

FORTUNE Prelims Precise Compilation Volume I



HISTORY & CULTURE

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Toppers in Top 100



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Maha Kumbh



- The **45-day-long Maha Kumbh** in Prayagraj, is listed by **UNESCO** as the **largest peaceful religious congregation**.
- Devotees take a “Shahi Snan” at the Sangam, where the Ganga, Yamuna, and mythical Saraswati converge.
- Held rotationally every three years in **Prayagraj, Haridwar, Ujjain, and Nasik**, its schedule is based on planetary alignments, mainly of the Sun and Jupiter.
- The **Ardh Kumbh** occurs every six years in Haridwar and Prayagraj, the **Purna Kumbh** every 12 years in all four cities, and the **Maha Kumbh**, the rarest, every 144 years in Prayagraj.
- Mythologically, it marks the **spill of Amrit from the Samudra Manthan**.
- **Adi Shankaracharya**, in the 8th century CE, institutionalized these religious gatherings, founding the **monastery system and 13 Akharas**, whose warrior saints with tridents and swords are a key attraction
- Kumbh Mela is recognized by UNESCO as an **intangible cultural heritage of humanity**.

Gangasagar Mela

- The Gangasagar Mela is a Hindu festival that takes place annually on **Makar Sankranti** (Sun entering Capricorn) at the **Sagar Dwip** (Island) in West Bengal.
- It is also known as the **Gangasagar Snan or Gangasagar Yatra**.

- The festival is considered the **second-largest religious gathering** in India, following the Kumbh Mela.
- **Sagar Island** is located at the **confluence of the Hooghly River and the Bay of Bengal**.
- Mela is organised near the **Kapil Muni ashram**.
- Devotees pray to **Lord Surya, Goddess Ganga and Kapil Muni**.
- Gangasagar finds mention in the **Mahabharata** and **Kalidasa’s Raghuvamsa**

Kanuma Panduga Festival

- **Kanuma Panduga**, is a key part of **Makar Sankranti** in Andhra Pradesh, dedicated to **cattle worship**.
- It marks the sun’s northward journey, symbolizing **longer days and the arrival of spring**.
- Held on the **third day of Sankranti**, it honors **Lord Krishna**, who protected villagers and cattle by lifting **Govardhan Hill**.
- Farmers bathe, adorn, and worship their **decorated cattle** at temples.
- The festival also features **bullfights and wagers**, reflecting **community spirit and tradition**.



Bathousim



- The **Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR) autonomous administration** in Assam has officially included '**Bathouism**' as a religion option in application forms.
- **Bathouism** is the traditional faith of the **Bodos**, the largest plains tribe of Assam, residing on the **north bank of the Brahmaputra** with Bhutan's foothills to the north.
- The term '**Ba**' (five) and '**thou**' (deep thought) represents **five elements: Air (Ba), Sun (San), Earth (Ha), Fire (Or), and Sky (Okhrang)**, similar to **Panchatatva in Hinduism**.
- **Bathoubwrai**, the supreme deity, is symbolized by the **Sijou plant (Euphorbia splendens)**, central to the faith.

BTR is an **autonomous region** created under the **Bodo Peace Accord 2020** and is administered by the **Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC)**.

The **BTC government** has legislative, executive, and financial powers over subjects delegated under the **Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution**.

It governs the four districts of **Kokrajhar, Baksa, Chirang, and Udalguri**, primarily inhabited by the **Bodo community** and other ethnic groups.

Herath

- The Herath festival, celebrated by **Kashmiri Pandits**, marks their unique observance of **Mahashivratri**.

- Beginning on the 13th day of **Phalgun** (February/March) and continuing until the new moon, its name derives from "**Har-Ratri**" or "**night of Hara**" (Lord Shiva).
- It symbolizes the divine union of Shiva and Parvati.
- A key ritual, **Vatuk Pooja**, involves placing a kalash filled with water and walnuts for worship.
- The festival also features "**Salam**", which is a unique tradition where **Kashmiri Pandits exchange greetings and good wishes with their Muslim neighbors** the day after Mahashivratri.

Ramman Festival



- The **annual religious festival** of Uttarakhand, Ramman, was recently celebrated at the **Bhumiya Devta Temple**.
- Ramman is an annual religious folk festival celebrated in the twin villages of **Saloor-Dungra, Uttarakhand**, in honour of **Bhumiya Devta** after Baisakhi.
- Recognised by UNESCO as **Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2009**, it features traditional mask dances based on episodes from the **Ramayana**, performed without dialogue to the rhythm of songs and drums.
- The festival dates back to the **8th century**, linked to **Adi Shankaracharya and the construction of Badrinath Temple** and rise of Vaishnavism.
- Over 18 handmade wooden masks—crafted from **Himalayan Birch and mulberry**—are used, including the **25-kg Narasin Devta mask**, which is worshipped before the festival.
- Only the **Bhandari community** has the rights to don this mask

Pushkar Kumbh Mela

- The Pushkar Kumbh Mela was recently celebrated in Uttarakhand after a 12-year hiatus.
- The festival is being held at **Keshav Prayag in Mana village**, near Badrinath Dham, at the confluence of the **Alaknanda and Saraswati rivers**.
- The Pushkar Kumbh is a significant event in Hindu tradition, attracting Vaishnavite devotees, particularly from southern India.
- Pilgrims believe that participating in the festival **purifies the soul and grants moksha** (liberation).
- Mana village holds deep spiritual significance, as it's believed to be associated with **Maharishi Ved Vyas**, who composed the Mahabharata while meditating at Keshav Prayag.
- It is also believed that South Indian scholars **Ramanujacharya and Madhvacharya** received divine knowledge from Goddess Saraswati at this location.

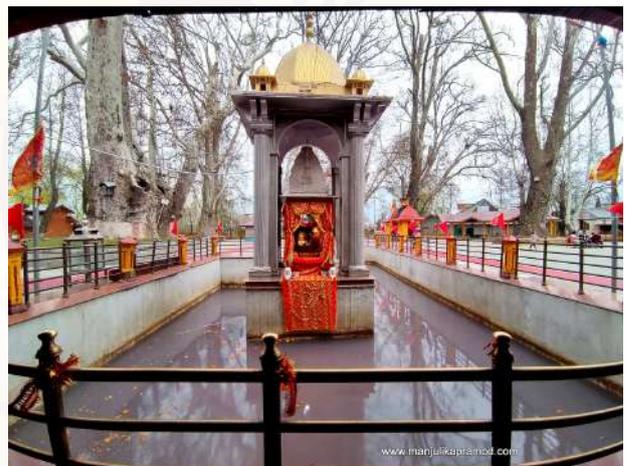
Santara/Sallekhana

- A three-year-old girl with a brain tumour recently died after being initiated into Santhara, also known as Sallekhana—a **Jain ritual of voluntary fasting unto death** for spiritual purification and detachment.
- Practised **since ancient times**, it involves gradually reducing food and water intake, with no desire for rebirth or heaven, only meditation on Arhat.
- **Arhats or Arihants**, including the **Tirthankaras**, are **not gods** in the typical theistic sense.
- They are enlightened beings who have **conquered all inner passions** and attained **Kevala Jnana** (infinite knowledge), but are **still living**.
- After death, they become **Siddhas**, liberated souls who reside in **Siddha Lok**, free from the cycle of birth and death.
- Santara is undertaken with full awareness and spiritual intent, typically when a person faces **old age, incurable illness, or unbearable hardship**.

- The goal is to achieve **detachment from the body and worldly desires**, purify the soul, and prepare for **liberation (moksha)**.
- Historical figures like Bhadrabahu and Chandragupta Maurya observed it.
- The 2nd-century Sangam text **Sirupanchamoolam** also refers to the practice.
- In 2015, the Rajasthan High Court banned Santhara under IPC Sections 306 and 309, but the Supreme Court stayed the order after appeals by Jain groups.

Sallekhana, meaning 'thinning out' or 'shedding,' emphasizes the gradual renunciation of bodily and emotional attachments, while **Santara**, meaning 'passing through,' highlights the spiritual transition from life to death with detachment—yet both refer to the same Jain practice of voluntary fasting unto death.

Zyeth Atham



- Zyeth Atham (**Jyeshtha Ashtami**), a significant festival for the **Kashmiri Pandit** community, was recently celebrated.
- Observed on the eighth day of the waxing moon (**growing or increasing in size**) in the Hindu month of **Jyeshtha**, it honors **Goddess Ragnya Devi (Kheer Bhawani)**.
- Kheer Bhawani is an incarnation of Mata Durga and their Kuldevi.
- Devotees visit her temple in **Tulmulla, Ganderbal, Jammu and Kashmir**, offering '**kheer**' (rice and milk pudding), from which the temple gets its name.
- Mentioned in **Kalhana's 12th-century 'Rajatarangini'**, the temple is built over a sacred spring amidst chinar trees.

- **Legend** says Ragnya Devi once was worshipped by King Ravana, but was displeased and left Lanka and settled in Tulmulla with Lord Hanuman's aid.

