



News Analysis (12 Apr, 2021)

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Global Minimum Corporate Tax

Why in News

The US Treasury Secretary has urged **G20 nations** to move towards a **global minimum corporate tax**.

It is **an attempt to reverse a “30-year race to the bottom”** in which countries have resorted to slashing corporate tax rates to attract multinational corporations (MNCs).

Key Points

- **Proposal on a Global Minimum Corporate Tax Rate:**
 - The US proposal envisages a **21% minimum corporate tax rate, coupled with cancelling exemptions on income from countries** that do not legislate a minimum tax to discourage the shifting of multinational operations and profits overseas.
 - The proposal for a minimum corporate tax is **tailored to address the low effective rates of tax shelled out by some of the world’s biggest corporations**, including digital giants such as Apple, Alphabet and Facebook, as well as major corporations such as Nike and Starbucks.

These companies typically **rely on complex webs of subsidiaries to Hoover profits out of major markets into low-tax countries** such as Ireland or Caribbean nations such as the British Virgin Islands or the Bahamas, or to central American nations such as Panama.
- **US’ Reasons for the Proposal:**
 - The proposal **aims to somewhat offset any disadvantages** that might arise from the **proposed increase in the US corporate tax rate**.

The proposed increase to 28% from 21% would partially reverse the previous cut in tax rates on companies from 35% to 21% by way of a 2017 tax legislation.
 - The increase in corporation tax **comes at a time when the pandemic is costing governments across the world**, and is also timed with the US’s push for a USD 2.3 trillion infrastructure upgrade proposal.

- **Significance:**
 - A global compact on this issue, at the time of pandemic, **will work well for the US government and for most other countries in western Europe**, even as some low-tax European jurisdictions such as the Netherlands, Ireland and Luxembourg and some in the Caribbean rely largely on **tax rate arbitrage** to attract MNCs.
 - The plan to peg a minimum tax on overseas corporate income **seeks to potentially make it difficult for corporations to shift earnings offshore**.
 - The **average headline corporate tax rate in advanced economies has fallen** from 32% in 2000 to just over 23% by 2018.
 - That is largely because **smaller countries such as Ireland, the Netherlands and Singapore have attracted footloose businesses by offering low corporate tax rates**.
 - Footloose industry is a general term for an industry that can be placed and located at any location without effect from factors such as resources or transport.
 - **Multinational companies** with increasingly intangible assets such as the global tech firms **have shifted some actual business and a lot of profits into these tax havens and low-tax jurisdictions**, lowering their global tax bills.
- **International Response:**
 - The European Commission backed the proposal, but the global minimum rate should be decided after discussions in the **Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development** (OECD).
 - The European nations, including Germany and France have supported the US proposal.
 - The OECD and Group of Twenty (G20) have been leading the **Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS) initiative**—a multilateral negotiation with over 135 countries, including the United States—since 2013.
 - **BEPS** refers to tax planning strategies used by multinational enterprises that exploit gaps and mismatches in tax rules to avoid paying tax.
 - **China** is not likely to have a serious objection with the US call, but an **area of concern** for Beijing would be the **impact of such a tax stipulation on Hong Kong**, the seventh-largest tax haven in the world and the largest in Asia.
 - The US proposal also has support from the **International Monetary Fund (IMF)**.
- **Challenges:**
 - The proposal **impinges on the right of the sovereign to decide a nation's tax policy**.
 - Taxation is ultimately a sovereign function, and depending upon the needs and circumstances of the nation, the government is open to participate and engage in the emerging discussions globally around the corporate tax structure.
 - A global minimum rate **would essentially take away a tool that countries use to push policies that suit them**. A lower tax rate is a tool they can use to alternatively push economic activity.
 - For instance, in the backdrop of the pandemic, IMF and World Bank data suggest that developing countries with less ability to offer mega stimulus packages may experience a longer economic hangover than developed nations.
 - Also, a global minimum tax rate **will do little to tackle tax evasion**.

- **Cut in Corporate Tax:**

- In a bid to revive investment activity, the Finance Minister announced, in September 2019, a sharp cut in corporate taxes for domestic companies to 22% and for new domestic manufacturing companies to 15%.
 - The **Taxation Laws (Amendment) Act, 2019** resulted in the insertion of a section (115BAA) to the Income-Tax Act, 1961 to provide for the concessional tax rate of 22% for existing domestic companies subject to certain conditions including that they do not avail of any specified incentive or deductions.
 - Also, the existing domestic companies opting for the concessional taxation regime will **not be required to pay any Minimum Alternate Tax.**
- The cuts effectively **brought India's headline corporate tax rate broadly at par with the average 23% rate in Asian countries.**
 - China and South Korea have a tax rate of 25% each, while Malaysia is at 24%, Vietnam at 20%, Thailand at 20% and Singapore at 17%.
 - The effective tax rate, inclusive of surcharge and cess, for Indian domestic companies is around 25.17%.
 - The average corporate tax rate stands at around 29% for existing companies that are claiming some benefit or the other.

