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MK Yadav Sir

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THE HINDU

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‘OBC leaders should focus on ST quota for Dhangar community’

Abhinay Deshpande
MUMBAI



OBC leaders are not enemies, says Manoj Jarange-Patil. FILE PHOTO

Pro-Maratha quota activist Manoj Jarange-Patil on Monday said that OBC leaders should prioritise securing ST category reservations for the Dhangar community rather than criticising the demand for Maratha quotas.

He said that OBC leaders are “not their enemies” and assured that Marathas would support the Dhangar community’s reservation under the Scheduled Tribes (ST) category.

“The OBC leaders are not our enemies. I have not spoken anything against them. Instead of criticising and talking about the Maratha quota, they should spend their energy to get reservation for the Dhangar community under the ST category. The Maratha community will also stand firmly with them,” he said from a private hospital in Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar (previously Aurangabad) where he is undergoing treatment.

On June 13, Mr. Jarange-Patil suspended his indefinite fast over the Maratha quota, six days after launching it, and set a deadline of one month before the Maharashtra government to accept the community’s demands, including implementation of the draft notification that recognises Kunbis as ‘*sage soyare*’ (blood relatives) of Maratha community members and a law to identify Kunbis as Marathas.

Amid the push for Maratha reservation under the OBC category, two activists from the Other Backward Classes in Jalna have been fasting, seeking assurance that their quota will remain unaffected.

On Monday, a government delegation, led by State Minister Atul Save, Rajya Sabha member Dr. Bhagwat Karad and Shiv Sena MP-elect Sandipan Bhumre, met with the fasting activists – Laxman Hake and Navnath Waghmare – urging them to end their fast, but they refused. The protesters clarified that they are not against Maratha reservations, but it should not impact the OBC quota.

Mr. Hake is a former member of the Maharashtra State Backward Classes Commission, and Mr. Waghmare is president of the Samta Parishad, Jalna, an organisation working for the welfare of the OBCs. “We will not end the fast until the government gives a written assurance. The government is neglecting the quota issue. We are not against the reservation for Marathas, but it should not disturb the OBC quota,” Mr. Hake said.

DHANGARS COMMUNITY

(Syllabus: GS Paper 1 – Indian Society)

Context: Pro-Maratha quota activist recently urged OBC leaders to focus on securing Scheduled Tribes (ST) category reservations for the Dhangar community instead of criticizing the demand for Maratha quotas.

Dhangars Community

- **About**: The Dhangars are shepherds who live mostly in Western Maharashtra and Marathwada.
- **Population**: The Dhangar community is estimated to be around 1 crore, which is about 9% of Maharashtra’s roughly 11.25 crore population.
- **Current Classification**: The Dhangars are currently on Maharashtra’s list of Vimukta Jati and Nomadic Tribes (VJNT).
- **Demand for ST Status**: They have been demanding Scheduled Tribe (ST) status for several decades.
- **Similar with**: Dhangar leaders claim their community in Maharashtra is the same as the one identified as “Dhangad” elsewhere in the country, which is listed as a Scheduled Tribe.
- **Reservation Breakdown**: Of the 52% reservation in Maharashtra:
  - SCs and STs have 13% and 7% respectively
  - OBCs have 19%
  - Vimukta Jati/Denotified Tribes, Special Backward Class, and Nomadic Tribes together have 13%.

Nomadic Tribes

- **About**: Nomadic tribes are some of the most interesting communities in the world. They don't belong to one particular region, in fact, they are spread across the world. The nomadic tribes are diverse, each with its unique culture and traditions.

DIRECT SEEDING OF RICE (DSR)

(Syllabus GS Paper 3 – Agriculture)



DSR cultivation needs less water, labour; why is it still not popular in Punjab?

ANJU AGNIHOTRI CHABA
JALANDHAR, JUNE 17

EXPLAINED AGRICULTURE

DIRECT SEEDING of rice (DSR), the technique of sowing promoted by the Punjab government for the past several years, has not had many takers this season as well. DSR, known as the *tar-wattar* technique of sowing, started last month, and sowing by the traditional transplantation method on June 11.

Last year, only 1.73 lakh acres of the 79 lakh acres under paddy cultivation in Punjab — only 2% — were sown by DSR. The government's target is to bring 7 lakh acres under DSR this year, less than 10% of the total rice acreage. It has offered an incentive of Rs 1,500 per acre to encourage DSR.

