Indus River'** and is a descendant of Sanskrit.

Solar Water Desalination

Why in News?

Indian Institutes of Technology (IIT)- Bombay scientists have developed a new material to **enable water desalination** and address **global freshwater scarcity.**

Key Points

- 💡 **About the Innovation:**
  - ✦ Researchers have developed a **Dual-Sided Superhydrophobic Laser-Induced Graphene (DSLIG) evaporator.**
  - ✦ The DSLIG **addresses limitations of traditional evaporators** and shows promise for large-scale desalination and wastewater treatment.
  - ✦ **The Freshwater Challenge:**
    - 🔖 Only **3% of Earth's water is freshwater,** and **less than 0.05% is easily accessible.**
    - 🔖 <u>**Desalination of seawater**</u> and brackish water is a **key solution** to this scarcity.
    - 🔖 However, desalination produces **brine, a concentrated salt byproduct,** which poses **disposal challenges,** especially in landlocked areas.
    - 🔖 Industries now aim for **zero liquid discharge systems** to avoid environmental harm.
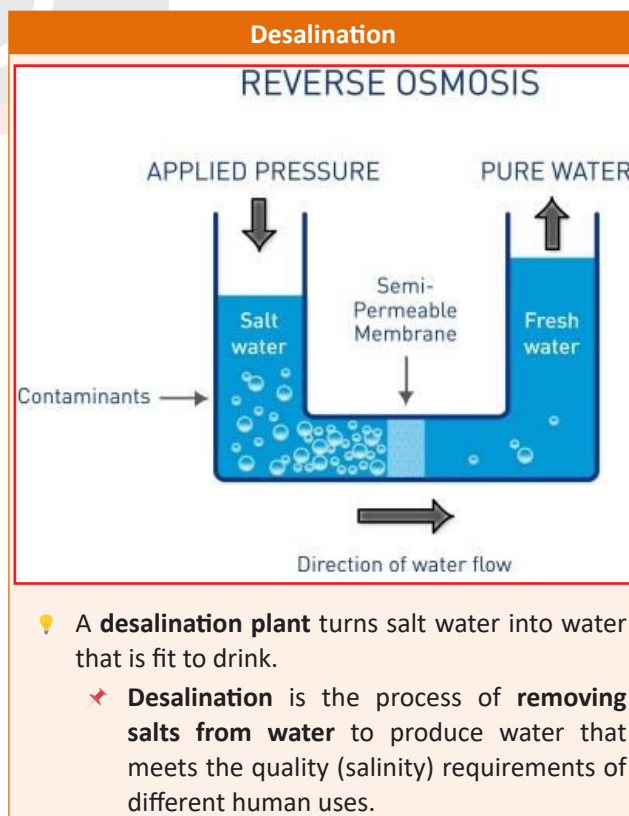
- 💡 **Solar Desalination:**
  - ✦ Solar energy-based desalination offers a **low-carbon solution.**
    - 🔖 Yet, sunlight variability and poor light absorption reduce efficiency.
  - ✦ Interfacial evaporation systems help by **heating a thin surface layer of water instead of the whole volume,** enhancing efficiency.
  - ✦ Challenges in Interfacial Evaporation:
    - 🔖 **Cloud cover** and fluctuating **solar intensity** hamper consistent performance.
    - 🔖 Evaporation peaks around 2 pm, when solar radiation is highest.
    - 🔖 Salt deposition on the evaporator surface blocks water contact, reducing long-term efficiency.
  - ✦ **DSLIG Overcomes the Challenges:**
    - 🔖 DSLIG allows **dual heating—solar and Joule heating (electric)—**ensuring performance even in low sunlight.
    - 🔖 **Superhydrophobic properties (lotus effect)** prevent salt from sticking to the evaporator surface.

- 💡 **Fabrication of DSLIG:**
  - ✦ Researchers coated <u>**PVDF (polyvinylidene fluoride)**</u> on one side of **PES (polyether sulfone) polymer.**

- 🔖 PDVF are **polymers** that can generate electric charges on the surface under pressure/strain thus **converting mechanical energy into electrical energy.**
- 🔖 PES is a thermoplastic polymer known for its high **thermal stability, excellent chemical resistance, and biocompatibility.**
- ✦ They used l**aser engraving to inscribe** <u>**graphene**</u> onto the PVDF layer.
  - 🔖 PES ensures mechanical strength, while PVDF contributes to dual-sided water repellency.
- ✦ The result is a durable, superhydrophobic surface effective in both electric and solar modes.
- ✦ Applications:
  - 🔖 It is suitable for **treating industrial wastewater and brine** from desalination plants.
  - 🔖 Researchers observed **improved performance by stacking multiple evaporators.**
  - 🔖 DSLIG is l**ow-cost, non-toxic, and sustainable,** making it ideal for large-scale applications.

Desalination

- 💡 A **desalination plant** turns salt water into water that is fit to drink.
  - ✦ **Desalination** is the process of **removing salts from water** to produce water that meets the quality (salinity) requirements of different human uses.

💡 The most commonly used **technology** for the process is **reverse osmosis.**
  - ✦ An external pressure is applied to push solvents from an area of high-solute concentration to an area of low-solute concentration through a semi-permeable membrane.
  - ✦ The **microscopic pores** in the membranes allow water molecules through but leave salt and most other impurities behind, releasing clean water from the other side.

💡 These plants are mostly set up in areas that have access to **sea water.**

ATM on Wheels

Why in News?

Indian Railways installed an **Automated Teller Machine (ATM)** onboard the **Manmad-CST Panchvati Express** as part of a pilot initiative **in Maharashtra.**

Key Points

💡 **About the Initiative:**
  - ✦ The initiative aligns with the Railway Board's push to boost **non-fare revenue** through innovative, out-of-the-box solutions.
  - ✦ It aims to provide **banking access to passengers**, especially in regions with limited financial infrastructure.
  - ✦ This setup could particularly **benefit commuters on long-distance routes** with fewer banking facilities en route.

💡 **Indian Railways' Modernisation Drive:**
  - ✦ The ATM initiative is a part of the **Viksit Bharat 2047 vision**, focusing on passenger convenience and tech-led upgrades.
  - ✦ Indian Railways is already transforming travel with high-tech trains like **Vande Bharat**, modern stations, and advanced safety systems.