- **Equalisation Levy:**

- To **address the challenges posed by the enterprises who conduct their business through digital means** and carry out activities in the country remotely, the government has the '**Equalisation Levy**'.
- The equalization levy is **aimed at taxing foreign companies which have a significant local client base in India** but are billing them through their offshore units, effectively escaping the country's tax system.
- The Income-tax Act, 1961 has been amended to bring in the concept of "**Significant Economic Presence**" for establishing "business connection" in the case of non-residents in India.

- **Agreements for Exchange of Information:**

- India has been proactively engaging with foreign governments with a view to facilitating and enhancing exchange of information under **Double Taxation Avoidance Agreements, Tax Information Exchange Agreements and Multilateral Conventions** to plug loopholes.
 - Such agreements **promote cooperation in tax matters.**
- Besides, **effective enforcement actions** including expeditious investigation in foreign assets cases have been launched, including searches, enquiries, levy of taxes, penalties, etc.

Corporate Tax

- Corporation Tax or Corporate Tax is a **direct tax levied on the net income or profit of a corporate entity** from their business, foreign or domestic.
- The rate at which the tax is imposed as per the provisions of the Income Tax Act, 1961 is known as the Corporate Tax Rate.
- The Corporate Tax rate is based on a slab rate system depending on the type of corporate entity and the different revenues earned by each of corporate entities.

Minimum Alternate Tax

- At times it may happen that a taxpayer, being a company, may have generated income during the year, but by taking the advantage of various provisions of Income-tax Law (like exemptions, deductions, depreciation, etc.), it may have reduced its tax liability or may not have paid any tax at all.
- Due to an increase in the number of zero tax paying companies, Minimum Alternate Tax (MAT) was introduced by the Finance Act, 1987 with effect from assessment year 1988-89. Later on, it was withdrawn by the Finance Act, 1990 and then reintroduced by Finance Act, 1996.
- MAT is **calculated at 15% on the book profit** (the profit shown in the profit and loss account) or at the usual corporate rates, and whichever is higher is payable as tax.
- All companies in India, whether domestic or foreign, fall under this provision. MAT was later extended to cover non-corporate entities as well.
- MAT is an important tool with which tax avoidance can be prevented.

Domestic Company

- Domestic company is one which is **registered under the Companies Act of India (2013)** and also includes the company registered in the foreign countries having control and management wholly situated in India.
- A domestic company includes private as well as public companies.

Foreign Company

Foreign company is one which is not registered under the Companies Act of India and has control & management located outside India.

Tax Heaven

A tax haven is generally an offshore country that offers foreign individuals and businesses little or no tax liability in a politically and economically static environment.

Source: IE

India-Netherlands

Why in News

Recently, India's Prime Minister (PM) and the PM of the Netherlands held a **Virtual Summit**.

- It was the **first high level Summit attended by the PM of Netherlands** after the general elections held in March 2021.
- Earlier in **2019** the **King and Queen of the Netherlands** visited India to give an impetus to the bilateral ties shared by the two nations.

Key Points



- **Review of Bilateral Engagements:**

- Exchanged views on **further expanding and diversifying the relationship** in trade and economy, water management, agriculture sector, **smart cities**, science & technology, healthcare and space.
- Agreed that the ambitious and innovative flagship programs like **Clean India, Digital India, Make in India, Sagarmala, Ayushman Bharat and Startup India** have provided immense opportunities for Indo-Dutch (India-Netherlands) collaboration in multiple sectors.
- Exchanged views on regional and global challenges such as **climate change**, counter-terrorism and **Covid-19 pandemic** and agreed to leverage the emerging convergences in new areas like **Indo-Pacific**, Resilient Supply Chains and Global Digital Governance.

- **Strategic Partnership on Water:**

Agreed on instituting a ‘**Strategic Partnership on Water**’ to further deepen the Indo-Dutch cooperation in the water related sector, and **upgrading the Joint Working Group on Water** to Ministerial-level.

In 2019, India and Netherlands had launched the **second phase of the Local Treatment of Urban Sewage streams for Healthy Reuse (LOTUS-HR) plant** as a part of joint collaboration in New Delhi.