DSR technique

Traditionally, farmers prepare paddy seedlings in nurseries and, after 25-35 days, replant the young plants in flooded fields. This is a labour- and water-intensive method, but is known to maximise yields and lead to better crop health.

DSR does not require nursery preparation or transplantation. Paddy seeds are directly sown in the field 20-30 days ahead of when they would have been transplanted.

After the field has been irrigated and prepared using a laser leveler, seeding is carried out using a seed drill or lucky seeder machine. It is crucial to treat the seeds — they are soaked in a fungicide solution for eight hours, and dried for half a day before sowing.

The first round of irrigation is carried out 21 days after sowing, followed by another 14-17 rounds at 7-10 day intervals, depending on the soil type and quality of monsoon rain. The final round of irrigation is done 10 days before harvesting.

Benefits of DSR

Tar-wattar can reduce the consumption of water in cultivation by 15% to 20% — the traditional puddling method requires 3,600 to 4,125 litres of water to grow every kilogram of rice. The traditional method also requires 25-27 rounds of irrigation in all. This is extremely important in water-scarce Punjab, where rapidly plunging groundwater levels foretell a crisis of desertification.

DSR also requires less labour, and the crop matures 7-10 days sooner, which leaves farmers more time to manage the paddy straw.

Soil texture is key

Experts underline that for DSR to be successful, it is crucial that the soil should be suitable. There are two aspects of soil suitability.

TEXTURE: DSR should be avoided in soils of a light texture; it is more suitable for heavy or medium-to-heavy-textured soils. This is primarily because light-textured soils do not retain water well.

A senior officer in the Punjab Agriculture Department told *The Indian Express* that in a bid to claim government incentives, some farmers end up using DSR in unsuitable soils, which leads to a need for irrigation every second or third day, which turns the water-saving benefits of DSR entirely on its head.

Heavy-textured soils contain more clay and less sand, whereas light-textured soils have less clay and more sand. Dr M S Bhullar, Principal Agronomist at Punjab Agriculture University (PAU), Ludhiana, who headed the development of the tar-wattar DSR technique, told *The Indian Express* that only 20% of Punjab's soil is light-textured.

The Majha (northwestern) and Doaba (northeastern) regions of the state predominantly have heavy- and medium-to-heavy-textured soil, whereas Malwa (central and southern Punjab) contains pockets of heavy-textured, medium-textured, and light-textured soils.

IRON CONTENT: The iron content of the soil also determines the suitability of DSR. Soils that are severely deficient in iron are not suitable for *tar-wattar* DSR.

Experts say that in several places, even medium-textured soils are unsuitable only due to the lack of iron. This is likely to be more of a problem in fields where crops such as cotton, maize, and sugarcane have been cultivated earlier.

Experts say that soils with plant-available iron are ideal for DSR. In case iron supplements are being used, farmers should apply ferrous iron, which is green in colour and not oxidised, rather than oxidised iron, which is brown in colour.

Lack of iron content can severely impact yields. Sometimes, farmers may even have to transplant the crop anyway, after a month or so, leading to DSR losing its labour-saving benefits.

The way forward

Farmers who use DSR in unsuitable soil often do not get the expected yields, and end up developing apprehensions regarding the technique and revert to the traditional method. Negative feedback spreads quickly by word of mouth, dissuading even farmers for whose fields DSR may have been ideal.

Education and awareness of farmers is key to enable the adoption of the new technique, and departure from the older method, experts say. They suggest that extensive training and a ready helpline should be provided to handhold farmers through the entire process from pre-sowing to harvesting. This can instill confidence among farmers regarding DSR's efficacy.

Additionally, if farmers incur losses during the initial years of adoption, adequate compensation should be provided as incentive for them to try again, they say.

Direct seeding of rice (DSR) and *(right)* paddy transplantation. *Anju Agnihotri Chabe*

Context: The Punjab government has been actively promoting the direct seeding of rice (DSR), or 'tar-wattar' technique, This can reduce water use by 15% to 20%.

Direct Seeding of Rice (DSR)

- **About**: It is also known as the 'broadcasting seed technique,' is a water-saving method of sowing paddy.
- **Factors**: Texture of the soil. Farmers should avoid DSR in light-textured soils — it is more suitable for heavy or medium-to-heavy-textured soils.
    - The iron content of the soil also determines the suitability of DSR.
- **Sowing Method**: In this method, seeds are directly drilled into the fields, bypassing the need for traditional water-intensive transplanting.
- **Water Conservation**: DSR saves groundwater by eliminating the need for waterlogged fields required in traditional rice cultivation.
- **Simplified Preparation:** There is no nursery preparation or transplantation involved in this method.