💡 **Amrit Bharat Station Scheme:**
  - ✦ Under the **Amrit Bharat Station Scheme**, Indian Railways has selected 1,337 stations for redevelopment, aiming to enhance infrastructure and passenger experience.
  - ✦ The Scheme was **launched in February 2023** by the **Ministry of Railways.**

Indian Railways

💡 **169 Years of Heritage:**
  - ✦ The Indian Railways was established on **16th April 1853**. The inaugural passenger train covered a **34-kilometer route between Mumbai's Bori Bandar and Thane.**

💡 **Unique Mascot:**
  - ✦ The Indian Railways boasts its **own mascot, a 'Shubhankar named 'Bholu,'** created by the **National Institute of Design in 2002.** Bholu is an elephant dressed as a railway guard, introduced on the **railways' 150th anniversary.**

💡 **World's 4th Largest Rail Network:**
  - ✦ The Indian Railways ranks as the **world's fourth-largest railway network,** encompassing a track **length of 67,368 km.** Only the US, China, and Russia have larger networks. It's **also the world's second-largest network** managed under a single administration, spanning 115,000 km.

💡 **UNESCO World Heritage Sites:**
  - ✦ The Indian Railways takes pride in owning four **UNESCO-recognized world heritage sites.**
    - 📎 Darjeeling Himalayan Railway, Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus in Mumbai, Nilgiri Mountain Railway, and Kalka Shimla Railway.

Maharashtra Reduces Women's Welfare Aid

Why in News?

The **Maharashtra government** has reduced stipends for around eight lakh beneficiaries of the **Mukhya Mantri Majhi Ladki Bahin Yojana** as they also receive benefits under the **Namo Shetkari Mahasanman Nidhi (NSMN) scheme.**

Key Points

💡 **Reduction in Monthly Assistance:**
  - ✦ Under the revised structure, **affected women will now receive Rs 500 per month instead of Rs 1,500** under the Mukhya Mantri Majhi Ladki Bahin Yojana.

✦ The **reduction applies to those** already **receiving Rs 1,000 monthly under the NSMN scheme.**

- As per the scheme's guidelines, the **total government aid per woman cannot exceed Rs 1,500.**

💡 **Mukhya Mantri Majhi Ladki Bahin Yojana:**

✦ **About:**

- Majhi Ladki Bahin Yojana, **launched in 2024,** is a flagship welfare programme aimed at supporting women financially across Maharashtra.

✦ **Benefits:**

- The original Rs 1,500 monthly payout was designed to **empower women economically and enhance their social security.**
- Beneficiaries receive **three free LPG cylinders each year.**
- Poor girls from **Other Backward Classes (OBC)** and **Economically Weaker Sections (EWS)** are eligible for fee waivers during college admissions.

✦ **Eligibility:**

- The scheme covers **women aged 21 to 65** including married, widowed, divorced, abandoned, and destitute women.

💡 **Namo Shetkari Mahasanman Nidhi (NSMN) Scheme:**

✦ **About:**

- **Introduced in 2023** by the Maharashtra government, it aims to provide **additional financial support to small and marginal farmers.**
- It complements the Central government's **Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) scheme.**

✦ **Eligibility:**

- Farmers must be registered under **PM-KISAN.**
- Must meet Maharashtra's criteria for small or marginal farmers.

✦ **Benefits:**

- Provides **Rs 6,000 annually in three equal installments of Rs 2,000.**

- This is over and above the Rs 6,000 received under PM-KISAN, totaling Rs 12,000 annually.

Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN)

💡 Under the scheme, the Centre t**ransfers an amount of Rs 6,000 per year, in three equal installments**, directly into the bank accounts of **all landholding farmers irrespective of the size of their land holdings.**

✦ It was launched in **February 2019.**

💡 It is a **Central Sector Scheme with 100% funding from the Government of India.**

💡 It is being implemented by the **Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare.**

💡 The entire responsibility of **identification of beneficiary farmer families rests with the State / UT Governments.**

💡 Objective:

✦ To **supplement the financial needs of the Small and Marginal Farmers** in procuring various inputs to ensure proper crop health and appropriate yields, commensurate with the anticipated farm income at the end of each crop cycle.

✦ To **protect them from falling in the clutches of moneylenders** for meeting such expenses and ensure their continuance in the farming activities.

Exercise DUSTLIK-VI

Why in News?

India and Uzbekistan began the **6th edition of Joint Military Exercise DUSTLIK-VI** at Aundh, **Pune**. The exercise will take place from **16 to 28 April 2025.**

💡 The previous edition took place in **Termez District, Uzbekistan, in April 2024.**

Key Points

💡 **Exercise Theme and Focus:**

✦ The **core theme** is **Joint Multi-Domain Sub-Conventional Operations in a Semi-Urban Scenario.**

✦ The focus is on **responding to terrorist actions** involving the capture of a defined territory.

- A Joint Operations Centre will be established at the battalion level for continuous coordination.

💡 **Participation and Representation:**
- The Indian contingent includes 60 personnel from a battalion of the **JAT Regiment** and the **Indian Air Force (IAF)**.
- The Uzbekistan Army is representing the Uzbek side.

💡 **Strategic Objectives:**
- The joint drill will promote **interoperability, tactical cooperation, and mutual learning** in sub-conventional warfare.
- It aims to enhance **defence cooperation and deepen bilateral military relations** between India and Uzbekistan.
- The exercise f**osters camaraderie and trust between both armies** through shared training and strategic alignment.

Uzbekistan

💡 **About:**
- Landlocked country in Central Asia, situated between the **Syr Darya (northeast) and Amu Darya (southwest) rivers.**
- Lies in the **Northern and Eastern hemispheres.**
- **One of only two doubly landlocked countries** in the world (the other is Liechtenstein).
- Neighbouring Countries:
  - Kazakhstan (north and northwest)
  - Kyrgyzstan (northeast)
  - Tajikistan (southeast)
  - Afghanistan (south)
  - Turkmenistan (southwest)

💡 **Topographical Features:**
- Around **80% of the land is sandy desert,** mostly **the Kyzyl Kum Desert.**
- Lowlands dominate the west; foothills and mountains (**Tian Shan range**) rise in the northeast and southeast.
- The highest peak is **Adelunga Toghi (4,301 m)** in the northeast.
- **Fergana Valley** is the most fertile and agriculturally productive region.

💡 **Rivers and Lakes:**
- **Major rivers:** Amu Darya and Syr Darya.
  - **The Aral Sea**, shared with Kazakhstan, is a major environmental disaster due to water mismanagement.
- **Important lakes:** Lake Aydarkul and Lake Sarykamish.