- **Commitment to International Peace:**

Reiterated their **commitment to a rules-based multilateral order for ensuring international peace, stability and prosperity** and looked forward to a successful **India-EU (European Union) Leaders’ Meeting in Porto, Portugal in May 2021**.

- **India's Stand:**

- India and Netherlands have **similar approach in dealing with global challenges** like climate change, terrorism and pandemics.
- It thanked the Netherlands for their support to **International Solar Alliance (ISA)** and **Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI)**.
ISA and CDRI are Indian Initiatives.
- It also **welcomed the Netherlands' Indo-Pacific Policy** and its desire to collaborate during India's **G20** Presidency in 2023.
- Setting up a **fast track mechanism for investment promotion will give new momentum** to the strong economic cooperation between the two countries.

India-Netherlands Relation

- **Economic and Trade:**

- Economic Partnership between India & Netherlands is a **key pillar of the bilateral ties**.
- The Netherlands was the **third largest investor in India**, after Mauritius and Singapore for **Financial Year (FY) 2018-19** with **Foreign Direct Investments (FDI)** inflows of USD 3.87 billion across a variety of sectors.
- The **Netherlands was the second largest destination of foreign investment by Indian companies** as of end-March 2018.
- In 2017-18, the **bilateral trade** between India and the Netherlands was around USD 8.77 billion. In 2018-19, it was around USD 12.87 billion.
By 2025, it shall touch around USD 18-23 billion.
- The **Netherlands is India's 5th largest trading partner** in the European Union. And is also one of the leading investor nations in India.
- There are **200 (Dutch) companies that are present in India**. Around **160 Indian companies are active in the Netherlands**. During the Covid-19 pandemic, there has been a sizable uptick in the Indian IT companies investing in the Netherlands.

- **Historical Relations:**

- Indo-Dutch relations can be **traced back to more than 400 years** when the first Dutch EIC (East India Company) **got established in India (in around 17th century AD)**.
- The **official relations** between the two nations were **established in the year 1947** which, since then, have been cordial and friendly.
- The two countries also **share common ideals of democracy, pluralism and the rule of law**.

- **Cultural Relations:**

- The **Netherlands currently is home to the largest Indian community on the European mainland**. The growing Indian student and professional community in the Netherlands is making the cultural knot stronger and the technological partnership deeper.
- An **Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR)** Cultural Centre "**The Gandhi Centre**" was established in The Hague in October 2011.
- The fifth **International Day of Yoga** was celebrated on 16th June, 2019 at prestigious Dam Square in Amsterdam.

Way Forward

- The Netherlands and India have **hardly achieved their true potential**. There is **huge potential for collaborations given the geopolitical and economic necessities** of both nations.
- Engagement of leaders at the highest level along with **greater economic and defence cooperation is the need of the hour** to take ties to new levels.
- In the next five years, as India will move ahead, Dutch companies will come to India and will be a key collaborator in helping India achieve its USD **5 trillion economy** vision.

Source: PIB

100% Sustainable Fuel for Formula 1

Why in News

Recently, the **Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA)** has announced the first barrels of **100% sustainable fuel**, made from **bio waste** and developed to **stringent F1(Formula One) specifications**, have been delivered to Power Unit manufacturers.

FIA announced its intent to make F1 carbon neutral by 2030 and to have sustainable races by 2025.



Formula One

- Formula One, also called F1 in short, is an **international auto racing sport**. F1 cars are the **fastest regulated road-course racing cars in the world**.
- F1 is the highest level of single-seat, open-wheel and open-cockpit professional motor racing contest.
- Formula One racing is **governed and sanctioned by a world body called the Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA)** or the International Automobile Federation. The name 'Formula' comes from the set of rules that the participating cars and drivers must follow.

Key Points

- **F1 Current Carbon Footprint:**

- **Direct Effect:**

- F1's driving activities produce approximately **2,56,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide per year**, which is the equivalent to powering roughly 30,000 houses in the UK over the same time period.

- **Indirect Effect:**

- The main issue is not the **cars** themselves, which **accounted for only 0.7%** of the sport's emissions in 2019, but the **logistics of transporting teams and equipment across the globe**.
 - In 2019, road, sea and air **logistics for equipment transportation accounted for 45% of F1's emissions** with business travel for teams contributing an additional 27.7%.
 - Rounding up the list, **factories and facilities servicing the sport** represent **19.3%** of emissions, and event operations, another 7.3%.