Ambubachi Mahayog



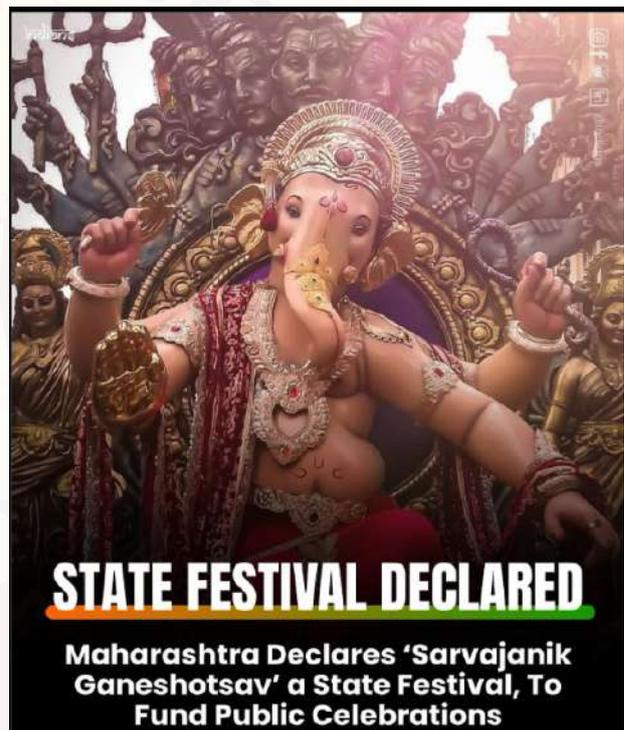
- The **four-day Ambubachi Mela** began recently at the historic **Kamakhya Temple**, a Shakti Peetha and a centre of tantric worship in Nilachal Hills of Guwahati, Assam.
- Shakti Peethas are revered centres of Shaktism—some traditions list 51 of them—where parts of Goddess Sati's body are believed to have fallen, and where the goddess is worshipped as the supreme deity.
- The Ambubachi Mela marks the **annual menstruation cycle of Goddess Kamakhya**, symbolising the power of creation and fertility.
- As per tradition, the **temple remains closed during these four days**, signifying the goddess's period of rest.
- **"Ambubachi"** means **spoken with water** and it also implies that the rains expected during this month make the earth fertile and ready for procreation.

Kanwar Yatra 2025

- Kanwar Yatra is a significant **annual** pilgrimage in India, primarily undertaken by devotees of **Lord Shiva**, known as **Kanwariyas** during the Hindu month of **Shravan**(July-August) .
- The term **"Kanwar"** refers to a decorated bamboo pole with two pots attached typically filled with **water from the Ganges River**, carried by devotees during the Kanwar Yatra.

- Devotees (called **Kanwariyas**) walk barefoot or travel long distances to fetch the water from the Ganga and carry it to their home or to pour over a **Shiva Linga** in a nearby temple as **Jalabhishek** — especially in places like Haridwar, Gaumukh, or Sultanganj.
- Kanwar Yatra traces its roots to ancient Hindu mythology, particularly to the **Samudra Manthan** (the churning of the ocean).
- During this process a deadly poison emerged and hence Lord Shiva, in his infinite compassion, consumed the poison, earning him the title **Neelkanth (the blue-throated one)**.
- To soothe his burning throat, **devotees offered him holy water from the Ganges**, an act believed to have birthed the tradition of the Kanwar Yatra

Sarvajanik Ganeshotsav



- The **Maharashtra** government officially declared **'Sarvajanik (public) Ganeshotsav'** as the state festival.
- It was started by **Lokmanya Tilak** in 1893 designed for Hindu social unity, nationalism, and self-respect during the colonial era.
- Ganeshotsav, also called Ganesh Chaturthi or Vinayaka Chaturthi, is a festival celebrating the **birthday of Hindu deity Ganesh**, the remover of obstacles

- The festival is marked with the **installation of Ganesha's murtis** privately in homes and publicly on elaborate pandals.
- It has been recorded as a **public celebration since the time of Chatrapati Shivaji** in Maharashtra but lost state patronage under British rule with its anti-public assembly legislation in 1892.
- Sweets like **modak** are offered to the deity and then distributed as **prasada** to the community.
- The festival concludes on the tenth day, **Ananta Chaturdashi**, with a procession where the idol (**murti**) is carried with music and chanting before being immersed in a body of water, a ritual known as **visarjana**.

Ramlila



- During a community event that showcased Ramlila in **Trinidad and Tobago**, Prime Minister Narendra Modi called Lord Ram “**the divine link beyond oceans**”.
- Ramlila, literally “**Rama's play**”, is a performance of the Ramayana epic in a series of scenes that include song, narration, recital and dialogue.
- It is performed across northern India during the festival of **Dussehra** based on **Ramacharitmanas** by **Tulsidas**.
- Ramlila recalls the battle between **Rama and Ravana** and consists of a series of dialogues between gods, sages and the faithful.
- Most performances last for **10-12 days**, though some, like the famous one in Ramnagar, can go on for an entire month.
- Ramlila was added to **UNESCO's list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2008**, recognizing its global cultural importance.

Durga Puja



- Durga Puja was celebrated across India during the Sharad (autumn) Navratri festival
- Durga Puja is a **ten-day festival**, with the main rituals taking place over the last five days: **Shashthi, Saptami, Ashtami, Navami, and Dashami**.
- The festival honors **Goddess Durga**, regarded as the cosmic feminine energy or ‘**Shakti**’, who was created by the gods to defeat the demon **Mahishasura**, who could only be killed by a woman.
- Their battle lasted **nine days and nights**, symbolizing the triumph of **good over evil**, which is celebrated on **Dashami**.
- Devotees worship **elaborate clay idols of Durga** in beautifully decorated **pandals**, participate in cultural programs, and offer prayers, making it a time of **community gathering, devotion, and celebration**.
- In recognition of its cultural significance, Durga Puja was **inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2021**.

Navaratri (nine holy nights) is celebrated **four times a year—Sharad (autumn), Chaitra (spring), Magha (winter), and Ashada (monsoon)—honors the Divine Feminine (Devi or Shakti) in her various forms** including **Durga, Lakshmi, and Saraswati**, with Sharad Navaratri being the most prominent, culminating in Durga Puja in eastern India and Chaitra is the Hindu New Year..

Tendong Lho Rum Faat



- Sikkim recently celebrated **Tendong Lho Rum Faat** (Prayer of the Tendong Mountain), a Lepcha festival thanking Idburum, their deity, and the **sacred Tendong Hill**.
- According to legend, the hill saved Lepcha ancestors from a **great flood**.
- Believed to be of **volcanic origin**, it symbolizes divine protection.
- During the festival, Lepchas build **nine-stone models** of the hill outside their homes, perform traditional dances, and wear masks to seek blessings.

Sunrise Festival



- Arunachal Pradesh is set to host **its inaugural Sunrise Festival in Dong village**, Anjaw district, from December 29, 2025, to January 2, 2026.
- Dong is renowned as the **easternmost village in India**, where the first rays of the sun touch the land each day
 - 📍 Dong is situated at an **altitude of 1,240 metres** above the mean sea level, at the **tri-junction of India, China, and Myanmar**.
- The event will combine **traditional cuisine, folk culture, adventure activities, and eco-tourism**.
- India celebrates **several Sunrise Festivals**, all centred on greeting and respecting the rising

sun, but expressed differently across regions.

- In the North-East, **Nyokum** in Arunachal/ Nagaland, and **Wangala** in Meghalaya involve tribal rituals, harvest prayers, music, and dance at sunrise.
- In the Himalayan regions, sun worship is tied to agriculture, New Year, and spiritual rituals, as seen in **Losar** in Sikkim and Ladakh.

Saduma na Garba

- **Saduma na Garba**, a 200 year old ritual that takes place every year on the **eighth night of Navratri**, was held at **Sadu Mata Ni Pol in Ahmedabad**.
- It commemorates **Saduben, a woman from centuries ago** who faced a Mughal nobleman's advances and sought help from her community.
- When no one protected her, she tragically lost her child and, in grief and anger, cursed the men, predicting their descendants would be cowardly, before **committing sati**.
- So every year, **men of the Barot community perform Garba in sarees** to show penance and respect for Saduben's curse.

Athachamayam Procession



- The 2025 Athachamayam procession in **Thrippunitura** marked the start of **Kerala's 10-day Onam festival**, celebrated on the Atham star of the Malayalam month Chingam.
- This historic parade, once the **headquarters of the Cochin Maharajas**, commemorates the victory of the Kochi king.
- It showcases **Kerala's folk arts**, including theyyam, chendamelam, arjunanrutham, karakattam, padayani, and pulikali, symbolising the arrival of King Mahabali and the Vamana avatar.

Deepavali Intangible Cultural Heritage

- Deepavali (Diwali), the festival of lights, has been inscribed on **UNESCO's List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) of Humanity**.
- Celebrated across India, it marks the **harvest season** and symbolises the victory of light over darkness and good over evil.
- **Deepavali (Diwali)** is celebrated by Hindus, Jains, Sikhs and some Buddhists.

- For Hindus, it marks events such as **Lord Rama's return to Ayodhya** or the worship of **Goddess Lakshmi**; for Jains, it commemorates **Lord Mahavira's nirvana**; and for Sikhs, it celebrates **Guru Hargobind Ji's release from imprisonment**.
- The ICH List, created under the **2003 UNESCO Convention**, safeguards living traditions, and India already has several inscribed elements such as **Durga Puja, Garba, Kumbh Mela, Yoga, Ramlila and Vedic chanting**.