💡 **Vegetation and Climate:**
- Dominated by **desert scrub** in arid zones.
- Fertile valleys, especially Fergana, support intensive agriculture.

💡 **Natural Resources:**
- Rich in natural gas, oil, coal, and minerals like **gold, uranium, and copper.**
- Holds the **4th largest gold reserves globally.**

Maharashtra Approves Compensation Policy

Why in News?

On 15th April 2025, the **Maharashtra Cabinet** approved a comprehensive **compensation policy** for **custodial deaths**, aligning with **National Human Rights Commission (NHRC)** recommendations to support families of inmates who die from unnatural causes in custody.

Key Points

- **Compensation Details:**
  - **Rs 5 lakh** will be paid to legal heirs if the prisoner's death results from:
    - Accidents during prison work,
    - Medical negligence,
    - Assault by prison staff,
    - Violence involving fellow inmates — if proven as administrative failure after inquiry.
  - **Rs 1 lakh compensation** will be provided in **cases of suicide in custody.**
  - The policy excludes natural deaths due to aging or chronic illness, injuries during escape attempts, lack of treatment while on bail.
  - In case of **natural disasters**, compensation will follow **existing government norms.**
- **Amnesty Scheme for Property Tax Defaulters:**
  - To improve revenue and reduce arrears, the Cabinet approved an **amnesty scheme for municipal property tax defaulters.**
    - The scheme **waives penalties (currently 2% monthly),** which often surpass the original dues and discourage payments.
  - Legal amendments have also been approved to validate the waiver under existing municipal laws.

National Human Rights Commission (NHRC)

- **About:**
  - It ensures the **protection of rights related to life, liberty,** equality, and dignity of individuals.
  - Rights guaranteed by the Indian Constitution and international covenants enforceable by Indian courts.

- **Establishment:**
  - Established on 12th October 1993, under the **Protection of Human Rights Act (PHRA), 1993.**
  - Amended by the Protection of Human Rights (Amendment) Act, 2006, and Human Rights (Amendment) Act, 2019.
  - Established in conformity with the Paris Principles, adopted for promoting and protecting human rights.

Custodial Death

- **About:**
  - Custodial death refers to a **death that occurs while a person is in the custody of law enforcement officials** or a correctional facility. It can occur due to **various causes such as the use of excessive force, neglect, or abuse** by the authorities.
  - According to the **Law Commission of India**, the crime by a public servant against the arrested or the detained person who is in custody amounts to **custodial violence**.
- **Types of Custodial Death:**
  - **Death in Police Custody:** Death in police custody can result from excessive force, torture, denial of medical care, or other forms of abuse or incidental cause.
  - **Death in Judicial Custody:** Death in judicial custody may occur due to overcrowding, poor hygiene, lack of medical facilities, inmate violence, or suicide.
  - **Death in the Custody of the Army or Paramilitary Forces:** It can happen through torture or extrajudicial killings.

B.R. Ambedkar's 135th Birth Anniversary

Why in News?

On the occasion of **the 134th birth anniversary** of **Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar**, thousands of followers gathered at **Deekshabhoomi in Nagpur** and **Chaityabhoomi in Mumbai.** The day was observed with deep reverence, cultural programmes, and tributes.

Drishti IAS

Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar

Babasaheb Ambedkar-
The Father of Indian Constitution
14 April 1891- 06 December 1956

① Brief Profile

- A social reformer, jurist, economist, author and thinker of comparative religions
- Labour member in the **Executive Council of Viceroy** (**1942**)
- **Chairman** of the **Drafting Committee** for the new Constitution
- **First Law Minister** of India
- Posthumously awarded **Bharat Ratna** (**1990**)

② Contributions

- Led the **Mahad Satyagraha in 1927** against Hindus
- Participated in **all three Round Table Conferences**
- Signed the **1932 Poona pact with Mahatma Gandhi** to abandon the idea of separate electorates for the depressed classes

The reserved seats for depressed classes were increased from 71 to 147 in provincial legislatures and to 18% in the Central Legislature.

- **Opposed the special status of J&K** (Article **370**)
- Supported **Uniform Civil Code**
- Referred **Article 32** as "soul of the Constitution and very heart of it"

③ Resignation and Buddhism

- Differences over **Hindu Code Bill** led to his resignation from Cabinet in **1951**
- Converted to Buddhism; his death is observed as **Mahaparinirvan Diwas**

④ Important Journals

- Mooknayak (**1920**)
- Samatha (**1929**)
- Bahishkrit Bharat (**1927**)
- Janata (**1930**)

⑤ Books

- Annihilation of Caste
- Buddha or Karl Marx
- **The Untouchable:** Who are They and Why They Have Become Untouchables
- The Rise and Fall of Hindu Women

⑥ Organisations

- Estd. '**Bahishkrit Hitkarini Sabha**' (**1923**)
- Founded **Independent Labour Party** (**1936**)
- Founded **Scheduled Castes Federation** (**1942**)

Key Points

- 💡 **Important sites:**
  - ✦ **Deekshabhoomi:**
    - 📎 The site holds historical significance as the place where Ambedkar **embraced Buddhism in 1956**, initiating a major socio-religious movement.
    - 📎 Followers offered floral tributes at the **sacred stupa** and to Ambedkar's preserved ashes.
  - ✦ **Chaityabhoomi:**
    - 📎 Situated in Dadar, Chaityabhoomi is a memorial that has become a major pilgrimage site for Ambedkarites nationwide.
    - 📎 The Maharashtra government and Mumbai civic bodies arranged **medical camps, water supply stations, and special traffic controls** to manage the crowd.
  - ✦ Both the sites are part of **the Ambedkar Circuit**, a set of important sites related to Dr. Ambedkar's life.

Ambedkar Circuit

- 💡 The government had first proposed the Ambedkar Circuit, or **Panchteerth**, in 2016, but the conceptualisation of the plan could be held recently.
- 💡 The five cities in the tourist circuit as announced by the government are:
  - ✦ **Janma Bhoomi-** Ambedkar's birthplace in Madhya Pradesh's Mhow.
  - ✦ **Shiksha Bhoomi-** the place in London where he stayed while studying in the UK.
  - ✦ **Deeksha Bhoomi-** the place in Nagpur where he embraced Buddhism.
  - ✦ **Mahaparinirvan Bhoomi-** the place of his demise in Delhi.
  - ✦ **Chaitya Bhoomi-** the place of his cremation is in Mumbai.