- **Uncounted Emission:**

- The 2,56,000 number doesn't even factor in the impact of fans, millions of whom require transportation and accommodation on and around the race weekend.
 - If one were to include the emissions generated by fans, the total carbon footprint of F1 catapults to approximately **1.9 million tonnes** of carbon dioxide generated by the sport annually.

- **100% Sustainable Fuels:**

- **Background:**

- One of the most high-profile ways in which F1 plans to reduce its environmental impact is through the **continued evolution of energy-efficient engines**.
 - Starting from 1989 when the FIA Alternative Fuel Commission was formed, F1 has committed to a number of initiatives designed to improve engine efficiency, with the most notable being its **global fuel economy initiative in 2007** which aims to reduce fuel consumption by 50% across the competition.
 - In 2020, the FIA announced that it had developed a **100% sustainable fuel** and that engine manufacturers were already in the process of testing it, intending to start using it by 2026.

- **About:**

- A 100% sustainable fuel essentially represents the **third generation and most advanced iteration of biofuels**, which typically are made from by-products of industrial or agricultural waste.
 - F1 cars already use biofuels but current regulations only mandate that the fuel include 5.75% of bio-components.
 - In 2022 that number will increase to 10% and by 2025, when new power units are proposed to enter the competition, the **FIA hopes to transition completely to 100% advanced sustainable fuels**.

Biofuels

- **About:**
 - Any hydrocarbon fuel that is produced from an organic matter (living or once living material) in a short period of time (days, weeks, or even months) is considered a biofuel.
 - Biofuels may be solid, liquid or gaseous in nature.
 - **Solid:** Wood, dried plant material, and manure
 - **Liquid:** Bioethanol and Biodiesel
 - **Gaseous:** Biogas
 - These can be used to replace or can be used in addition to diesel, petrol or other fossil fuels for transport, stationary, portable and other applications. Also, they can be used to generate heat and electricity.
- **Categories of Biofuels:**
 - **First generation biofuels:**
 - These are **made from food sources such as sugar, starch, vegetable oil, or animal fats** using conventional technology.
 - Common first-generation biofuels include **Bioalcohols, Biodiesel, Vegetable oil, Bioethers, Biogas.**
 - **Second generation biofuels:**
 - These are **produced from non-food crops** or portions of food crops that are not edible and considered as wastes, e.g. stems, husks, wood chips, and fruit skins and peeling.
 - **Thermochemical** reactions or **biochemical** conversion processes are used for producing such fuels.
 - **Examples:** Cellulose ethanol and biodiesel.
 - **Third generation biofuels:**
 - These are **produced from micro-organisms** like algae.
 - **Example:** Butanol
 - Micro-organisms like algae can be grown using land and water unsuitable for food production, therefore reducing the strain on already depleted water sources.
 - **Fourth Generation Biofuels:**
 - In the production of these fuels, **crops that are genetically engineered to take in high amounts of carbon are grown and harvested as biomass.**
 - The crops are then converted into fuel using second generation techniques.
 - The fuel is pre-combusted and the carbon is captured. Then the carbon is geo-sequestered, meaning that the carbon is stored in depleted oil or gas fields or in unmineable coal seams.
 - Some of these fuels are considered as **carbon negative** as their production pulls out carbon from the environment.

- **India's Related Initiatives:**

- **E20 Fuel:** The Indian government has invited public comments for introducing adoption of **E20 fuel** (a blend of 20% ethanol with gasoline).
- **Pradhan Mantri JI-VAN Yojana, 2019:** The objective of the **scheme** is to create an ecosystem for setting up commercial projects and to boost research and development in the 2G Ethanol sector.
- **Reduction in GST:** The Government has also reduced **GST** on ethanol for blending in fuel from 18% to 5%.
- **National Biofuel Policy 2018:** The Policy categorises biofuels as "Basic Biofuels" viz. First Generation (1G) bioethanol & biodiesel and "Advanced Biofuels" - Second Generation (2G) ethanol, Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) to drop-in fuels, Third Generation (3G) biofuels, bio-CNG etc. to enable extension of appropriate financial and fiscal incentives under each category.

Source: IE

Potential of Lighthouses for Tourism: Sagarmala

Why in News

The **Union Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways** seeks to **develop 65 lighthouses** on public-private-partnership mode. **Odisha's five lighthouses** present huge potential for tourism.

The Ministry wants to develop lighthouses as hubs of tourism under the **Sagarmala project**.