TRIBAL COMMUNITIES & INDIGENOUS CULTURE

The Hatti Tribes



- The **Boda Tyohar** festival, the largest annual celebration of Himachal Pradesh's Hatti tribes, was celebrated.
- Also called **Magho ko Tyohar**, it spans a month and includes three **mini-festivals**—Bhatioj, Khoda, and Boidoot—highlighting **women's importance** in Hatti culture.
- At the **76th Republic Day parade**, the Hatti tribe's ancient folk dance **Sinhtoo** was performed.
- A **mask dance**, it features artists wearing handcrafted animal masks, with lion-masked performers taking center stage.
- The Hatti community's renowned folk dance remains **Natti**, which includes variants like **Sirmauri Natti and Kinnauri Natti**.
- Hatti tribe was accorded **Scheduled Tribe** status in 2023.
- They follow a **rigid caste system** and has a traditional council called **Khumpli** that decided village matters

Mannan Community

- Raman Rajamannan, **tribal king of the Mannan Community** from Kerala, attended the Republic Day celebrations in Delhi.
- The Mannan tribe, with around 3,000 people, **resides in 46 settlements across Idukki**.
- Originally from Tamil Nadu, they **fled during Chola-Pandya wars** and settled in Idukki's forests, forming a small kingdom.
- Following a **matrilineal system**, most work as farmers or daily wage laborers, with some in forest jobs.
- **Rajamannan, the first literate king**, holds an Economics degree.
- He has no palace, official vehicle, or civil authority but oversees community affairs with a **50-member council**, including four deputies and a prince.

Banjara Community

- Lok Sabha Speaker addressed the Banjara community's celebration of their **286th birth anniversary of Sant Sewalal Maharaj in Delhi**.
- The Banjara (Labana, Lambadi), a historically nomadic trading group likely from Rajasthan, have a **distinct "Gor" identity** and rich culture.

- While multilingual, “Banjara” is widely used (except “Banijagaru” in Karnataka) with a significant presence across central and southern India.
- Sant **Sewalal Maharaj** (born 1739 in Karnataka) was a key social reformer and spiritual leader who travelled India, using his knowledge to reform tribal communities.
- His revered Samadhi Sthal, “**Banjara Kashi,**” is in **Maharashtra.**

Sahariya Tribe

- Recently, researchers from BHU have uncovered a genetic connection explaining the high tuberculosis (TB) rate among the Sahariya tribe.
- They are classified as a **Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG)** and mainly found in **Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh.**
- They have a total six-lakh population (Census 2011) also called by the names **Seher, Sair, Savar, Saonar, Sahra,** etc.
- They mostly live in a separate basti in the village, which is called ‘**Seharana**’.
- They are known for their dance, the **Saharia Swang**, which is performed during the month of **Holi** where a **male dressed in female attire** dances around the male performers.

The Apatanis Tribe



- Reports suggest that Apatani women of **Ziro Valley, Arunachal Pradesh,** are the **last generation** to wear traditional **facial tattoos and wooden nose plugs.**
- The **Apatani tribe** (also known as **Tanw or Apa Tani**) live in the **Ziro Valley** of **Lower Subansiri district,** Arunachal Pradesh, in the eastern

Himalayas.

- They are renowned for their **unique wet rice cultivation system,** practiced without animals or machinery, which earned Ziro Valley recognition by **UNESCO** as a potential **World Heritage Site.**
- Traditionally, Apatani women wore **facial tattoos (Tippei)** and **wooden nose plugs (Yaping Hullo)** — practices that began as protection against abduction by rival tribes and later became symbols of identity and pride
- The **tattooing process** involved using a bamboo needle and soot-based pigment, while the **wooden plugs** were inserted after thorough cleaning to prevent infection.
- However, by the **1970s,** the **Indian government banned** these practices, viewing them as **regressive** and as barriers to women’s **social acceptance and employment.**

Siddi Tribe



- President Droupadi Murmu recently interacted with members of the Siddi community, a primitive tribal group with **African roots, in Gujarat’s Junagadh district.**
- Also called **Habshis or Sheedi,** they are a **large Afro-descendant community of tribes** with an estimated 250,000 members in the country with **African roots from the Bantu community.**
- They are believed to have **first come to India in the 7th century** with Arab merchants and in the 16th century, they arrived with the Portuguese and the British, largely as slaves.
- They are scattered across **Karnataka, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Goa and Tamil Nadu,** often in isolated villages and interior forests.
- Siddis are known for folk music and dances such as Dhamal and Rasda, with men performing the **Dhamal dance.**

- They are recognised as a **Scheduled Tribe (ST) in five regions**, also as a **Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG)** and **speak regional languages, Gujarati, Konkani, Marathi, Kannada.**
- They **practise different religions**, such as Christianity, Hinduism and Islam, but some cultural practices and rituals are shared, such as remembering elders (hireru or hiri-yaru) once a year.

Maram Naga Tribe

- Under the Prime Minister's **Jan Man Scheme**, the Centre has sanctioned a Rs 9 crore development program for the **Maram Naga tribe.**
- The Maram Naga are a significant **Tibeto-Burman tribal group** within the larger Naga people, primarily **residing in the Senapati district of Manipur.**
- They speak the **Maram language (using Roman script)**, practice **shifting (Jhum) cultivation** as their main occupation, and celebrate major **festivals** like **Punghi** (July), **Kanghi** (December), and **Mangkang** (April, dedicated to women)
- The **Jan Man Scheme** is a centrally sponsored scheme under the Ministry of Tribal Affairs aimed at the **development of tribal and marginalized communities** in tribal areas.
- The Maram Nagas maintain an **age-old monarchy.**
- While most have embraced **Christianity**, some still follow a traditional animistic religion.



Olo Tribe



- The **Assam Rifles' Khonsa Battalion** recently launched a skill-based empowerment programme under **Operation Sadbhavana** for women of the **Olo tribe in Arunachal Pradesh's Tirap district.**
- The Olo, also called **Oloh or Lazu Naga**, inhabit parts of Arunachal Pradesh and Myanmar, sharing language, religion, and traditions.
- A subgroup of the Tangshang Naga, they have a **rich oral tradition, ancestral worship, and a patriarchal clan-based social system.**
- Historically known for **facial tattoos and headhunting**, they celebrate the **Woraang (Hornbill) Festival**, featuring songs, dances, and rituals symbolising prosperity and community.
- **Operation Sadbhavana** is an Indian Army initiative that promotes community welfare, education, healthcare, infrastructure, and skill development in border areas.

Girmitiyas

- Prime Minister Modi announced that India is actively working on creating a **comprehensive database of the Girmitiya community.**
- The term "Girmithiyas," a **corruption of the English word "agreement,"** refers to Indian workers who were sent to **British colonies** like Fiji, Mauritius, and the Caribbean in the 19th and early 20th centuries.
 - ☞ The agreements specified the workers' length of stay in foreign parts and the conditions attached to their return to the British Raj.
- This system was established to **fill the labor shortage on plantations** after the **abolition of slavery** in 1833.

- Girmithiyas are also called **Jahajis** implying 'people of ship' or 'people coming via ship'.
- Despite facing brutal working and living

conditions, these laborers and their descendants have **preserved their cultural traditions**, making significant contributions to the societies they settled in and strengthening India's global ties

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES & PREHISTORIC CULTURES

Mehrgarh



- A team of international scientists has revised the age of **South Asia's oldest known farming settlement, Mehrgarh**, from 8000 BCE to 5200 BCE.
- Mehrgarh is a **Neolithic** archaeological site in **Balochistan, Pakistan**.
- It lies near the **Bolan Pass, west of the Indus River**, between Quetta, Kalat, and Sibi.
- The site was discovered in **1974 by the French Archaeological Mission**, led by archaeologists Jean-François Jarrige and Catherine Jarrige.
- For decades, Mehrgarh was cited **as evidence that agriculture may have arisen locally**, with domestication of plants like barley and animals such as zebu cattle thought to have occurred independently in South Asia.
- But the **new radiocarbon timeline suggests** that the earliest inhabitants of Mehrgarh were already practicing **a fully developed farming lifestyle**, including the use of West Asian domesticates, when they arrived.

Keeladi Archaeological Site



- Researchers have conducted **3D facial reconstructions** of two ancient skulls from the **Keeladi site** in Tamil Nadu's Sivaganga district, near Madurai along the **Vaigai River**.
- The excavations from 2015 prove that an urban civilisation existed in Tamil Nadu in the **Sangam age on the banks of the Vaigai river & hence called the Vaigai Valley Civilisation**.
- The Sangam age is a period of history in ancient Tamil Nadu which was believed to be from the third century BCE to the third century CE.
- Excavations by the **Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) and Tamil Nadu State Archaeology Department (TNSDA)** have pushed the Sangam age further back between **sixth century BCE and first century BCE**.
- Keeladi could also provide crucial evidence for understanding the **missing links** of the Iron Age (12th century BCE to sixth century BCE) to the Early Historic Period (sixth century BCE to fourth century BCE) and subsequent cultural developments.

