



## Haryana Forest Census | Haryana | 18 Apr 2024

### Why in News?

According to the first state-wide tree census there are around **4.1 crore trees outside designated forests in Haryana**, with **neem, shisham, pipal, bargad and eucalyptus** being the most common species.

### Key Points

- Approximately 150 surveyors, taxonomists, and technical staff were engaged in the project for a duration of 13 months to assist authorities in making well-informed decisions regarding **green cover management in the state**.
  - It provides **data on the number of trees in each district outside forest areas**. The **highest tree counts** were found in Yamunanagar, Ambala, Sirsa, Bhiwani, and Hisar.
  - Faridabad had the **lowest count**, with Kurukshetra, Palwal, Gurgaon, and Rohtak following suit.
- Covering only 6.7% of its total area, **Haryana has the smallest forest and tree cover in India**. The [National Forest Policy](#) aims for a 20% coverage for each state.
  - Out of 22 districts in Haryana, 21 have less than 20% forest and tree cover.
  - Karnal ranks the lowest with 1.8%, Panchkula tops the list with 47.4%, and Gurgaon stands sixth at 12.9%.
- The state is witnessing a rapid decline in tree cover too, as reported by the [Forest Survey of India](#), with a 140 sq km reduction in the tree cover (excluding forest area) from 2019 to 2020.
  - Forest department officials are planning to enhance conservation efforts using census data.
  - They are advocating that the government earmark at least 25% of panchayat and common lands for plantations, institutions should have 33% of their area under tree cover, and urban local bodies should focus on developing green spaces in cities, drawing inspiration from Hyderabad's initiatives.
  - Emphasizing the importance of high-quality seedlings, officials stressed that using them is crucial for ensuring the survival and growth of trees.

### National Forest Policy

- India's forests are currently governed by the **National Forest Policy, 1988**
- It has environmental balance and livelihood at its centre.
- **Salient Features and Goals:**
  - Maintenance of environmental stability through preservation and restoration of ecological balance.
  - Conservation of Natural Heritage (existing).
  - Checking Soil Erosion and Denudation in catchment areas of rivers, lakes, and reservoirs.
  - Checking extension of sand dunes in desert areas of Rajasthan and along coastal tracts.
  - Substantially increasing Forest/Tree Cover through Afforestation and Social Forestry.
  - Taking steps to meet requirements of fuel, wood, fodder, minor forest produces, soil and timber of Rural and Tribal Population.
  - Increasing the productivity of Forests to meet National Needs.
  - Encouraging efficient utilization of Forest Produce and Optimum Use of Wood (Timber).
  - Generation of Work Opportunities, the involvement of Women.

## Forest Survey of India

- The **Forest Survey of India (FSI), Dehradun** has been conducting **biennial (once every two years)** assessments of **forest cover since 1987**, and the findings are published in the **India State of Forest Report (ISFR)**.
- As per the latest assessment in **ISFR 2021**, India's total forest and tree cover stands at **8,09,537 square kilometers, which accounts for 24.62%** of the country's geographical area.
- Notably, this represents an **increase of 2261 square kilometers compared to the ISFR 2019 assessment**, indicating positive strides in forest conservation efforts.

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## Athletics Federation of India (AFI) | Haryana | 18 Apr 2024

### Why in News?

The [Athletics Federation of India](#) has **disaffiliated 16 district associations** across the country for failing to send teams for the **National inter-district junior athletics meet held in Ahmedabad**.

### Key Points

- The disaffiliated districts (with name of State/UT association) are **Panchkula** (Haryana), Budgam, Ramban & Shopian (all J&K), Lohardaga (Jhkd), Kalpeni (Lakshadweep), East Jaintia Hills, East Khasi Hills & Ri-Bhoi (all Meghalaya), Harda & Neemuch (both MP), Ferozpur & Fazilka (both Punjab), Jhalawar (Raj), Krishnagiri (TN), Purba Medinipur (WB).
- As per the AFI constitution, the **suspended districts will be removed and fresh associations will be formed**.
  - The State associations have been asked to take appropriate action, in consultation with the AFI, and form the new district units.

### Athletics Federation of India (AFI)

- It is the apex body for running and managing athletics in India.
- It is a non-governmental and non-profitable autonomous body.
- It is affiliated to the World Athletics, the **Asian Athletics Association (AAA)**, and the [Indian Olympic Association](#).
- It was formerly called the Amateur Athletic Federation of India (AAFI).
- The AFI has as many as **32** affiliated state units and institutional units.
- It came into **existence in 1946**, and the federation organises the National Championships, **trains the Indian Athletics National Campers**, selects the Indian Athletics Teams for various international competitions, including the **Olympics, Asian Games, CWG, World Championships, Asian Championships**, and other international meets, conducts the National Championships for various age categories.
  - The AFI conducts **international and national championships** and various meets to promote the sport, popularise it amongst the masses, and make athletics commercially attractive for the further growth of the athlete and the sport.
  - The federation also **supervises and assists its state units** in their activities, plans and **sets up special coaching camps, coaches training**, and takes initiatives for development programmes and **grass root promotion of athletics in India**.

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## Uttar Pradesh Leads India in GI Tags | Uttar Pradesh | 18 Apr 2024

### Why in News?

With six new additions, **Uttar Pradesh** retains its position as the state with the most [GI-tagged products in India](#), reaching a total of **75**.