Key Points

- **Five lighthouses of Odisha:**

- **'False Point' island lighthouse:** It is situated off the Kendrapara coast. It is the British era lighthouse and its location close to massive **mangrove vegetation** infested with **crocodiles** makes it an adventurous tourist place on the eastern coast.
- **Paradip lighthouse:** It also holds tourism potential because of its proximity to the port town and Cuttack and Bhubaneswar cities (100 km). It was commissioned in the 1980s.
- **Gopalpur lighthouse:** It is located in Ganjam district. If it is developed as a place of tourist interest, the **Chilika Lake and the Gopalpur beach** will be added attractions.
- **Chandrabhaga lighthouse:** It is 10 km from the world famous **Konark temple**. It had withstood the severity of cyclones such as the Super Cyclone (1999), Phailin (2013) and **Fani** (2019).
- **Puri lighthouse:** It is 4 km from the 12th century **Shree Jagannath Temple**, which is also a tourist place.

- **Lighthouse Tourism in India:**

- **Number of Lighthouses:** India has as many as 189 lighthouses dotting its vast coastline including the Andaman and Nicobar Islands in the Bay of Bengal and Lakshadweep Islands in the Arabian Sea.
- **Objectives for Promoting Lighthouse based Tourism:**
 - To **enhance & develop the existing lighthouses & its surrounding areas** into a Tourism Destination, Maritime Landmark, and Heritage Precinct.
 - To **develop allied Maritime Infrastructure** like National Maritime Museums & National Lighthouse Museums.
 - To explore the possibilities of developing these projects under various modes including the possibilities of **Public Private Partnership (PPP)** by integrating commercially viable interventions at the feasible locations in order to make the project viable.
- **Advantages:**

The advantages behind creation of lighthouses into a tourism product are that it shall **help in attracting tourists** from across the world & locally and thereby create a source of revenue for the government, **employment opportunities for local people, increase in commerce** through purchase and sale of goods and services, etc.

Sagarmala Project

About:

- The Sagarmala Programme was **approved by the Union Cabinet in 2015** which aims at holistic port infrastructure development along the 7,516-km long coastline through modernisation, mechanisation and computerisation.
- The vision of the Sagarmala Programme is to **reduce logistics cost for EXIM** (Export-Import) and **domestic trade** with minimal infrastructure investment.
- Sagarmala **could boost India's merchandise exports** to USD 110 billion by 2025 and create an estimated 10 million new jobs (four million in direct employment).



Components of the Sagarmala Programme:

- **Port Modernization & New Port Development:** De-bottlenecking and capacity expansion of existing ports and development of new Greenfield ports.
- **Port Connectivity Enhancement:** Enhancing the connectivity of the ports to the hinterland, optimizing cost and time of cargo movement through multi-modal logistics solutions including domestic waterways (inland water transport and coastal shipping).
- **Port-linked Industrialization:** Developing port-proximate industrial clusters and Coastal Economic Zones to reduce logistics cost and time of EXIM and domestic cargo.
- **Coastal Community Development:** Promoting sustainable development of coastal communities through skill development & livelihood generation activities, fisheries development, coastal tourism etc.
- **Coastal Shipping & Inland Waterways Transport:** Impetus to move cargo through the sustainable and environment-friendly coastal and inland waterways mode.

Public-Private Partnerships

- Public-private partnerships involve **collaboration between a government agency and a private-sector company** that can be used to finance, build, and operate projects, such as public transportation networks, parks, and convention centers.
- Financing a project through a public-private partnership can **allow a project to be completed sooner or make it a possibility in the first place.**
- Public-private partnerships **often involve concessions of tax** or other operating revenue, protection from liability, or partial ownership rights over nominally public services and property **to private sector**, for-profit entities.
- It can create **complex principal-agent problems**, such as corrupt dealings, pay-offs to political cronies, etc.
- **Commonly adopted model of PPPs** include Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) ,Build-Own-Operate (BOO), Build-Operate-Lease-Transfer (BOLT), Design-Build-Finance-Operate-Transfer (DBFOT), Lease-Develop-Operate (LDO), Operate-Maintain-Transfer (OMT), etc.

Source: TH

Shaphari: Certification Scheme for Aquaculture Products

Why in News

Recently, the **Marine Products Exports Development Authority (MPEDA)** has developed a **certification scheme for aquaculture products called 'Shaphari'**.