Sirpur Archaeological Site



- **Chhattisgarh** plans to nominate **Sirpur site in Mahasamund** for UNESCO World Heritage status.
- Sirpur, a 5th–12th century **multi-religious city on the Mahanadi River**, thrived under the **Panduvanshi and Somavamshi dynasties** and hosts Hindu temples (Shaiva and Vaishnava), Buddhist viharas, and Jain monuments.
- Excavations revealed 22 Shiva temples, five Vishnu temples, 10 Buddhist viharas, and three Jain viharas.
- Key highlights include the **7th-century brick Lakshmana Temple** with intricate carvings, the **Surang Tila Complex** with Shiva and Ganesha shrines on a high terrace, and the 8th-century **Teevardev Buddha Vihara** blending Buddhist and Hindu iconography.

- The **Mudumal Megalithic Menhirs** in **Telangana's** Narayanpet district, dating back **3,500-4,000 years**, have been added to India's tentative list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites.
- This site, **potentially South India's largest megalithic burial area**, features around 80 tall menhirs (10-14 ft), nearly 3,000 alignment stones in rows, and circular stone formations across 80 acres.
- Revered locally as **'Niluralla Thimmappa'** with one worshipped as Goddess Yellamma, these stones demonstrate a connection to ancient funerary rites and, significantly, align with solar events like equinoxes and solstices, suggesting their use for calendrical calculations and astronomical observation.

Ursa Major, Latin for "Great Bear," is a prominent constellation in the northern sky and the third largest overall, covering over 3% of the night sky.

It is best known for containing the Big Dipper asterism, a group of seven bright stars forming a distinctive scoop-like shape.

The Big Dipper has been used for navigation and timekeeping for centuries

Mudumal Menhirs

CUBOID ROCK MARKS URSA MAJOR

• India submitted dossier on Mudumal's standing stones to Unesco on Feb 11

• Menhirs theories range from marking celestial events to sacrificial sites



• Mudumal stands out for its precise alignment of menhir

• This indicates advanced mathematical & astronomical knowledge

• Cuboid rock signifies Ursa Major

Sarcophagus



- Recent **Accelerator Mass Spectrometry (AMS) dating** of a **sarcophagus** from Kilnamandi, Tamil Nadu, dates it to **1692 BCE**, placing it in the **Late Harappan period**.
- A **sarcophagus** is a **stone or terracotta coffin** used for burials, often containing **charcoal, pottery, and grave goods**, and the term comes from ancient Greek: **"sarx" (flesh) + "phagein" (to eat)**, literally meaning **"flesh-eating."**

- The **Late Harappan period** refers to the **final phase of the Indus Valley Civilization**, roughly **1900–1300 BCE**, after the **mature Harappan phase (2600–1900 BCE)**.
- During this time, **urban centers declined**, large cities were abandoned or reduced in size, and there was a **shift toward rural settlements and regional cultural practices**.
- The Kilnamandi sarcophagus provides insights into ancient Tamilakam's burial practices and culture.
- Findings include **etched carnelian beads** (from Gujarat/Maharashtra) and **graffiti-inscribed potsherds** with symbols ~90% similar to **Indus Valley signs**, indicating **south-north trade links** and pushing back Tamil Nadu's graffiti tradition.
- The Indian Navy inducted its first '**stitched ship**' built using the ancient **Tankai method**, reviving a 2,000-year-old Indian shipbuilding tradition.
- Inspired by the text **Yuktikalpataru** (9th century) and foreign accounts of Indian stitched ships, the ship named **INSV Kaundinya** is modeled after a ship in Ajanta cave paintings of 5th century CE.
- It was built under a tripartite pact between the Indian Navy, Ministry of Culture, and a Goa-based shipbuilder.
- **Tankai Method** uses stitched planks of teak/sal/mango wood tied with **coir ropes**, sealed with cotton, resin, and fish oil.
- **No metal fasteners** are used making the ships flexible, rust-resistant, and durable.

Accelerator Mass Spectrometry (AMS)

- AMS is a **high-precision radiocarbon dating method**.
- In **AMS**, all **carbon isotopes**— ^{12}C , ^{13}C , and ^{14}C —of a sample are **converted into ions and accelerated** using a particle accelerator and **then their mass is analysed**.
- The **radioactive ^{14}C** decreases over time to the **stable ^{12}C and ^{13}C** isotopes.
- Using AMS, scientists **count ^{14}C atoms directly** to calculate how long it has been since the organism died.
- AMS is more precise than traditional radiometric dating, which measures the **rate of ^{14}C decay** over time and needs **larger amounts** of sample material.

- Ships are built **hull-first, followed by ribs**—opposite of Western methods.
- Her sails display motifs of the **Gandabherunda and the Sun**, her bow bears a sculpted **Simha Yali**, and a symbolic Harappan style stone anchor adorns her deck, each element evoking the rich maritime traditions of ancient India.
- ★ **Note: Gandabherunda** is a two-headed bird symbol in Hindu mythology, particularly associated with Vishnu and the royal insignia of Mysore.
- Named after Kaundinya, the **legendary Indian mariner who sailed across the Indian Ocean to Southeast Asia**, the ship serves as a tangible symbol of India's long-standing traditions of maritime exploration, trade, and cultural exchange.

Tankai method: Stitched ship



Indus Script

- MK Stalin, the chief minister of Tamil Nadu, recently announced a **\$1m prize** for anyone who can crack the Indus script.
- The Indus script is the **earliest known writing system** developed in the Indian subcontinent, used by the **Indus Valley Civilization (c. 3300-1900 BCE)**.
- Most inscriptions are written from **right to left**, but some examples of **boustrophedon** (alternating direction) writing exist.

- It is said that the script was used mainly for commercial purposes and seals were mainly **used as tax stamps**, while the tablets were used as permits for tax collection, craft making or trading.



Challenges to deciphering the Indus script:

- ★ **Small number of scripts:** There are only about 4,000 of them, almost all on small objects such as seals, pottery and tablets.
- ★ **Brevity of each script:** Average length of about only five signs or symbols - with no long texts on walls, tablets or upright stone slabs.
- ★ **Not Bilingual:** There's also no bilingual artefact like the **Rosetta Stone**, which helped scholars decode Egyptian hieroglyphs.
- ★ **Such artefacts contain text in two languages,** offering a direct comparison between a known and unknown script.

Iron Age in South India

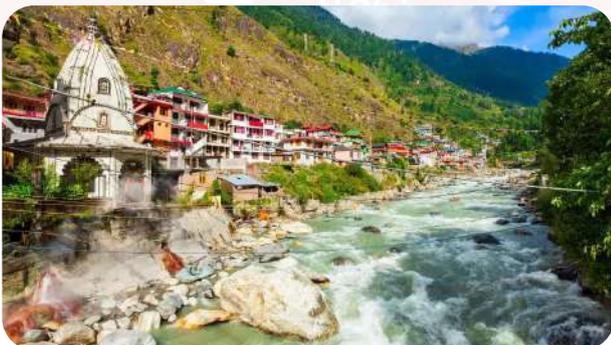
- The report Antiquity of Iron: Recent Radiometric Dates from Tamil Nadu reveals **evidence of iron use in Tamil Nadu dating back to 3345 BCE.**
- This challenges the belief that iron technology first emerged in Anatolia around 1300 BCE.
- Excavations at sites like **Sivagalai, Adichanallur, Mayiladumparai, and Kilnamandi** push India's Iron Age timeline further back from the previously estimated 1500–2000 BCE.

Radiometric dating measures the decay of radioactive isotopes to determine a material's age, using parent-daughter isotope ratios and half-lives to calculate time since formation.

It includes **Carbon-14 dating** (upto 50,000 years), **Uranium-Lead dating** (millions to billions of years) and **Potassium Argon dating** (thousands to billions of years)

TEMPLES, FORTS & SACRED SITES

Manikaran



- A proposal to transfer water from **Manikaran** to **Kasol** in Himachal Pradesh's **Kullu district** for a hot bath facility has sparked opposition from locals.
- Manikaran**, a sacred pilgrimage site for Hindus and Sikhs, is located in the **Parvati Valley** on the **Parvati River** at **1760m altitude**, about **4 km from Kasol** and **45 km from Kullu**.
- Known for its **hot springs and pilgrim centers**, it holds significance in Hindu belief as the place where **Manu recreated human life after the flood**.

Vijay Durg

- Fort William in Kolkata, headquarters of the Eastern Army Command, has been renamed **Vijay Durg** as part of efforts to eliminate colonial legacies in the armed forces.
- Kitchener House is now **Manekshaw House**, and St. George's Gate has been renamed **Shivaji Gate**.
- Built in 1781 and originally named after King

William III of England, Fort William now takes its name from **Vijay Durg**, the oldest fort on the Sindhudurg coast (Maharashtra), which served as a naval base under Chhatrapati Shivaji.

- However, the move has sparked debate due to the **Borgi invasions (1741–1751)**, when Maratha raiders, led by Raghoji Bhonsle, ravaged Bengal in a decade-long campaign, causing widespread destruction and trauma.
- Their **plunder left a lasting imprint on Bengali folklore**, with the Borgis still invoked as a symbol of fear in popular memory.