Free Electricity for Maharashtra Farmers

Why in News?

Maharashtra Chief Minister announced that the government will provide **free electricity to 80% of the state's farmers** by **December 2026**.

- 💡 The Chief Minister emphasised that the government is working to generate 16,000 MW of solar power under the **Mukhyamantri Saur Krishi Yojana** to ensure **12-hour daytime electricity**.

Key Points

- 💡 Mukhyamantri Saur Krishi Yojana:
  - ✦ This program is a Maharashtra government initiative aimed at promoting **solar-powered agriculture** through various schemes, including **off-grid solar pumps** and **decentralized solar power projects**.
  - ✦ The scheme aims to **decouple the irrigation sector from power subsidies,** ease the financial burden on other electricity consumers, **replace diesel pumps to curb pollution**, and promote **environmentally sustainable agriculture.**
- 💡 **Sub-schemes** included under this are:
  - 📎 Mukhyamantri Saur Krushi Pump Yojana:
- 💡 This component aims to **provide solar-powered agricultural pumps,** especially in off-grid areas, to reduce dependence on diesel and ensure reliable daytime irrigation.
- 💡 It targets the **installation of 100,000 off-grid solar pumps**, offering subsidies primarily to farmers with small landholdings.
  - 📎 Mukhyamantri Saur Krushi Vahini Yojana (MSKVY) 2.0:
- 💡 The scheme aims to **solarize 30% of agricultural feeders** through the **installation of decentralized solar power projects** with a combined capacity of 7,000 MW.
- 💡 It seeks to ensure daytime electricity for farmers, ease pressure on the conventional power grid, and encourage private sector investment in solar energy.
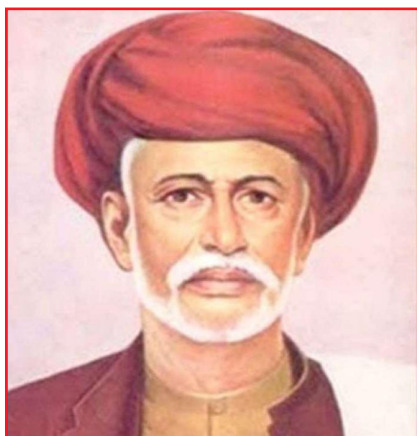
Sustainable Agriculture

- 💡 **About:** It is a **holistic farming approach** that meets current **food and fiber needs** while preserving resources for **future generations.**
  - ✖ It includes practices like **crop rotation, organic farming,** and community-supported agriculture, ensuring **environmental health, economic viability, and social equity.**
- 💡 **Benefits:**
  - ✖ **Environmental Benefits:** Improves **soil health**, conserves **water**, protects **biodiversity**, and reduces the **carbon footprint.**
  - ✖ **Economic Benefits:** Ensures **long-term productivity**, lowers **costs**, creates **market opportunities**, and enhances **climate resilience**.
  - ✖ **Social Benefits:** Produces **healthier food,** generates **employment**, and strengthens **food security**.
  - ✖ **Resilience to Climate Change:** Organic farming, **conservation tillage**, and agroforestry **sequester carbon, reduce emissions**, and boost climate resilience.

Birth Anniversary of Jyotiba Phule

Why in News?

The **Prime Minister** of India paid tribute to **Mahatma Jyotirao Phule** on his **birth anniversary** and praised him as a **true servant of humanity.**

Key Points

- 💡 **About Jyotiba Phule:**
  - ✖ He was born on **11th April, 1827,** and emerged as a pioneering social reformer who challenged **Brahmanical orthodoxy**, fought for the **rights of Dalits and women**, and laid the foundation for India's **social justice movements**.
- 💡 **Social Reforms:**
  - ✖ Phule and his wife **Savitribai** opened **India's first girls' school in 1848** and later started **night schools (1855) for workers, farmers, and women** in Pune.
  - ✖ Phule opposed **caste oppression, criticized** Brahminical figures like **Chiplunkar and Tilak**, and **supported the British** to uplift the oppressed and women.
  - ✖ Phule founded **Satyashodhak Samaj (1873)** to fight caste hierarchy and, in **Gulamgiri,** compared caste oppression to **American slavery.**
    - 📎 "Deenbandhu," a Marathi weekly newspaper, was founded in 1877 and served as a platform for Satyashodhak Samaj
  - ✖ Viewed it as an **upper-caste effort** to restore Brahmin rule.
  - ✖ He advocated **compulsory education** for lower castes and economic upliftment to **dismantle caste hierarchies.**
- 💡 **Major Publications:**
  - ✖ **Tritiya Ratna (1855), Powada: Chatrapati Shivajiraje Bhosle Yancha (1869), Gulamgiri (1873), Shetkarayacha Aasud (1881).**
- 💡 **Death: 28th November, 1890.** His memorial is built in **Phule Wada, Pune, Maharashtra.**

Dharavi Redevelopment Project (DRP)

Why in News?

The **Maharashtra government** approved the allocation of 256 acres of **salt pan land** in Mulund, Kanjurmarg, and Bhandup for the **Dharavi Redevelopment Project (DRP)** to rehabilitate ineligible **slum dwellers.**

- Environmental concerns were raised as this violated the **I**nternal Policy Guidelines (IPG) of 2012, which **prohibited construction activities on salt pan land.**