Key Points

- **About:**
 - Shaphari is based on the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization's technical guidelines on aquaculture certification.
 - **Shaphari** is a Sanskrit word that **means superior quality of fishery products suitable for human consumption.**
 - It is a market-based tool for hatcheries to **adopt good aquaculture practices** and help **produce quality antibiotic-free shrimp products** to assure global consumers.
- **Components and Process:**
 - **Two Components:**
 - **Certifying hatcheries** for the quality of their seeds.
 - Those who successfully clear multiple audits of their operations shall be granted a **certificate for a period of two years.**
 - **Approving shrimp farms** that adopt the requisite good practices.
 - **Process:**
 - The entire **certification process will be online** to minimise human errors and ensure higher credibility and transparency.
- **Significance:**
 - The certification of hatcheries will **help farmers easily identify good quality seed producers.**
 - Certified aquaculture products will **help exporters to export their consignments to markets under stringent food safety regulations** without the fear of getting rejected.
 - It will **bolster confidence in India's frozen shrimp produce**, the country's biggest seafood export item.
- **India's Shrimp Exports:**
 - **About:**
 - India exported frozen shrimp worth almost **USD 5 billion in 2019-20**, with the **US and China** its biggest buyers.
 - Frozen shrimp is **India's largest exported seafood item.** It constituted 50.58% in quantity and 73.2% in terms of total USD earnings from the sector during 2019-20.
 - **Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Odisha, Gujarat and Tamil Nadu are India's major shrimp producing States**, and around 95% of the cultured shrimp produce is exported.
 - **Concern:**
 - **Container shortages** and incidents of **seafood consignments being rejected** because of food safety concerns.
 - Consignments sourced from Indian shrimp farms have been **rejected due to the presence of antibiotic residue** and this is a matter of concern for exporters.

- **Other Initiative for Food Safety of Exported Products:**

- **National Residue Control Programme:**

- National Residue Control Plan (NRCP) is a **statutory requirement for export to European Union countries.**
 - It is **regulated and carried by MPEDA**, under NRCP, **definite sampling schedule and sampling strategies are drawn every year** for monitoring the residues of substances like Antibacterial/Veterinary Medicinal Products and environmental contaminants.
 - **Samples are collected from hatcheries, feed mills, aquaculture farms and processing plants**, located in maritime states and **tested for the presence of any residue/contaminant.**

Marine Products Exports Development Authority

- MPEDA is a **nodal coordinating, state-owned agency** engaged in fishery production and allied activities.
- It was **established in 1972** under the **Marine Products Export Development Authority Act (MPEDA), 1972.**
- It functions under the **Union Ministry of Commerce and Industry.**
- It is **headquartered** in Kochi, Kerala.
- Its mandate is to **increase exports of seafood** including fisheries of all kinds, **specifying standards, marketing, processing, extension and training** in various aspects.

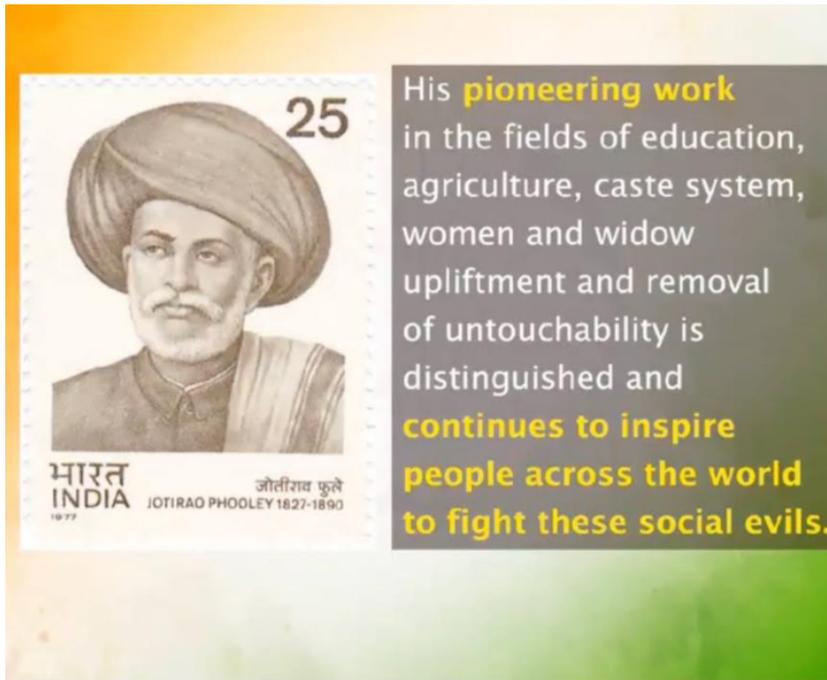
Source: TH

Jyotirao Phule

Why in News

The '**Tika Utsav (vaccination festival)**', started on the birth anniversary of Mahatma **Jyotirao Phule** (11th April) will continue till the birth anniversary of **Babasaheb Ambedkar** on 14th April 2021.