Chittorgarh Fort

- The Rajasthan government recently informed the Supreme Court that it is taking steps to protect Chittorgarh Fort.
- Located in southern Rajasthan on the **Berach River**, a tributary of the Banas River, about 100 km northeast of Udaipur, Chittorgarh was the capital of **Mewar** from the 8th to 16th century and a stronghold of the Sesodia Rajputs.
- The fort faced **sieges** by Alauddin Khalji (1303), Bahadur Shah (1534–35), and Akbar (1567–68), with defenders choosing death and jauhar over surrender.
- Built by **Chitrangad of the Mori dynasty in the 7th century**, the fort is India's **largest**, spread over 700 acres and 180 metres above the plain.
- It was declared a **UNESCO World Heritage Site** in 2013 and houses palaces, Jaina and Hindu temples, and the famous Kirti Stambh and Vijay Stambh.



Other Forts under UNESCO World Heritage List:

Fort	State/UT	Description
Red Fort	Delhi	Built in 1638 by Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan. It is renowned for its massive walls, the Diwan-i-Aam (Hall of Public Audience), & Diwan-i-Khas (Hall of Private Audience)
Agra Fort	Uttar Pradesh	Akbar initiated the construction and houses the Jahangir Mahal, Khas Mahal, Diwan-i-Khas, Diwan-i-Aam, and the iconic Musamman Burj , where Shah Jahan was imprisoned by his son Aurangzeb.
Amber Fort	Rajasthan	Built in the late 16th century by Raja Man Singh I, the fort is known for the famous Sheesh Mahal (Mirror Palace) .
Jaisalmer Fort	Rajasthan	Built in 1156 by Rawal Jaisal, it is one of the largest fully preserved fortified cities in the world.
Kumbhalgarh Fort	Rajasthan	Built by Rana Kumbha in the 15th century, the fort stretches over 36 kilometres. It is strategically located in the Aravalli Range and served as a refuge for the rulers of Mewar during times of conflict.
Ranthambore Fort	Rajasthan	The now dilapidated fort was built in the 10th century by the Chauhan rulers .

Bodh Gaya Temple



- The All India Buddhist Forum has been protesting in Bodh Gaya, demanding the repeal of the **Bodh Gaya Temple Act (BTA), 1949**.
- The Act created an **eight-member Bodh Gaya Temple Management Committee (BTMC)** with equal representation from Buddhists and Hindus, chaired ex-officio by the district magistrate—typically a Hindu—leading to **concerns over Hindu dominance**.
- The temple, built by **Emperor Ashoka** in the 3rd century BCE and a **UNESCO World Heritage Site** since 2002, had come under Hindu control in 1590 during Akbar's reign.
- Bodh Gaya temple is located near the **Niranjana (Phalgu) River** and marks the spot where **Gautama Buddha attained enlightenment** under the **Bodhi Tree**, around **6th century BCE**.
- The temple has a **50-meter high spire**, with intricately carved sandstone, and reflects a mix of **Gupta and later architectural styles**.
- Includes the **Vajrasana** (Diamond Throne), the exact spot of Buddha's enlightenment, built by **Emperor Ashoka**.

Gangaikonda Cholapuram Temple



- Recently the Prime Minister addressed the **Aadi Thiruvathirai Festival** at Gangaikonda Cholapuram temple in Tamil Nadu.
- Aadi Thiruvathirai Festival is a special celebration that commemorates 1,000 years of **Rajendra Chola's** legendary **maritime expedition** to **South East Asia** and the commencement of the construction of the iconic Gangaikonda Cholapuram temple.
- **Rajendra I** built the temple in the newly founded city of Gangaikonda Cholapuram after his victorious campaigns to Gangetic plains.
- The temple is dedicated to **Lord Shiva** and have features similar to Brihadeshwara Temple at Thanjavur
- It is one of the **Great Living Chola Temples** that was added to **UNESCO World Heritage Site**.

Karni Mata Temple

- The Indian Prime Minister recently visited the **Karni Mata temple in Deshnok**, a small town about 30 km from Bikaner, Rajasthan.
- The Karni Mata Temple is famously known as the **"rat temple"** for housing thousands of sacred **rats (kabas)**, believed to be **incarnations of Karni Mata's family**.
- **Karni Mata (Ridhi Kanwar/Ridhu Bai), born in 1387 CE** in Suwap village to a Charan family, is revered as an incarnation of Goddess Durga.
- Most accounts of her life come from **oral tradition and texts like Karni Mata Charitra**, which describe her as a miracle-working saint who supported rulers like Rao Jodha (founder of Jodhpur) and Rao Bika (founder of Bikaner).
- The current temple structure was built in the early **20th century by Maharaja Ganga Singh of Bikaner**.



Why are rats worshipped here?

Legend says Karni Mata revived her stepson Lakhana as a rat — and decreed that her lineage would be reborn as kabas (rats), avoiding the cycle of death and rebirth.

Devotees believe these rats are her family, reborn in a divine loop.

Punaura Dham temple



- The Union Home Minister recently laid the foundation stone for a new **Janaki Temple** at Punaura Dham, Sitamarhi, Bihar, believed to be the mythological **birthplace of Goddess Sita**.
- The **Rs.833 crore** temple will be developed on the **lines of the Ram temple in Ayodhya**.
- The site already has a **100-year-old Janaki Temple** and other sacred places associated with Goddess Sita, namely **Sitakund** (a holy pond), **Sita Vatika** (a garden), and **Luv Kush Vatika** (a garden linked to Sita's sons, Luv and Kush).
- **Mithila**, the kingdom of King Janaka, is mentioned in Vedic texts and was one of ancient India's 16 **Mahajanapadas**, historically called Tirhut or Tirabhukti, spanning parts of north Bihar and Nepal's Terai region.

Astrolabe at Raigad Fort

- An 16th century astronomical instrument, Yantraraj (Astrolabe), has been discovered at Raigad Fort, Maharashtra.
- Astrolabes were commonly used by **astrologers and navigators to track stars and calculate directions**.
- Featuring **directional markings** like “mukh” (head) and “poonchh” (tail), the find suggests scientific and astronomical planning in the fort's construction.
- The instrument's upper surface has inscriptions in the **Sanskrit language and in Devanagari script**, with two animal engravings—likely a tortoise or snake—at the centre.
- Located in the **Sahyadri range near Mahad**, Raigad Fort was **declared the Maratha capital in 1674**, has the Gangasagar Lake, and is accessed via the Maha-Darwaja, its grand entrance.



Zehanpora Village

- Archaeologists have uncovered a **2,000-year-old Buddhist complex at Zehanpora village in Baramulla, Jammu and Kashmir**.
- The finding features **stupas, viharas and organised monastic remains**.
- Dated to the **1st–3rd century CE (Kushan period)**, it is among the **earliest Buddhist establishments in Kashmir** and reflects **Kushan patronage under rulers like Kanishka and Huvishka**.
- The site shows **Gandharan architectural influence** and may be linked to the elusive **Huvishkapura**, an important city of the Kushan Empire, believed to have been founded or developed during the reign of Emperor Huvishka (c. 150–190 CE).

Devi Ahilyabai Holkar



- The Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA) held a lecture titled '**Devi Ahilya – Empress Renunciate**', honoring **Ahilyabai Holkar** (1725–1795), ruler of **Malwa** under the **Maratha Confederacy**.
- She governed from **Maheshwar and Indore**, leading the **Holkar dynasty** to its peak.
- Known for her **philanthropy**, she rebuilt the **Kashi Vishwanath Temple** and constructed multiple Hindu temples.
- She also fostered a **textile industry in Maheshwar**, giving rise to the **Maheshwari sari**.
- Referred to as **Punyashlok Ahilyabai**, her legacy was documented by **John Malcolm** in *A Memoir of Central India* (1823).

Guru Tegh Bahadur

- The **350th anniversary** of Guru Tegh Bahadur was observed at Delhi's Red Fort.
- Born **Tyag Mal** in 1621, he was the **ninth Sikh Guru** and **son of Guru Hargobind Sahib**, and **father of Guru Gobind Singh**.
- Known as **Tegh Bahadur** ("brave swordsman"), he displayed valor in the **1635 Battle of Kartarpur** and **founded Anandpur Sahib**.

- A poet and spiritual leader, he contributed over **100 hymns to the Guru Granth Sahib**.
- In 1675, he was **executed by Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb** for defending religious freedom, earning the title **Hind-di-Chadar (Shield of India)**.

NOTE: **Battle of Kartarpur** was a significant military engagement that occurred in 1635, in Kartarpur (present-day Punjab, India). It was fought between the Sikh forces (Akal Sena) led by the sixth Sikh Guru, Guru Hargobind, and the Mughal Empire forces commanded by Kale Khan, and a former Sikh general, Painde Khan.



Assam's King Prithu

- The Assam Cabinet recently named a key flyover in Guwahati after Raja Prithu, believed to be a **13th-century ruler** credited with **resisting Turko-Afghan incursions**.
- King Prithu, also referred to as **Raja Prithu Rae** supposedly ruled **Kamarupa kingdom**, which corresponds to modern-day Assam.

- He is supposed to belong to the **Khen dynasty**, who drew their lineage from Narakasura and they worshipped **Kamteswari**, an incarnation of Hindu Goddess Durga.
- He is credited with repelling the Turko-Afghan general **Bakhtiyar Khilji's incursion** around **1206 CE**, however direct evidence does not exist.
 - Bakhtiyar Khilji, a general **under Muhammad of Ghor**, was one of the earliest Turko-Afghan commanders who **attacked Nalanda University**.
- He is also credited by some historians to having defeated **Ghiyasuddin Iwaj Shah** (Bengal Sultan) who aimed to conquer kamrupa in 1226
- King Prithu is ultimately believed to have been killed in a battle against **Nasiruddin Mahmud** (Sultan of Delhi).
- Some historians also state that the only evidence about Prithu is from the **Tabaqat-i-Nasiri of Minhaj-i-Siraj**, and is actually about another ruler **Brithu of Awadh**.