Key Points

- **About the Land:**
  - ✦ The Officials clarified that the sea has not reached these plots since the construction of the Eastern Express Highway.
  - ✦ It was emphasized that the **land is no longer designated as a flood buffer zone nor falls under Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) restrictions.**
  - ✦ All necessary environmental clearances will be obtained before initiating construction activities.
  - ✦ The land lies west of the expressway and is away from **ecologically sensitive wetlands visited by flamingos.**
    - ✐ It was assured that the location poses no risk to wildlife or the surrounding ecosystem.
  - ✦ The allocation of salt pan lands for affordable housing aligns with Mumbai's Development Plan 2034.
- **Salt Pan Lands:**
  - ✦ **About:**
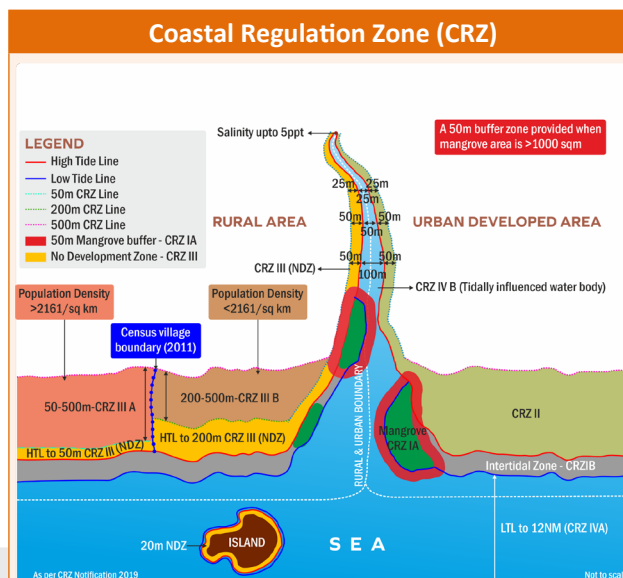   - ✐ Salt pans are **low-lying tracts of land where seawater periodically flows in**, leaving behind deposits of salt and minerals.
    - ✐ This **natural process** plays a critical role in maintaining the **balance of coastal ecosystems.**
  - ✦ **Protection Status:**
    - ✐ Under the **CRZ Notification of 2011**, these ecologically sensitive areas are **classified under CRZ-1B** and **restrict economic activities except salt extraction and natural gas exploration.**
  - ✦ **Salt Pans in India:**
    - ✐ In Mumbai, a t**otal of 5,378 acres** have been **designated as salt pan lands.**
    - ✐ On a national scale, **around 60,000 acres of salt pan lands** are identified, distributed across states like **Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Odisha, Gujarat, and Karnataka.**

- **Andhra Pradesh has the largest expanse** (20,716 acres), followed by Tamil Nadu (17,095 acres) and Maharashtra (12,662 acres).

Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ)

- The CRZ was first notified in 1991 by **the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF)** under **the Environment Protection Act of 1986.** The CRZ is categorized into five zones: **CRZ-I, CRZ-II, CRZ-III, CRZ-IV, and CRZ-V.**
  - ✦ **CRZ-I** are **ecologically sensitive** areas like mangroves, coral reefs, biosphere reserves etc.
  - ✦ **CRZ-II** includes built-up areas – **villages and towns** that are already well established.
  - ✦ **CRZ-III** are **areas that are undisturbed** and do not fall under either in Category I or II.
  - ✦ **CRZ-IV** is the **aquatic area** from low tide line up to territorial limits.
- CRZ is **an area near the coastline** that's governed by rules to protect the environment and promote sustainable development. The CRZ includes:
  - ✦ It is the land between **the high tide line (HTL)** and **the low tide line (LTL).**
  - ✦ A 100-metre stretch along the banks of **rivers, estuaries, backwaters, and creeks** that are affected by tides.
  - ✦ The river banks on either side of estuaries.

Maharashtra to Launch Healthcare Mission

Why in News?

Maharashtra Chief Minister directed officials to design a **comprehensive project to strengthen healthcare institutions** across the state with support from the **Asian Development Bank (ADB).**

Key Points

- **Review Meeting on Healthcare Projects:**
  - Maharashtra CM chaired a review meeting to discuss healthcare projects under the Medical Education and Public Health departments.
  - He emphasized aligning the state's cancer care initiatives with the **Centre's National Cancer Care Strategy.**
  - He called for a **time-bound, structured plan for providing chemotherapy and radiation therapy** through an efficient referral framework.
  - He also directed officials to submit a detailed project report to **strengthen cancer diagnosis and treatment infrastructure.**
- **Upgrading Medical Colleges and Public Hospitals:**
  - New government medical colleges are being set up across various districts in Maharashtra.
  - A specific recommendation was made to establish a teaching hospital in Dharashiv.
- **Ongoing Health Projects:**
  - Construction of government hospitals is in progress in **Alibag and Sindhudurg.**
  - **Centres of Excellence are being developed** to enhance quality care across the state.
  - An integrated **Health Management Information System (HMIS)** is currently under development.

Asian Development Bank

- **About:** Established in 1966, ADB is a regional development bank that envisions a prosperous, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable Asia and the Pacific while sustaining its efforts to eradicate extreme poverty in the region.
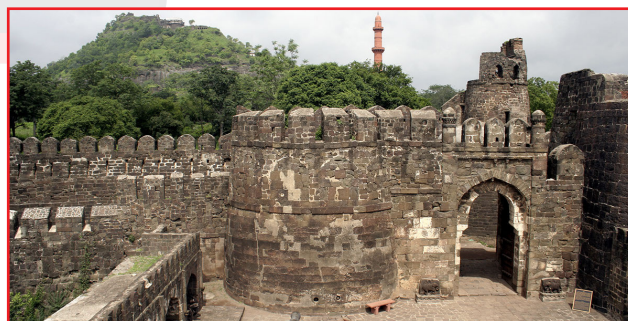- ADB supports its members and partners through the provision of **loans, technical assistance, grants, and equity investments** aimed at advancing social and economic development.
- **Headquarters:** Manila, Philippines
- **Members:** It currently has 68 members of which 49 are from within Asia and the Pacific and 19 outside.
- **ADB and India:** India is a founding member of ADB and the bank's **fourth-largest shareholder.**
  - ADB supports India's priorities for robust, climate resilient, and inclusive growth, aligned with **ADB's Strategy 2030** and the country **partnership strategy, 2023–2027.**

Fire at Daulatabad Fort

Why in News?

A fire at **Daulatabad Fort** in Maharashtra's Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar district has prompted the **Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)** to initiate damage assessment and plan disaster management.

Key Points

- **Damage Assessment:**
  - The **fire damaged the Baradarai**, a historic pavilion at the summit of the fort.
  - ASI has started assessing the fire damage and will draft a **disaster management plan based on its findings to prevent future incidents.**
  - The fire **disrupted local wildlife**, as wild animals lost significant portions of their shrubland habitat.