- The aim of the four day festival is to vaccinate as many people as possible for the priority groups and zero wastage of **Covid-19** vaccine.
- **Jyotirao Phule** was an **Indian social activist, thinker, anti-caste social reformer and writer from Maharashtra.** He is also known as **Jyotiba Phule.**



Key Points

- **Brief Profile:**

- **Birth:** Phule was born on **11th April, 1827** in present-day Maharashtra and **belonged to the Mali caste of gardeners and vegetable farmers.**
- **Education:** In 1841, Phule was enrolled at the **Scottish Missionary High School (Pune)**, where he completed education.
- **Ideology:** His Ideology was based on: **Liberty; Egalitarianism; Socialism.**
Phule was **influenced by Thomas Paine's book titled The Rights of Man** and believed that the only solution to combat the social evils was the **enlightenment of women and members of the lower castes.**
- **Major Publications:** Tritiya Ratna (1855); Powada: Chatrapati Shivajiraje Bhosle Yancha (1869); Gulamgiri (1873), Shetkarayacha Aasud (1881).
- **Related Association:** Phule along with his followers formed **Satyashodhak Samaj in 1873** which meant 'Seekers of Truth' in order to attain equal social and economic benefits for the lower castes in Maharashtra.
- **Municipal Council Member:** He was appointed commissioner to the Poona municipality and served in the position until 1883.
- **Title of Mahatma:** He was bestowed with the title of Mahatma on 11th May, 1888 **by a Maharashtrian social activist Vithalrao Krishnaji Vandekar.**

- **Social Reformer:**

- In 1848, he taught his wife (**Savitribai**) how to read and write, after which the couple **opened the first indigenously run school for girls** in Pune where they both taught. He was a **believer in gender equality** and he exemplified his beliefs by involving his wife in all his social reform activities.
- By 1852, the **Phules had established three schools** but all of them had shut by 1858 due to the shortage of funds after the Revolt of 1857.
- Jyotiba realised the pathetic conditions of widows and established an ashram for young widows and eventually became an advocate of the idea of **Widow Remarriage**.
- Jyotirao **attacked the orthodox Brahmins and other upper castes** and termed them as "hypocrites".
- In 1868, Jyotirao **constructed a common bathing tank** outside his house to exhibit his embracing attitude towards all human beings and wished to dine with everyone, regardless of their caste.
He started awareness campaigns that ultimately inspired the likes of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and **Mahatma Gandhi**, stalwarts who undertook major initiatives against caste discrimination later.
- It is believed by many that **it was Phule who first used the term 'Dalit' for the depiction of oppressed masses** often placed outside the 'varna system'.
- He **worked for abolishment of untouchability and caste system** in Maharashtra.
- **Death:** 28th November, 1890. His memorial is built in Phule Wada, Pune, Maharashtra.

Source: PIB

Navegaon-Nagzira Tiger Reserve: Maharashtra

Why in News

Three labourers were killed and two others injured during an operation to douse a **forest fire** at **Navegaon-Nagzira Tiger Reserve (NNTR)** in Maharashtra.