Khwaja Moinuddin Chisti

- The Supreme Court recently declined urgent hearing of a plea against the Prime Minister offering a **chadar** at the Ajmer Sharif Dargah of **Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti**.
- Born in **1141 CE in Sijistan (Iran)**, he came to India around **1192 CE**, became a leading **Sunni Hanafi Sufi**, and established the **Chishti order** in India after being initiated by **Khwaja Usman Harooni**.
- Known as **Gharib Nawaz** for serving the poor, he preached love and tolerance, set up a **khanqah** in Ajmer, and his dargah (after his death in **1236 CE**) remains a major interfaith pilgrimage site.
- Chishti order (tariqa) emphasised **Ishq-e-Ilahi (love for God), service to humanity, renunciation, humility and tolerance**, while maintaining distance from political power and declining royal patronage.
- He institutionalised the **langar** system at Ajmer, encouraged **Sama (spiritual music)** within ethical limits, and made his dargah a major centre of **ziyarat**, with the annual **Urs** marking his spiritual union with God.
- His inclusive, non-coercive approach greatly aided the **social integration of Islam in India**, and his legacy continued through disciples like **Bakhtiyar Kaki, Baba Farid and Nizamuddin Auliya**.



Future Dalai Lama

- Recently the **14th Dalai Lama** announced that the institution of the Dalai Lama will continue.
- The 14th Dalai Lama was born in Tibet on July 6, 1935, and was identified at age 2.
 - He escaped Chinese persecution, reached India in 1959.
 - Currently, he is living in exile in Dharamsala, Himachal Pradesh.
- The Dalai Lama, literally '**Ocean of Wisdom**', is believed to be the manifestation of **Avalokiteshvara** (Bodhisattva of compassion).
- It is part of the **tulku** concept in **Tibetan Buddhism**, in which spiritual masters are reincarnated upon their death, so that their teachings can be preserved and carried forward.
- The Dalai Lama is the spiritual leader of the **Gelug** school of Tibetan Buddhism.
- Also known as the "**Yellow Hat**" school, the Gelug tradition is the newest and largest of the 4 major schools of Tibetan Buddhism.
- While the Dalai Lama is the most influential figure, the official head of the Gelug school is **Ganden Tripa**.

World Monuments Watch

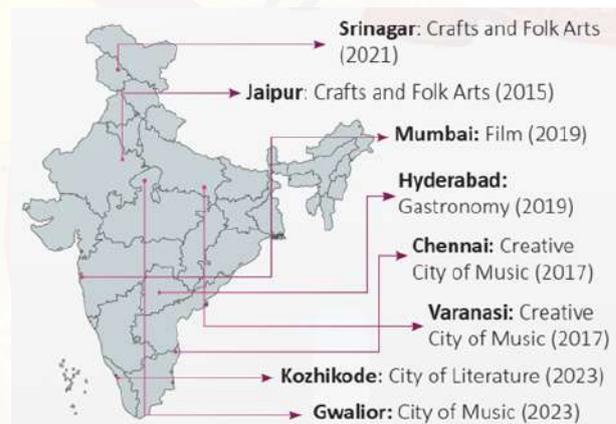
- The **Musi River Historic buildings in Hyderabad** and **Bhuj's Water Systems** are among 25 sites listed on the **World Monuments Fund's (WMF) World Monuments Watch**, which highlights threatened heritage sites.
- The Musi River corridor's historic landmarks, including the High Court and Osmania General Hospital, face risks from environmental decline and urbanization.
- **Bhuj's Water Systems**, which includes the sixteenth century **Hamirsar Lake** built during the reign of Rao Khengarji, and named after Jadeja ruler Rao Hamir (1472-1524), the founder of Bhuj, are in neglect.
- **World Monuments Fund (WMF)**, a non-profit founded in 1965 and based in New York, has worked on 700+ projects in 112 countries.
- Since 1996, its **World Monuments Watch** biennially identifies sites at risk from tourism, conflict, climate change, and disasters to drive preservation efforts.
- Notably, this year's list **includes the Moon**, marking the first time a site beyond Earth has been featured

Memory of World Register

- Manuscripts of the Bhagavad Gita and Bharata's Natyashastra are among the 74 new additions to **UNESCO's Memory of the World Register** this year.
- UNESCO launched the **Memory of the World (MoW) Programme in 1992**.
- The central project of the MoW was **to create a compendium of documents** including manuscripts, oral traditions, audio-visual materials, and library and archive holdings which are of "world significance and outstanding universal value".
- 📁 This is the **MoW Register**.
- The Register, updated biennially since **1997** (except 2017-2023), now has **570 entries**, including **13 from India**, such as the **Rig Veda (2005)**, works of **Abhinavagupta (2023)**, and archives from the **Non-Aligned Movement (2023)** and **Dutch East India Company (2003)**.

UNESCO City of Gastronomy Title

- **Lucknow** has been **nominated** for inclusion in the UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) as a "City of Gastronomy".
- The **UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN)** was created in 2004 to promote cooperation with and among cities that have identified creativity as a strategic factor for sustainable urban development
- The UCCN is currently formed by **350 cities and covers seven creative fields**: Crafts & Folk Art, Design, Film, Gastronomy, Literature, Music and Media Arts.
- Currently, **eight Indian cities** are officially part of UNESCO's Creative Cities Network.



Virtual Museum of Stolen Artifacts

- UNESCO launched the world's first **Virtual Museum of Stolen Cultural Objects** at the **MONDIACULT 2025** conference in Barcelona, Spain.
- This digital museum documents and traces stolen or trafficked cultural objects from around the world, featuring around **240 missing items from 46 countries**, including India's **Nataraja** and **Brahma sculptures**.
- Using **AI-generated 3D models**, it aims to raise awareness, support recovery, and combat illicit trafficking, especially items linked to colonialism, with the goal of returning them to their rightful owners.

- The project is financially supported by **Saudi Arabia** and developed in collaboration with **INTERPOL**.

Note: **MONDIACULT** is the acronym for the **UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development** and it's the **world's largest ministerial forum** on cultural policy, bringing together UNESCO's **194 Member States** to define the global agenda for culture.

'Mera Gaon Meri Dharohar' (MGMD) initiative

- **The Ministry of Culture** is implementing the 'Mera Gaon Meri Dharohar' (MGMD) initiative to digitally map and document the cultural heritage of all 6.5 lakh villages across India.
- The initiative, implemented by the **Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA)**, classifies villages into seven broad categories, such as "Arts and Crafts Village" and "Epic Village" linked to legends like the Ramayana and Mahabharata.
- The initiative falls under the **National Mission on Cultural Mapping (NMCM)** started in 2017 and was launched as part of 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' in 2023
- The mapping will be on a comprehensive virtual platform (**MGMD Web Portal**).



Mera Gaon Meri Dharohar

The **Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA)** is a premier, government-funded institution in India dedicated to the study, preservation, and dissemination of the nation's cultural and artistic heritage. It was established in 1987 as an autonomous body under the Ministry of Culture, Government of India

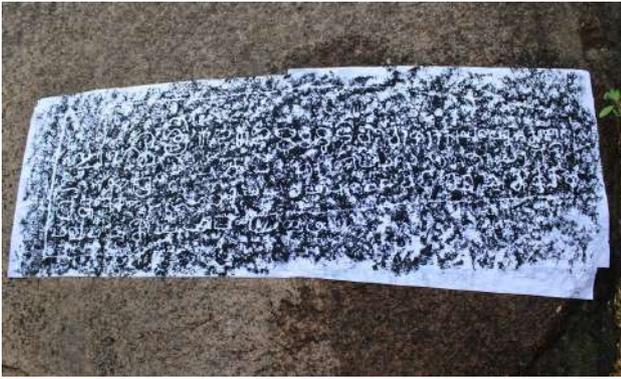
Telangana's Satavahana Heritage

- The ASI has documented 11 inscriptions in **Telangana's Gundaram Reserve Forest**, dating from the **1st century BCE to the 6th century CE**.
- These inscriptions shed light on the **Deccan's early cultural and political history**, especially the **Satavahana period**.

- Found on a rock surface called **Sitammalodi**, two notable inscriptions include one in early **Brahmi script by a Hāritiputra lineage figure**—likely of the Chuṭu dynasty—who donated a cave for Buddhist monks and was a friend of Satavahana prince Kumāra Haksiri.
- Another features a **trident and damaru**, indicating early links between political authority and religion.
- Mentions of Satavahana royals like Kumāra Sakasiri and Akusiri highlight the region's historical importance.
- **Note:** **King Simuka** founded the Satavahana Kingdom in Telangana and later kings conquered and expanded the regions of Upper Maharashtra, Lower Central India and Vidarbha.