- 💡 **About the Daulatabad Fort:**
  - ✦ Originally called **Devgiri (Hill of Gods)**, it was renamed Daulatabad by <u>**Muhammad bin Tughlaq**</u> when he shifted his capital there in the 14th century.
    - 🔖 It served as the capital of several dynasties including **Yadavas, Tughlaqs, Bahmanis, Nizam Shahis, Mughals,** and briefly the **Marathas** before the **Nizams of Hyderabad**.
    - 🔖 It is a <u>**UNESCO-nominated heritage site**</u>, known for its historical, architectural, and ecological importance.
  - ✦ **Architectural Brilliance:** Daulatabad Fort is fortified in three layers **Ambarkot, Mahakot, and Kalakot** with moats, bastions, and iron-spiked gates.
    - 🔖 It features a deadly tunnel called **Andheri,** used to trap and attack invaders.
  - ✦ Monuments and Structures Within:
    - 🔖 **Chand Minar (1435 CE):** Indo-Islamic style victory tower modeled after Qutub Minar.
    - 🔖 **Bharat Mata Mandir**, located within the fort, was previously the Jama Masjid during <u>**Qutub-ud-din Mubarak's**</u> reign (1318 CE).
    - 🔖 **Chini Mahal,** a lavish palace turned prison by Aurangzeb.
  - ✦ **Artillery and Cannons:** Fort was equipped with ₹**288 cannons**, a notable one is **Aurangzeb's Mendha** also called **Qila Shikan (fort-breaker)**, symbolized military power.

Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)

- 💡 ASI, under the **Ministry of Culture**, is the premier organisation for the archaeological research and protection of the cultural heritage of the nation.
  - ✦ **Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains (AMASR) Act, 1958** governs the functioning of ASI.
- 💡 It administers more than 3650 ancient monuments, archaeological sites and remains of national importance.
- 💡 Its activities include carrying out surveys of antiquarian remains, exploration and excavation of archaeological sites, conservation and maintenance of protected monuments etc.

- 💡 It was founded in 1861 by **Alexander Cunningham- the first Director-General of ASI.** Alexander Cunningham is also known as the "Father of Indian Archaeology".

NITI Aayog Workshop in Pune

Why in News?

<u>NITI Aayog</u>, in collaboration with **the Government of Maharashtra**, organised a one-day workshop focused on the theme **"Developing Ecosystem for Assistive Technology in India."** at Yashwantrao Chavan Academy Of Development Administration(YASHADA) Pune.

Key Points

- 💡 **Rising Demand for Assistive Technology in India:**
  - ✦ India is witnessing a **growing need for assistive devices** due to the increasing number of persons with disabilities, elderly individuals, and people with chronic health conditions.
  - ✦ These technologies significantly improve their quality of life and play a key role in building a more inclusive and equitable society.
- 💡 **India's Potential as an AT Manufacturing Hub:**
  - ✦ With rapid advancements in technology and a thriving start-up ecosystem, India holds great promise to emerge as a global hub for <u>**Assistive Technology (AT)**</u> **manufacturing.**
  - ✦ This growth can meet domestic needs while also contributing to international markets.
- 💡 **Broad Participation Expected:**
  - ✦ The workshop will bring together around 200 participants, including senior officials from Central and State Governments, international agencies, research institutions, and AT startups.
  - ✦ They will discuss the current state and future possibilities of assistive technology in the country.
  - ✦ **Key Themes for Discussion:**
    - 🔖 Improving access to assistive technology in India
    - 🔖 State-led initiatives promoting AT

📎 Innovations in AT manufacturing

📎 Opportunities for global partnerships and collaboration

💡 **Towards a Robust AT Ecosystem:**

✦ Insights and recommendations from the workshop will help shape a national framework to support and expand the AT ecosystem in India.

✦ These efforts align with the goal of 'leaving no one behind' and advancing an inclusive, accessible society for all.

Assistive Technology (AT)

💡 AT is any **item, piece of equipment, software program or product system** that is used to increase, maintain or improve the functional capabilities of persons with disabilities.

💡 Examples:

✦ **Technologies and devices** such as prosthetics, braces, walkers, special switches, special-purpose computers, screen readers and specialised curricular software.

💡 **Universal assistive technology coverage implies** that everyone, everywhere receives the AT that they need without financial or other hardships.

✦ **Priority Assistive Products List** launched by WHO in 2018 include hearing aids, wheelchairs, communication aids, spectacles, artificial limbs, pill organisers, memory aids and other essential items for the elderly and persons with disabilities.

New Species of Land Snail in Maharashtra

Why in News?

A team of researchers from India and the UK has discovered **a new species of land snail in Maharashtra's Konkan region** and named it *Theobaldius konkanensis*.

Key Points

💡 **Research Publication and Team:**

✦ Researchers published their findings in **the Molluscan Research journal** on 11th March 2025.

✦ The study titled **"A new species of cyclophorid land snail from the coastal regions of Maharashtra".**

💡 **Endemic Status and Conservation Significance:**

✦ The species is endemic to the northern **Western Ghats**, a largely unexplored biodiversity hotspot.

✦ Researchers emphasized the **snail's restricted distribution in Konkan,** calling for urgent conservation efforts to preserve its ecological niche.

💡 **Habitat and Behaviour:**

✦ The snail prefers **tropical evergreen** and **semi-evergreen forests**.

✦ Live snails were found from **June to September in leaf litter** and on damp branches; only shells were observed in other seasons.

✦ The species is **active both day and night**, especially under shaded forest canopies.

💡 **Distinctive Morphological Traits:**

✦ The species has a **thick, conoidally depressed, widely umbilicated shell with increasing whorls.**

✦ It has a **yellowish-brown shell** with **black striations and unique operculum features**— triangular aperture notch, raised fold, and short spines.

✦ Its **spire is more elevated** compared to other Theobaldius species.

💡 **Ecology and Reproductive Biology:**

✦ Snails are most active in the monsoon and are **important bioindicators sensitive to climate change.**

- ✦ Most land snails are **hermaphrodites**; some have separate sexes.
- ✦ Reproduction involves courtship, dart-shooting, and both self- and cross-fertilisation.
- ✦ Eggs are laid in soil or under litter; they hatch in 2–4 weeks. Lifespan ranges from 2 to 7 years.

Maharashtra Pollution Control Board (MPCB)

Why in News?

While the **fishing community continues to voice concerns** about the **contamination of water bodies** caused by heavy industrial **pollution**, **the Maharashtra Pollution Control Board** maintains in its report that pollution levels remain within the prescribed limits.

Key Points

- 💡 **Expert Opinion:**
  - ✦ The Water Pollution Expert noted drastic differences between MPCB and independent lab results.
    - 📎 It was pointed out that even 236 mg/l **Chemical Oxygen Demand (COD)** (in MPCB report) is too high for a natural water body, indicating severe pollution.
    - 📎 The independent Lab findings also show extremely high COD, hinting at direct effluent discharge from industries.
- 💡 **Impact on Local Fishing Community:**
  - ✦ **Environmental degradation:**
    - 📎 The water turned black and lifeless, as it suggests a high concentration of organic matter requiring significant oxygen for decomposition, potentially leading to oxygen depletion and harm to **aquatic life.**
  - ✦ **Community response:**
    - 📎 **The Fish Workers Union** raised multiple complaints to various government departments (fisheries, environment, Konkan & Raigad administration) without resolution.
    - 📎 Diwale village once had more than 10,000 fishermen, now many have shifted to non-fishing jobs (security guards, domestic help) or sell purchased fish.