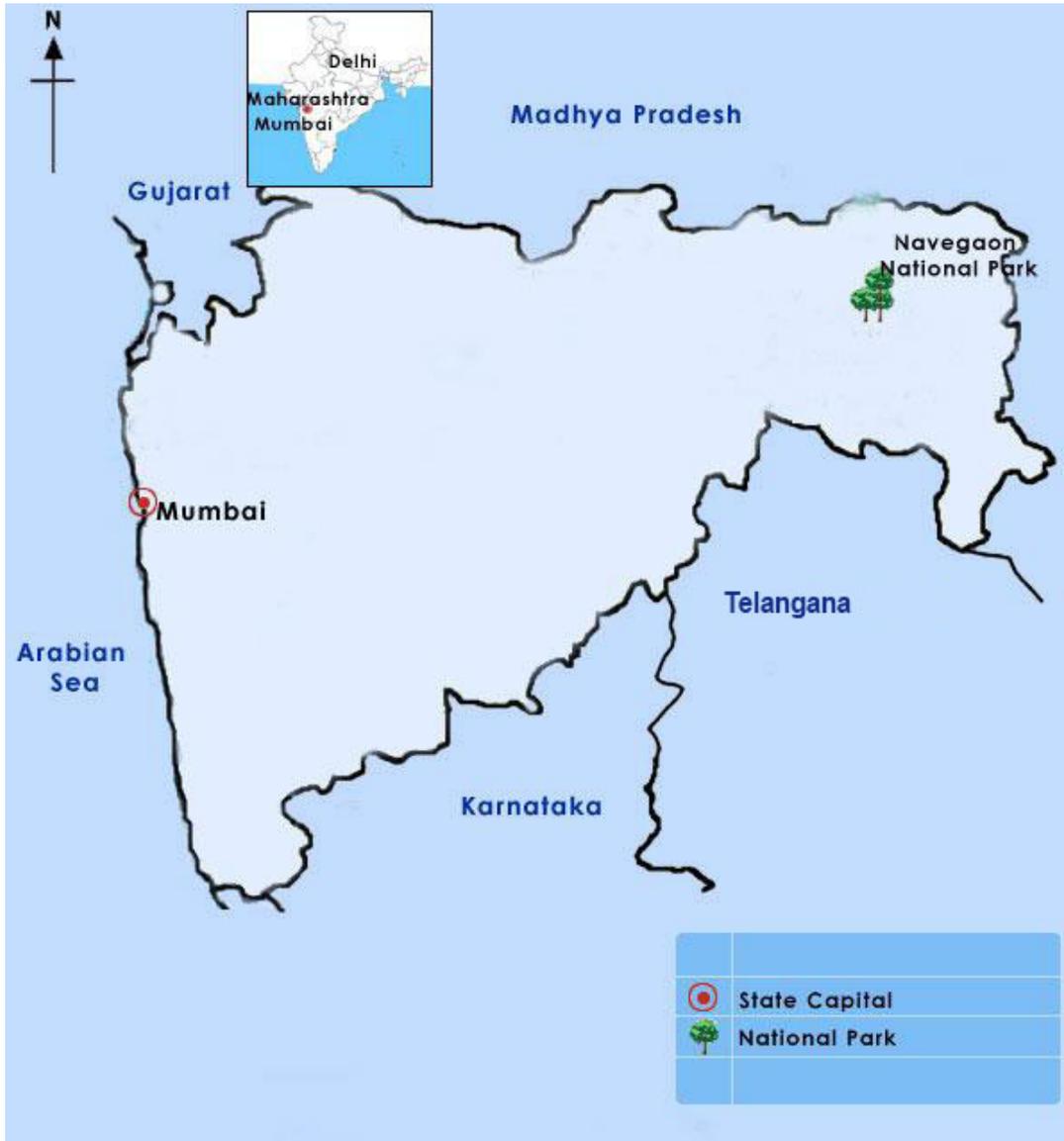
Key Points

- **Location:**
 - It is situated in **Gondia and Bhandara districts** of Maharashtra.
Gondia District shares common boundaries with the **state of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh** in the **north and eastern** side respectively.
 - Strategically, the Tiger Reserve is **located in the heart of central Indian Tiger landscape** which contributes almost one sixth of the total tiger population of the country.
- **Formation:**
 - It was notified as the **46th Tiger Reserve of India** in **December 2013**.
 - NNTR comprised of the notified area of **Nawegaon National Park, Nawegaon Wildlife Sanctuary, Nagzira Wildlife Sanctuary, New Nagzira Wildlife Sanctuary and Koka Wildlife Sanctuary**.

- **Connectivity:**
 - NNTR has connectivity with the major tiger reserves in Central India like,
 - **Tadoba-Andhari Tiger reserve** in Maharashtra,
 - **Indravati Tiger Reserve** in Chhattisgarh,
 - Indirectly with the **Kawal** and **Nagarjuna Sagar** in **Telangana** and **Andhra Pradesh** and, **Achanakmar Tiger reserve** in **Chhattisgarh**.
 - It is also connected to important tiger bearing areas like **Umred-Karhandla sanctuary** and Brahampuri Division (Maharashtra).
- **Flora:**

The major forest type is "Southern Tropical Dry Deciduous Forest".

 - Few thorny plants are also found.
 - **Bamboo** occurs in abundance.
- **Fauna:**
 - Large Carnivores such as **leopards** and smaller carnivores like wild dogs, wolf jackals, jungle cats and also the good population of **sloth bears** are seen.
 - The important herbivore includes **Cheetal, Sambar, Nilgai, Chousingha, Barking deer, Wild pig and Indian gaur**. Mouse deer has also been recorded from the area.
 - More than 300 species of birds have been reported from the area.
- **Other Protected Areas in Maharashtra:**
 - Sahyadri Tiger Reserve.
 - **Melghat Tiger reserve**.
 - Great Indian Bustard Sanctuary.
 - Karnala Bird Sanctuary.
 - Sanjay Gandhi National Park.
 - **Pench National Park**.



Source: IE