Discovery of Rajaraja Chola Inscription

- A new inscription pertaining to Rajaraja Chola, which has been discovered recently atop **Somagiri hills at Melavalavu near Melur in Madurai district, Tamil Nadu**.
 - ➔ The inscription is dated to around 1,000 CE.
- The inscription begins with the honorific title - **Raja Raja Mummudichola**, a unique salutation found in this region, known as the **Pandya country**.
- The inscription talks of Rajaraja Chola's reign in the Pandya region and how a military commander called **Viranarana Pallavarayan** had captured the area and ruled here.
- **Raja Raja Chola I (985–1014 CE)** was one of the greatest rulers of the Chola dynasty, known for expanding the empire across South India, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives through military and naval power.
- He commissioned the grand **Brihadisvara Temple** at Thanjavur, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and promoted Shaivism while remaining tolerant of other faiths.
- His **titles** included Rajakesari Varman, Peruvudaiyar, Mummudi Chola (meaning wearer of 3 crowns: Chola, Chera, and Pandya)



150 years of Vande Mataram

- Recently, the Prime Minister in his Mann Ki Baat address, called for nationwide participation to celebrate the 150th anniversary of “Vande Mataram”.
- Vande Mataram (meaning “**I bow to thee, Mother**”) also called Bande Mataram is **India’s national song**, symbolizing reverence to the motherland.
- The root of the **Sanskrit word Vande is Vand**, which appears in Rigveda which means “to praise, celebrate, laud, salute respectfully” and the word “**Mataram**” has **Indo-European roots in Matar-** (Sanskrit), méter (Greek), mäter (Latin) which mean “**mother**”.
- It is composed in **Sanskritised Bengali** by **Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay** in the **1870s** and was **first published in his novel Anandamath (1882)**.
 - 📖 Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay was an influential **19th-century Indian writer, poet, and a key figure in the Bengal Renaissance** who played a significant role in India’s freedom struggle.
- The song’s **first public rendition was by Rabindranath Tagore** at the **1896 Congress Session** and it became the anthem of India’s freedom struggle.
- On **January 24, 1950**, the **Constituent Assembly accorded Vande Mataram as the National song** in equal honour to the National Anthem “Jana Gana Mana.”

Rashtriya Ekta Diwas

- The **Ministry of Culture** organized grand events on **Rashtriya Ekta Diwas** (31 October 2025) to mark the 150th birth anniversary of **Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel**.
- Sardar Patel was India’s **first Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister**, who played a key role in integrating over 550 princely states into a unified India.
- Born on **31 October 1875** in Gujarat, Patel rose from a successful lawyer to a nationalist leader, leading movements like the **Bardoli Satyagraha** and serving as Congress President.
- The day, observed **annually since 2014**, promotes national unity through events like the ‘Run for Unity’.
- His legacy is also commemorated by the **Statue of Unity** in Kevadia, Gujarat, inaugurated in 2018.

Gyan Bharatam Mission

- The Union Budget 2025-26 announced the Gyan Bharatam Mission to conserve and **document one crore manuscripts**, preserving India’s intellectual heritage.
- The mission focuses on the survey, documentation, and conservation of manuscripts held by institutions, museums, libraries, and private collectors.
- To support this, the **budget for the National Manuscripts Mission (NMM)** has been increased from ₹3.5 crore to ₹60 crore.
- NMM was launched by the **Ministry of Culture** in 2003 under the Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts (IGNCA).
- **IGNCA** was established in **1987** as an autonomous institution under the Ministry of Culture, as a centre for research, academic pursuit and dissemination in the field of the arts.

Traditional Sports

- Mallakhamb was added as a medal sport, while Kalaripayattu remained a demonstration sport at the 38th National Games in Uttarakhand.
- **Kalaripayattu**, also known as Kalari, is an ancient martial art from Kerala, believed to date back to the Sangam period (600–300 BCE).
- The term combines ‘Kalari’ (training center) and ‘Payattu’ (fight/practice). Rooted in mythology and history, it is said to have been founded by **Parashurama**, the creator of Kerala.
- **Mallakhamb** originated in 12th-century Maharashtra and is named from Marathi words ‘Malla’ (wrestler) and ‘Khamb’ (pole).
- It involves performing **gravity-defying exercises on a vertical wooden pole**, enhancing strength, flexibility, and agility, traditionally serving as a wrestler’s training regimen.



- India won the inaugural men and women’s **Kho Kho World Cup** held at New Delhi.
- Kho Kho is a **traditional Indian sport** and its origins are as old as Mahabharata.
 - The **chasing team** must tag out the **defenders** within a set time.
 - The team that tags out the most players wins.
 - **Kho is a voice signal sent to communicate** to other players to indicate their turn to chase.
 - Each kho-kho team consists of **12 players, but during a match only 9 players on the field.**
- In 1959 **first National Championship was held** under the Kho Kho Federation of India (KKFI) which was set up in the year 1955.

Kolhapuri Chappal



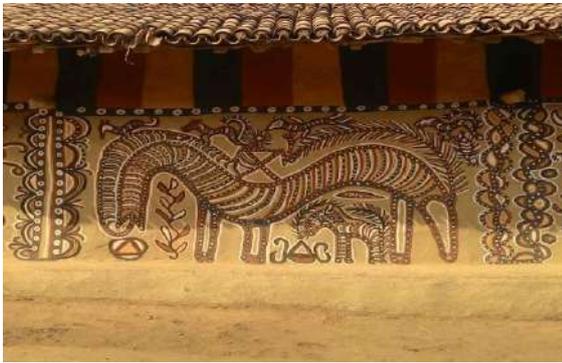
Kho Kho



- Kolhapuri chappal manufacturers have alleged that the **Italian luxury fashion brand Prada’s** recent sandal design bear a striking resemblance to the traditional Kolhapuri chappals.
- Kolhapuri chappals are **handcrafted unisex leather sandals** traditionally made by artisans in **Maharashtra’s Kolhapur district and parts of Karnataka.**
- Kolhapuri Chappal is a product granted **Geographical Indication (GI) status under India’s Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999 in 2019.**

- The Kolhapuri, along with **mojari, juttis, and Jaipuris**, constitute the unorganised footwear industry in India.
- The community of Charmakars traditionally makes Kolhapuri chappals and the term '**Charmakar**' is of **Sanskrit origin** and means leather artisan.
- The chappals are made from **animal leather** but undergo a **vegetable oil tanning** process which makes it more environment friendly.

Sohrai Art



- **Jharkhand** was spotlighted at Kala Utsav 2025 held at Rashtrapati Bhavan, where the President of India hailed it as reflecting "**the soul of India.**"
- Sohrai is celebrated by the **Santhal, Munda, and Oraon tribes**, along with other tribal communities in Jharkhand, Odisha, and West Bengal.
- It is a **traditional ritual wall painting practiced by tribal communities** of Jharkhand, particularly created by women on the mud walls of houses using natural pigments and bamboo twigs.
- It is painted during **harvest festivals, especially Diwali**, to honour livestock and fertility of the land.
- It was mainly practised across **Hazaribagh, Santhal Parganas, and bordering areas of Bihar.**
- It uses **naturally inspired motifs** (animals, birds, trees), **natural colours** and **traditional tools.**

Thanjavur Painting



- Recently, the Department of Posts undertook the transmission of a priceless Thanjavur painting of Shri Ram from Bengaluru to Ayodhya using its **Logistics Post service.**
- It is a classical South Indian art form originated **in the town of Thanjavur (Tanjore), Tamil Nadu, around 1600 AD.**
- Tanjore or Thanjavur paintings are **created on wooden panels** made from jackfruit or teak, commonly known as **palagai padam.**
- It flourished **under the Nayakas of Thanjavur** and received the **Geographical Indication tag** in 2007-2008.
- It uses **vibrant shades** of reds, blues and greens and **themes include Bal Krishna, Lord Rama, as well as other gods, goddesses, saints and subjects from Hindu mythology.**
- One of the unique features of Tanjore paintings is the **use of Gesso work.**
 - Gesso is a mixture of chalk, gypsum, and glue applied to the surface to create embossed patterns and motifs.
- And they **use pure 22-karat gold leaf** which is gently laid over the gessoed areas to embellish the artwork.

Vrindavani Vastra



- Recently the British Museum has agreed to loan the **16th-century Vrindavani Vastra** to Assam in 2027 for an 18-month public exhibition.
- Vrindavani Vastra is a **silk tapestry**, a thick fabric woven with pictures or designs, often used for decoration or storytelling.
- It was created under the guidance of **Vaishnavite saint-reformer Srimanta Sankardeva** and commissioned by Koch king **Nara Narayan**, depicts scenes from **Lord Krishna's life in Vrindavan** and other mythological motifs.
- It was taken to **Tibet**, a predominantly Buddhist region, where it was **repurposed in a monastery at Gobshi** and later acquired during the 1904 Younghusband expedition by British journalist Perceval Landon.
- It is a silk weaving with vibrant motifs, rich in narrative art, **unique as Vaishnavism under Sankardeva who discouraged idol worship**—yet the textile became a medium for depicting sacred stories.

Daruma doll

- During the Indian Prime Minister's visit to **Japan**, he was gifted a **Daruma Doll** by the chief priest of Daruma-ji temple.
- Named after **Bodhidharma (Daruma Daishi)**, founder of Zen Buddhism from Kanchipuram, the doll symbolizes resilience and determination.
- Bodhidharma **meditated for nine years** facing a wall at Shaolin Temple, leading to the doll's armless, legless design.
- Considered **auspicious** in Japanese culture, Daruma dolls originate from Takasaki City of Japan.