- 📎 Fishing zones like **Kharghar, Mansarowar, Diwale creek**, historically rich, are now degraded.
- ✦ Observes untreated effluents discharged directly into Diwale creek, with pipeline proposed to extend to Belapur.
  - 📎 This could **destroy Thane and Nhava Sheva creeks**, affecting **the Arabian Sea.**
- 💡 **Industrial Activity in the Region:**
  - ✦ Approximately 3,254 industrial units operate in the region which include chemicals, dyes, pharmaceuticals, pesticides, petrochemicals, textile processing, engineering units, etc.

The Maharashtra Pollution Control Board (MPCB)
💡 It is a state-level body **responsible for implementing environmental legislation** in Maharashtra, focusing on **preventing and controlling pollution**, particularly under **the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974**, and **the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981.**

Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Death Anniversary 2025

Why in News?

On 3rd April 2025, **Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's death anniversary** is observed, to honour the **legacy of the iconic 17th-century Maratha warrior king** and founder of the Maratha Empire.

Key Points

- 💡 **Observance of His Death Anniversary:**
    - ✦ Maharashtra and other regions honour his legacy through **cultural events, processions, and tributes.**
    - ✦ The day is marked by **processions, speeches, and public gatherings** to pay homage.
- 💡 **Significance of the Day:**
    - ✦ Serves as a reminder of **Shivaji Maharaj's enduring influence on Indian culture** and **governance.**
    - ✦ Encourages reflection on his vision for self-rule and **good governance.**
- 💡 **Birth:**
    - ✦ He was **born on 19th February, 1630** at **Shivneri Fort in District Pune** in the present-day state of Maharashtra.
    - ✦ He was **born to Shahaji Bhonsle**, a Maratha general who held the jagirs of Pune and Supe under the Bijapur Sultanate and **Jijabai**, a pious woman whose religious qualities had a profound influence on him.
- 💡 **Early Life:**
    - ✦ He displayed his military zeal for the first time **in 1645** when as a teenager, he successfully **got control of the Torna Fort** which was under Bijapur.
    - ✦ He also acquired the **Kondana Fort**. Both these forts were under Adil Shah of Bijapur.
- 💡 **Major Battles:** Battle of Pratapgad, Battle of Pavan Khind, Sacking of Surat, Battle of Purandar, Battle of Sinhagad, and Battle of Sangamner.
    - ✦ The Wagh nakh, was used by Shivaji to kill Afzal Khan in the 1659 Battle of Pratapgad.
- 💡 **Titles:** Chhatrapati, Shakakarta, Kshatriya Kulavantas, and Haindava Dharmodhhaarak.
- 💡 **Administration:** Centralized administration with the **Ashtapradhan (Council of Eight Ministers)**, abolished **the Jagirdari System**, implemented **the Ryotwari System**, and built a strong naval force for coastal defense.
    - ✦ Shivaji is renowned for his innovative **guerrilla warfare tactics**, which influenced subsequent rulers and shaped the **Maratha Military Landscapes**.
- 💡 **Death:**
    - ✦ He **died on 3rd April 1680.**

Mercy Petitions Cell for Death Row Convicts

Why in News?

The Maharashtra government created a dedicated cell under **the Additional Secretary (Home)** to **handle mercy petitions filed by death row convicts.** This cell will ensure a prompt execution of the process.

Key Points

- 💡 **Supreme Court Order:**
    - ✦ In December 2024, **the Supreme Court** directed all states to establish dedicated cells for handling mercy petitions of death row convicts.
    - ✦ The **court observed that delays in executions had a dehumanizing effect** on individuals awaiting their fate.
- 💡 **Formation of Maharashtra's Dedicated Cell:**
    - ✦ Following the SC order, the Maharashtra Home Department held a meeting to establish a dedicated cell.
    - ✦ The nine-member committee includes senior prison officers, court officials, and other stakeholders.
    - ✦ The **committee will convene every three months** to ensure prompt processing of mercy petitions.
- 💡 **Objective of the Committee:**
    - ✦ Officials stated that **delays in mercy petitions could unfairly benefit convicts** and **cause undue distress.**
    - ✦ The committee **aims to ensure that mercy petitions are addressed at the earliest** and their status is promptly conveyed to the convicts.

Mercy Petition

- 💡 **About:**
    - ✦ A mercy petition is a **formal request** made by someone who has been sentenced to **death or imprisonment** seeking mercy from the President or the Governor, as the case may be.

- ✦ The idea of Mercy Petition is followed in many countries like the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Canada, and India.
- ✦ Everyone has the basic <u>right to live</u>. It is also mentioned as a <u>**fundamental right**</u> mentioned under <u>**Article 21**</u> of the **Indian Constitution.**
- 💡 **Philosophy behind:** The philosophy behind the pardoning powers in India is rooted in the recognition that no judicial system is infallible and the need for a mechanism to rectify potential judicial errors.
  - ✦ **Rectification of Judicial Errors:** This safeguard acts as a **corrective measure** against potential miscarriages of justice.
    - 🖉 For example, in 2012, 14 judges from the Supreme Court and High Courts, in separate letters to the President of India, highlighted cases from the 1990s where courts had wrongfully awarded capital punishment to 15 individuals, two of whom were subsequently executed.
  - ✦ **Maintaining Public Trust:** One of the core objectives of the pardoning power is to uphold and maintain the trust of the common man in the criminal justice system.
- 💡 **Constitutional Framework:**
  - ✦ As per the Constitutional framework in India, a mercy petition to the President is the last constitutional resort a convict can take when he is sentenced by a **court of law.** A convict can present a mercy petition to the President of India under **Article 72** of the Constitution of India.
  - ✦ Similarly, the power to grant pardon is conferred upon the <u>**Governors**</u> of States under <u>**Article 161**</u> of the Constitution of India.
- 💡 **Article 72:**
  - ✦ The President shall have the **power to grant pardons, reprieves, respites or remissions** of punishment or to **suspend, remit or commute** the sentence of any person convicted of any offence:

- ✦ In all cases where the punishment or sentence is by a <u>**Court Martial**</u>
- ✦ In all cases where the punishment or sentence is for an offence against any law relating to a matter to which the executive power of the Union extends
- ✦ In all cases where the sentence is a sentence of death.
- 💡 **Article 161:**
  - ✦ It provides that the **Governor** of a State shall have the power to **grant pardons, reprieves, respites or remissions** of punishment or to suspend, remit or commute the sentence of any person convicted of any offence against any law relating to a matter to which the executive power of the State extends.
  - ✦ The SC in 2021 held that the Governor of a State can pardon prisoners, including death row ones, even before they have served a minimum 14 years of prison sentence.