How DSR Works

- DSR, as the name suggests, requires no nursery preparation or transplantation. Paddy seeds are directly sown, roughly 20-30 days prior to when they would have been transplanted.
- **Field Preparation**: The field is irrigated and laser-leveled before the seeding process, which is carried out using a seed drill or lucky seeder.
- **Seed Treatment**: It is crucial, with seeds soaked in a fungicide solution for eight hours, then dried for half a day before sowing.
- **Irrigation Schedule**: The first round of irrigation is carried out 21 days after sowing, followed by 14-17 more rounds at 7-10 day intervals, depending on soil type and the quality of the monsoon. The final irrigation takes place 10 days before harvest.
- **Comparison to Traditional Method**: The traditional method requires 25-27 irrigations in total.

Benefits of DSR

- **Water Conservation**: Tar-wattar can reduce the consumption of water in cultivation by 15% to 20%.
    - The traditional puddling method requires 3,600 to 4,125 litres of water to grow every kilogram of rice.
- **Reduced Irrigation**: The traditional method requires 25-27 rounds of irrigation in all, while DSR significantly reduces this need.
- **Addressing Water Scarcity:** This reduction in water usage is extremely important in water-scarce regions like Punjab, where rapidly plunging groundwater levels foretell a crisis of desertification.

MERCENARIES
(Syllabus: GS Paper 2 – IR)



Laws on mercenaries in war zones

Indian nationals tricked by the promise of lucrative jobs in Russia have died fighting on the frontlines. As states are increasingly hiring private military companies to operate in conflict zones — can they qualify as mercenaries under international law? How can India secure the interests of its overseas migrant workers?

EXPLAINER

Anuradha Bhasin

The story so far:

On June 11, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) acknowledged the tragic loss of two Indian nationals who were recruited by the Russian Army amidst the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine. The MEA in a press statement said that the Indian Embassy in Moscow has strongly raised this issue with the Russian Ambassador in New Delhi and authorities in Moscow, seeking the swift release and return of all Indian nationals currently serving in the Russian Army.

In February, *The Hindu* reported for the first time that Indians were getting killed while fighting on behalf of Russia in the Ukraine war. Over the past year, nearly 100 Indians have been recruited by the Russian Army after being reportedly duped by agents with the lure of money and a Russian passport. Contracts signed by these recruits stipulate a "no leave or exit policy" before six months of service, with salaries amounting to ₹1.5 lakh to ₹2 lakh per month. In January, Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a decree simplifying the process of obtaining Russian citizenship for foreigners who sign a minimum of one-year contract with the Army.

At least 20 Indians have so far contacted the MEA and the Indian Embassy in Moscow, seeking help to return. The deaths of the two Indian nationals highlight a disturbing reality – Indians are increasingly falling prey to labour trafficking rackets after being unable to secure jobs domestically leading to their recruitment as mercenaries in international armed conflicts.

What has been the MEA's response?

The MEA has issued a press note advising Indians to exercise caution while seeking employment opportunities in Russia. In March, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) said that it had filed a first information report (FIR) booking 15 individuals and four companies for their alleged role in the "trafficking of gullible Indian nationals to Russia and duping them for better employment and high-paying jobs". In May, the central agency divulged that it had made four arrests in the case.

Who are mercenaries?

The distinction between conventional combatants and mercenaries is a fundamental cornerstone of international humanitarian law (IHL). A combatant is typically a member of the armed forces of a party to the conflict, whereas a mercenary is recruited from a third-party state unrelated to the conflict. Mercenaries usually engage in hostilities motivated primarily by personal gain as opposed to virtues of patriotism associated with regular combatants.

Article 47 of Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions (AP) envisages six cumulative conditions for a person to qualify as a mercenary. The person i) should be specially recruited locally or abroad in order to fight in an armed conflict, ii) has taken a direct part in the hostilities, iii) is motivated to take part in the hostilities essentially by the desire for private gain and, in fact, is promised, by or on behalf of a party to the conflict, material compensation substantially in excess of that promised or paid to combatants of similar ranks and functions in the armed forces of that party, iv) is neither a national of a party to the conflict nor a resident of territory controlled by a party to the conflict, v) is not a member of the armed forces of a party to the conflict, vi) has not been sent by a state which is not a party to the conflict on official duty as a member of its armed forces.