Haka Dance



- **Haka** is a traditional Māori cultural dance of New Zealand.
- It **symbolises** pride, identity and unity, historically performed by warriors to display strength, intimidate opponents and boost morale, and **today used** in welcomes, rituals, protests and celebrations.
- Rooted in Māori mythology and linked to **Tāne-rore**, it involves vigorous rhythmic movements like stamping, chest-slapping and expressive gestures.
 - ➔ The most famous form is "**Ka Mate**", composed by chief **Te Rauparaha** around 1820 and popularised globally by the **All Blacks** rugby team.
- **Similar traditional war or identity dances** include the Siva Tau of Samoa, Cibi of Fiji, the Zulu War Dance of South Africa, and the Highland Sword Dance of Scotland.
- **India has many war-related dances**, including Chhau (martial semi-classical from East India), Sarlamkai/Solakia (Mizoram warrior dance), Tapu (Arunachal's Adi tribe dance of valor), Rangma (Nagaland's Naga tribe war dance), Vela-Kali (Kerala's mock combat dance), and Raebenshe (West Bengal's folk war dance), all featuring warrior themes, mock combat, or expressions of bravery

Boreendo



- UNESCO has inscribed **Pakistan's Boreendo (Bhorindo)**, a rare **clay vessel-flute** linked to the **Indus Valley musical tradition**, on the **Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding** list.
- Used by the **Thari community of Sindh**, the 5,000-year-old instrument—traced to **Mohenjo-daro**—is a hollow, spherical, kiln-fired clay flute whose pitch is controlled by blowing and tilting.
- Archaeological finds from **Harappa and Mohenjodaro** show similar terracotta and bone flutes, highlighting its continuity from the **Indus Valley Civilisation** to present-day folk traditions.

Labyrinth in Solapur

- Archaeologists have discovered a **2,000-year-old circular stone labyrinth** in **Solapur district, Maharashtra**, linked to the **Satavahana period (1st–3rd century CE)** and believed to be the **largest in India**.
- A **labyrinth** is an ancient, unicursal pathway with a single winding route to the centre, used for rituals, meditation or symbolic journeys, and unlike a maze, it is designed to guide rather than confuse.
- Spread over about **50 × 50 feet**, it consists of **15 concentric stone circuits** laid in open grasslands, suggesting ritual or navigational use rather than habitation.
- Similar finds across western Maharashtra and resemblances to **Roman labyrinth motifs on coins** point to links with **Deccan trade routes and Indo-Roman commerce**.



Moh Juj



- The Assam Assembly passed the **Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Assam Amendment) Bill, 2025**, allowing the **traditional buffalo fight, Moh Juj**.
- Moh Juj was introduced by 30th **Ahom king Swargadeo Rudra Singha** around 200 years ago.
- The term is a combination of “**moh**” (**buffalo**) and “**juj**” (**fight**)
- Celebrated in Ahatguri village during **Magh Bihu**, the sport showcases the animals' strength and training.
- However, the **2014 Animal Welfare Board of India vs. A. Nagaraja. Supreme Court ban** on bull taming and races as well as 2024 Gauhati HC ban on **buffalo and bulbul fights** under Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1960 and the Wildlife Protection Act 1972, had stopped this tradition.

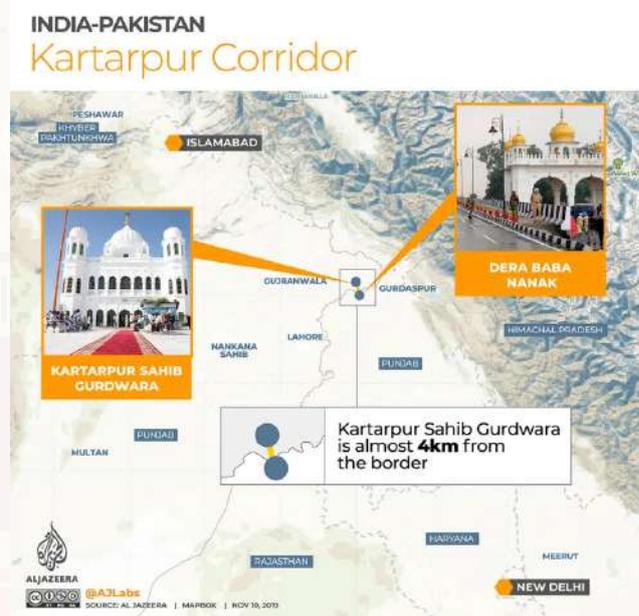
The Paika Rebellion of 1817

- Recently, omission of the **Paika Rebellion** from the latest Class VIII history textbook of the NCERT sparked controversy.
- The **Paikas** were traditional peasant militias of the Gajapati rulers of Odisha.
- They were granted hereditary, rent-free land (**nish-kar jagirs**) in exchange for military service to the king.
- Reasons of Rebellion:**
 - Loss of Land:** The British in 1803 confiscated the Paikas' traditional rent-free land, replacing it with a new revenue system that stripped them of their livelihood.
 - Economic Exploitation:** The British introduced a salt monopoly and a new currency (silver rupee), making essentials more expensive and taxes harder to pay.
 - Political Disruption:** The British dethroned the local Gajapati king of Khurda, which deeply offended the political and cultural identity of the Odia people.
- The Paika Rebellion was led by **Bakshi Jagabandhu**, the former commander-in-chief of the Khurda king.
- Starting in March 1817, the rebels, including **Paikas and Kondh tribals of Odisha**, attacked British outposts and briefly forced a British retreat from Khurda.
- The British military soon suppressed the revolt, but Bakshi Jagabandhu continued a **guerrilla campaign** for several years before surrendering in 1825.
- He remained a prisoner until his death in 1829.

Kartarpur corridor

- The **central government** has allowed Sikh pilgrims to visit Pakistan via the **Kartarpur Corridor** for **Prakash Purab**, the birth anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev.

- The corridor is a **visa-free border crossing** connecting **Dera Baba Nanak in India** with **Gurdwara Darbar Sahib in Pakistan**, about 4.5 km from the border.
- Gurdwara Kartarpur Sahib**, established by Guru Nanak in 1522, is believed to be where he passed away.
- After the **1947 partition**, Kartarpur fell on the Pakistani side, and Indian Sikhs could initially visit informally.
- However, access was cut off after the **1965 Indo-Pak War**, and for decades, pilgrims could only **view the Gurdwara from Dera Baba Nanak** using binoculars.
- Before the establishment of the **Kartarpur Corridor** in 2019, Indian pilgrims wishing to visit the Gurdwara had to take a **detour of about 130 kilometers** via the **Attari-Wagah border**.
- The **Kartarpur Corridor Agreement (2019)** allows Indian Sikhs to visit the Gurdwara directly visa-free, facilitating easier access for devotees.



Kashi-Tamil Sangam (KTS) 3.0

- **Kashi Tamil Sangamam 3.0** was recently held at **Namo Ghat, Varanasi**, organized by the **Ministry of Education** to celebrate the civilizational bond between **Tamil Nadu and Kashi**.
- The 2024 theme focused on **Sage Agastya's contributions** to the **Siddha System, Classical Tamil Literature, and cultural unity**.
- KTS brings together **scholars, students, artisans, and artists**, fostering cultural exchange and youth awareness.
- Aligned with **NEP 2020** and **Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat**, the event started in 2022 and has been held at Varanasi (also called Kashi)
- **Sage Agastya**, a revered figure in **Vedic and Tamil traditions**, authored **Rigveda hymns (1.165–1.191)** and appears in **epics and Puranas**, including **Ramayana and Mahabharata**.
- Some texts list him among the **Saptarishi** or as an **extraordinary sage**.
- In Tamil heritage, he is the **father of Tamil language** and compiler of **Agattiyam (Tamil grammar)**.
- His Sanskrit works include **Agastya Gita (Varaha Purana)**, **Agastya Samhita (Skanda Purana)**, and **Dvaidha-Nirnaya Tantra**.
- He is also known as **Mana, Kalasaja, Kumbhaja, Kumbhayoni, and Maitravaruni**.

Dadasaheb Phalke Award

- Malayalam Actor **Shri. Mohanlal** was conferred with the prestigious **Dadasaheb Phalke Award** for the year 2023.
- It is the **country's highest film honour, introduced in 1969**, conferred for "Outstanding contribution to the growth and development of Indian cinema".
- The award was introduced by the Government of India to commemorate **Dadasaheb Phalke's** contribution to Indian cinema where 1969 was the birth centenary year of **Dadasaheb Phalke**.
- **Dadasaheb Phalke** (1870–1944), real name **Dhundiraj Govind Phalke**. is known as the "**Father of Indian Cinema**".
- He directed India's **first full-length feature film, Raja Harishchandra (1913)**, and pioneered the Indian film industry.
- The **Award** is decided by a committee constituted by the **Ministry of Information and Broadcasting**.
- The committee typically includes **eminent film personalities, experts, and government representatives**, who select recipients for their **lifetime contribution to Indian cinema**.
- The award's **inaugural recipient was Devika Rani**, aptly titled "**the first lady of Indian cinema**".
- The award comprises a **Swarna Kamal (Golden Lotus) medallion, a shawl, and a cash prize of ₹10 lakh** and it is **presented by the President of India**.

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