Maharashtra Cabinet Approval for New Projects

Why in News?

Maharashtra Chief Minister approved the policy on <u>electric bike</u> **taxis** to benefit solo commuters across the State. The Cabinet also cleared **nine key decisions**, including infrastructure projects such as the **Sindphana river projects and the Gadchiroli railway project.**

Key Points

- 💡 **Policy on E-Bike Taxis:**
  - ✦ The **policy prioritizes women's safety** with a **partition between the front and pillion riders** and a **roof cover** for monsoon protection.
  - ✦ The government is working on an **affordable revenue model** for single passengers.
  - ✦ The initiative is expected to **generate 10,000 jobs in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region** and **20,000 jobs across Maharashtra.**
  - ✦ The policy offers Rs 10,000 aid to children of auto-rickshaw and taxi drivers associated with a **government-certified corporation** who wish to apply for e-bike taxis.

✦ The policy is based on recommendations from a **committee led by Ramnath Jha.**

💡 **Mining Foundation and Railway Development in Gadchiroli:**

✦ The Cabinet approved the establishment of the **Gadchiroli District Mineral Foundation** to promote industrial development in the tribal district.

✦ The foundation aims to support ultra mega projects and **MSME** projects in the region.

✦ The government approved the formation of an authority to monitor the mineral sector, chaired by the Chief Minister with 13 other members.

✦ The executive committee, led by the Chief Secretary, will oversee the authority's decisions.

✦ The Cabinet sanctioned Rs 1,886.05 crore for the Wadsa-Desaiganj-Gadchiroli railway project, with the State contributing 50% (Rs 943.025 crore) of the cost.

💡 **AI-Based Law Enforcement and Infrastructure Projects:**

✦ The government approved the establishment of **Maharashtra Research and Vigilance for Enhanced Law Enforcement (MARVEL)** to integrate **Artificial Intelligence** into law enforcement.

💡 **Infrastructure Approvals:**

✦ Rs 161.12 crore sanctioned for **Nandurbar district's Nagthan Medium Project.**

✦ Rs 58 crore allocated for three projects on **the Sindphana river.**

✦ Rs 79.71 lakh incentive grant approved for 500 farmers in Murbad taluk, Thane district.

Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve

Why in News?

Maharashtra's **Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR)** has implemented new measures to streamline safari operations and enhance guest convenience.

Key Points

💡 **Enhanced Safari Experience for Visitors:**

✦ TATR has introduced new **luxuries to enhance visitor convenience.**

✦ The reserve has implemented measures to ease safari operations, ensuring a smoother experience for guests.

💡 **Balancing Tourism with Conservation:**

✦ **Sustainable Tourism Initiatives:**

🖉 The new policies reflect Tadoba's commitment to enhancing visitor experiences while upholding conservation principles.

🖉 Measures such as the fast-track system, relaxed entry for late arrivals, and improved full-day safaris aim to **balance tourism expansion with ecological sustainability.**

✦ Emphasis on Responsible Tourism:

🖉 Visitors must adhere to reservation rules, including:

💡 Prohibitions on firearms, alcohol, and non-vegetarian food.

💡 Maintaining a **litter-free environment** to protect the rich biodiversity.

🖉 These guidelines ensure that tourism remains responsible and does not disrupt the reserve's ecological balance.

Tadoba Andhari Tiger Reserve
💡 **Location:** It is situated in **Maharashtra** and is the **oldest and largest national park** in the state.
✦ **Tadoba/Taru** is the **local deity** revered by the tribal people in the area.
✦ **Andhari** is derived from the **Andhari river** which flows through the reserve.
💡 **Geography:** It contains two primary lakes, **Tadoba Lake and Kolsa Lake**, along with **the Tadoba River.**
💡 **Biodiversity:**
✦ **Flora: Teak,** semal, **tendu**, beheda, karaya gum, mahua madhuca, **arjun, bamboo** etc.
✦ **Fauna:** Tigers, Indian leopards, sloth bears, gaurs, nilgai, **dholes**, small Indian civets, sambars, **spotted deer, barking deer, and chital.**

TIGER

Royal Bengal Tiger (Panthera Tigris) is the National animal of India.

Subspecies of Tiger

✳ **The continental** *(Panthera tigris tigris)*
✳ **The Sunda** *(Panthera tigris sondaica)*

Habitat

Tropical rainforests, evergreen forests, temperate forests, mangrove swamps, grasslands, and savannas

Countries Where Tiger Population Is Found

◘ Found only in **13 Tiger Range countries-** India, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Russia, China, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam
  ◆ As per the latest report by IUCN, tiger has gone extinct in Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam

Protection Status

◘ **IUCN Red List:** Endangered
◘ **CITES:** Appendix I
◘ **WPA 1972:** Schedule I

Threats

◘ Habitat loss
◘ Poaching and illegal trade
◘ Human-Wildlife conflict

Conservation Efforts

◘ **International Big Cats Alliance (IBCA):** For conservation of seven big cats namely Tiger, Lion, Leopard, Snow Leopard, Cheetah, Jaguar and Puma (launched by India)
◘ **Tx2 campaign:** Launched by WWF; stands for 'Tiger times 2' signaling the goal to double the tiger population by 2022
◘ **National Tiger Conservation authority (NTCA):** Constituted under the WPA, 1972
◘ **Project Tiger:** Launched in 1973
◘ **Tiger Census:** Every 4 years

Tigers In India

◘ India has the **largest** population
  ◆ As of 2022, India has 3167 tigers
  ◆ Largest population has been found in Central Indian Highlands & Eastern Ghats Landscape
◘ **Tiger Reserves:** India now has 53 tiger reserves
  ◆ **Ranipur in UP** is the latest
  ◆ **Nagarjun Sagar** (Andhra Pradesh) **is the largest** while Orang (Assam) **is the smallest** (Core area)

Drishti IAS

Key Points

Details

Summary

Key Points

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