Under customary IHL, being a mercenary itself does not constitute a specific crime. However, if captured, they are not entitled to prisoner-of-war status or any protected categories under the Geneva Conventions.

This allows for their prosecution for war crimes or other grave breaches of humanitarian law.

They may also face charges under the domestic laws of the detaining nation. Nevertheless, mercenaries qualify for humane treatment in accordance with the fundamental guarantees of humanitarian law, as outlined under Article 75 of the API.

However, over time, African states began expressing reservations about this definition, as it only addressed international armed conflicts and overlooked civil wars, where mercenary activities were most prevalent. This led to the adoption of the Organization of African Unity Convention for the Elimination of Mercenarism in Africa in 1977 which included a more expansive definition of mercenaries.

Similarly, in 1989, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adopted the International Convention against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries that criminalised the recruitment, use, financing and training of mercenaries and also promoted inter-State cooperation in this regard.

The charter also widened the prevailing definition of mercenaries as provided under the Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions to include "persons recruited for the purpose of participating in a concerted act of violence aimed at overthrowing a government or otherwise undermining the constitutional order of a State, or at undermining the territorial integrity of a State."

What are the limitations of the existing regime?

One of the major challenges of the existing regulatory regime is the lack of a clear, unequivocal, and comprehensive legal definition of what constitutes a mercenary. This is compounded by the fact that the domestic laws of most states do not criminalise mercenary activity. Additionally, the definition outlined under Article 47 of the API does not include within its ambit foreign military personnel integrated into the armed forces of another state — such as the Gurkhas (soldiers from Nepal who have served in the British Army since the 1800s). It also fails to establish mechanisms for holding accountable foreigners employed as advisors and trainers.

Dr. Shalika Prasad, Assistant Professor of International Relations at the Sterlin School, Berlin highlighted the emerging trend of private military and security companies (PMSCs) gradually taking over roles previously associated with mercenaries. "These for-profit companies provide a range of services from combat to food supplies for troops. The legal framework surrounding the operations of PMSCs is more loosely defined and relies heavily on a country's domestic legal capacity", she said.

For instance, the operations of the controversial Wagner Group in Russia have been increasingly subjected to international scrutiny. Despite being registered as a private entity, it reportedly includes Russian Army veterans among its ranks. While the direct participation of the Wagner Group has been evident in the Ukraine-Russia conflict, the Kremlin had never formally acknowledged its connections with it. This has posed challenges in calling for accountability and assessing whether the group qualifies as a mercenary organisation. However, following the military corporation's aborted attempt at a coup last year, President Vladimir Putin acknowledged that it had received tens of billions of rubles in public money from the government.

"Signatories to the Montreux Doctrine have committed to stronger state oversight of private military and security actors. States are obliged to check whether PMSCs comply with international humanitarian and human rights law. However, neither India nor Russia is a signatory to this document. That does not preclude India from imposing tighter restrictions on the recruitment of Indian nationals for such enterprises. Furthermore, we need stronger international legal frameworks to safeguard individuals who are coerced or misled into contracting with PMSCs", Dr. Prasad added.

What is the way forward

According to Dr. Prasad, the Indian government should develop a robust policy framework to address distress migration and implement strict measures against human trafficking. "India should adopt a two-pronged approach," she suggested. "Long-term preventive measures should target the underlying economic factors that are driving people to leave the country, while immediate measures should prioritise educating the public and ensuring strong pre-travel vetting for Indians going to Russia or other conflict zones".

For instance, she pointed out that pre-travel approval from the MEA for travel to Russia could be another measure to check if there are suspicious cases of human trafficking. This will also enable the identification of companies that are exploiting Indians, she added.

In 2012, Bangladesh implemented the Dhaka Principles for Migration with Dignity for ethical overseas recruitment of migrants. The Nepal government in January banned its citizens from travelling to Russia or Ukraine for employment after 10 young men were killed and dozens more reported missing while fighting, predominately in the Russian military.