### Key Points

- This comprises the renowned '**Tirangi Barfi**' from **Kashi**, a tri coloured sweet that was traded to make a statement by **freedom fighters** in the [Quit India Movement](#).
- The other products that received the certification in Uttar Pradesh include **Banaras Metal Casting Craft, Lakhimpur Kheri Tharu Embroidery, Bareilly Cane and Bamboo Craft, Bareilly Zardozi Craft, and Pilkhuwa Hand Block Print Textile**.
  - With the inclusion of these six new items, Uttar Pradesh remains the leading state in India with the highest number of GI-tagged products.
  - **Tamil Nadu comes next with 58 GI products.**

### Geographical Indication (GI) tag

- **About:**
  - A GI tag is a **name or sign used on certain products** that correspond to a specific geographical location or origin.
  - The GI tag ensures that only the **authorised users or those residing in the geographical territory** are allowed to use the popular product name.
  - It also protects the product from being copied or imitated by others.
  - A registered GI is valid for 10 years.
  - GI registration is overseen by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
- **Legal Framework and Obligations:**
  - The **Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999** seeks to provide for the registration and better protection of geographical indications relating to goods in India.
  - It is governed and directed by the **WTO Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS)**.
  - Furthermore, the significance of protecting industrial property and geographical indications **as integral components of intellectual property** is acknowledged and emphasised in Articles 1(2) and 10 of the Paris Convention.

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## Surya Tilak Project at Ayodhya | Uttar Pradesh | 18 Apr 2024

### Why in News?

[Indian Institute of Astrophysics \(IIA\)](#), an Autonomous body under the Department of science and Technology played a crucial role in the **Surya Tilak Project at Ayodhya**.

## Key Points

- Under the Surya Tilak project, **sunlight was brought on the forehead of [Sri Ram Lalla](#) at 12 noon** on the occasion of [Sri Ram Navami](#) in the Chaitra month.
- IIA team carried out the **calculation of the sun position, design and optimisation of the optical system**, and performed the integration & alignment at the site.
  - The IIA team led the calculation for identification of the calendar days of Sri Ram Navami for **one cycle of 19 years** followed by its repetition, estimation of the position in the sky on the calendar dates of the Ram Navami.
  - They also led the design of an **opto-mechanical system** to bring the sunlight from the top of the temple to the forehead of the idol, **estimation of the size, shape and location of mirrors and lenses** in the system for sufficient light to fall on the idol for about 6 minutes.
- The **device has been manufactured by Optica, Bangalore & implementation** of the opto-mechanical system at the site is being done by [CSIR-CBRI \(Council of Scientific and Industrial Research-Central Building Research Institute\)](#).

## Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA)

- The IIA is a premier research institute in India dedicated to the study of astronomy, astrophysics, and related fields. Wholly financed by the **Department of Science and Technology, Government of India**.
- It has several **observational facilities**, including the **Vainu Bappu Observatory** in Kavalur, Tamil Nadu, the **Gauribidanur Radio Observatory** in Karnataka, and the [Hanle Observatory](#) in Ladakh, Jammu, and Kashmir.

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## Ashwagandha | Madhya Pradesh | 18 Apr 2024

### Why in News?

**Ashwagandha** is growing in popularity, both in India and abroad. It is an **evergreen shrub found in parts of India, Africa, and the Middle East**.

### Key Points

- **Ashwagandha (*Withania somnifera*)** is a medicinal herb. It is reputed as an immunity enhancer.
- It is classified as **an adaptogen**, which means that it can **help the body to manage stress**.
- Ashwagandha also boosts brain function and lowers blood sugar and helps fight symptoms of anxiety and depression.
- Ashwagandha has shown clinical success in **treating both acute and chronic [rheumatoid arthritis](#)**.
  - **Rheumatoid arthritis (RA)** is an autoimmune disease that can **cause joint pain and damage throughout your body**.
  - An autoimmune disease is a condition in which your immune system mistakenly attacks your body.
- Being **hardy and drought tolerant** species with its enormous **biocompounds**, its usage is forever regarded and continues to enjoy the monopoly in many parts of India, particularly in **Madhya Pradesh**.
  - It grows in **dry parts in sub-tropical regions**. Rajasthan, Punjab, Haryana, Uttar

Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh are the **major Ashwagandha producing states** of the country.

- In Madhya Pradesh it is cultivated in more than 5000 hectares.
- The estimated production of Ashwagandha roots in India is more than 1500 tonnes and the annual requirement is about 7000 tonnes necessitating the increase in its cultivation and higher production.



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## Rebuilding a Hydropower Project in Uttarakhand | Uttarakhand | 18 Apr 2024

### Why in News?

The **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC)** has started the process of granting environmental clearance to **rebuild a hydropower project** in the upper reaches of the Himalayas in Uttarakhand that was almost completely **washed away during the 2013 flash floods** that killed over 6,000 people.

### Key Points

- The ministry's expert appraisal committee for river valley and hydroelectric projects approved the grant of terms of reference (ToR) to the [Phata Byung Hydroelectric Project](#) (76 MW).
- The Phata Byung project aggravated the damage caused by the **2013** cloudburst and flash floods by constricting the flow of **the Mandakini river**.

### The Mandakini River

- It is a tributary of the **Alaknanda River** in Uttarakhand.
- The river runs for approximately 81 kilometers between the **Rudraprayag and Sonprayag** areas and emerges from the **Chorabari Glacier**.
- The Mandakini merges with river Songanga at Sonprayag and **flows past the Madhyamaheshwar temple at Ukhimath**.
- At the end of its course it drains into the Alaknanda, which flows into the **Ganges**.