Context: The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) recently acknowledged the tragic loss of two Indian nationals recruited by the Russian Army amid the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

Mercenaries

- **Definition**: These are individuals recruited from third-party states to participate in armed conflicts, driven primarily by personal gain rather than national allegiance, unlike conventional combatants who are typically part of a party's armed forces.
- **Criteria for Mercenary Status:** According to Article 47 of Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions, specific conditions must be met to classify an individual as a mercenary, including recruitment, direct involvement in hostilities, and monetary compensation exceeding that of regular combatants.
- **Legal Status under IHL:** While being a mercenary isn't inherently a crime under customary IHL, mercenaries are not entitled to prisoner-of-war status if captured, potentially facing prosecution for war crimes or breaches of humanitarian law.
- **Protection under IHL**: Despite their status, mercenaries are entitled to humane treatment under Article 75 of Additional Protocol I, ensuring they receive fundamental guarantees of humanitarian law.
- **African Context and Legislation**: In response to the prevalence of mercenaries in civil wars, African states crafted the Organization of African Unity Convention in 1977, expanding the definition of mercenaries to encompass activities within civil conflicts, aiming to curb their impact in the region.
- **International Legislation**: The 1989 UN International Convention against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries broadened the definition to include acts against governmental integrity and territorial sovereignty.

PIB June 17

DEEP SEA MISSION

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Economy)

"India set to be the 6th country to have its own Deep Sea Mission" says Dr. Jitendra Singh

Context: India is set to be the 6th country to have its own deep-sea mission; 1st Stage of the harbour trail (40-50m) deep of the deep-sea mission is planned by September 2024; The Mission has the potential to contribute greatly to the overall growth of Indian economy

Deep Sea Mission

- **About:** It is a mission-mode project aimed at supporting the Blue Economy Initiatives of the Government of India.
- **Scope**: It is a high-level multi-ministerial, multi-disciplinary programme designed to enhance understanding of both living and non-living resources in the deep sea of the Indian Ocean.
- **Strategic Importance**: It plays a crucial role in India's strategy to achieve Blue Economy status, focusing on sustainable use of ocean resources.
- **Implementing Authority:** The Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES).
- **Cost**: The Mission has an estimated cost of 4077 crores and is set to span over 5 years (2021-2026), to be executed in phases.
- **Components of the Mission:** The Mission comprises six major components, including the development of technologies for deep-sea mining, manned submersibles, underwater robotics, ocean climate change advisory services, biodiversity exploration and conservation, deep ocean survey and exploration, and initiatives for energy and freshwater from the ocean, as well as an advanced marine station for ocean biology.

Matsyayaan 6000

- **About:** It is a three-person submersible designed to reach depths of 6,000 meters beneath the ocean's surface. It marks a significant advancement in deep-sea exploration capabilities.
- **Structure:** The submersible features a spherical design with a diameter of 2.1 meters.
    - It is constructed from an 80mm-thick titanium alloy, ensuring durability and the ability to withstand pressures up to 600 times greater than those at sea level.
- **Operational Capabilities:** The Matsya 6000 is equipped for extended missions, capable of operating continuously for 12 to 16 hours underwater.
    - It includes an oxygen supply that can sustain occupants for up to 96 hours, enabling longer-duration scientific research and exploration missions.

DTE June 17

COMBAT DESERTIFICATION & DROUGHT 2024

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Env and Eco)

World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought 2024: 30 years after UNCCD adoption, UN urges globe to 'unite for land'

Context: The world commemorates the World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought, highlighting global efforts to tackle land degradation and water scarcity issues.

World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought

- **About**: Every year, World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought is celebrated on June 17.
- **Theme 2024**: United for Land. Our Legacy. Our Future
- **Theme 2023:** Her Land. Her Rights
- **History**: During the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, desertification, loss of biodiversity, and climate change were recognized as the greatest challenges to sustainable development.
    - In 1994, the UN General Assembly established the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), a legally binding international agreement.
    - In 2007, the UN General Assembly declared the decade from 2010 to 2020 as the United Nations Decade for Deserts and the fight against Desertification.

Significance

- The theme for this year is 'United for Land. Our Legacy. Our Future.'
- Growing populations and unsustainable production and consumption patterns exacerbate the demand for natural resources, leading to land degradation.
- Desertification and drought contribute to forced migration, endangering tens of millions of people annually.
- The day calls for collective action to combat desertification and drought and to restore environmental damage.

United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)

- **Establishment**: In 1994, effective from 1996.
- **Origin**: Rio Conference's Agenda 21, 1992.
- **Purpose:** The sole legally binding international agreement linking environment and development to sustainable land management.
- **Permanent Secretariat**: Bonn, Germany.
- It is the driving force behind Sustainable Development Goal 15 and Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN).

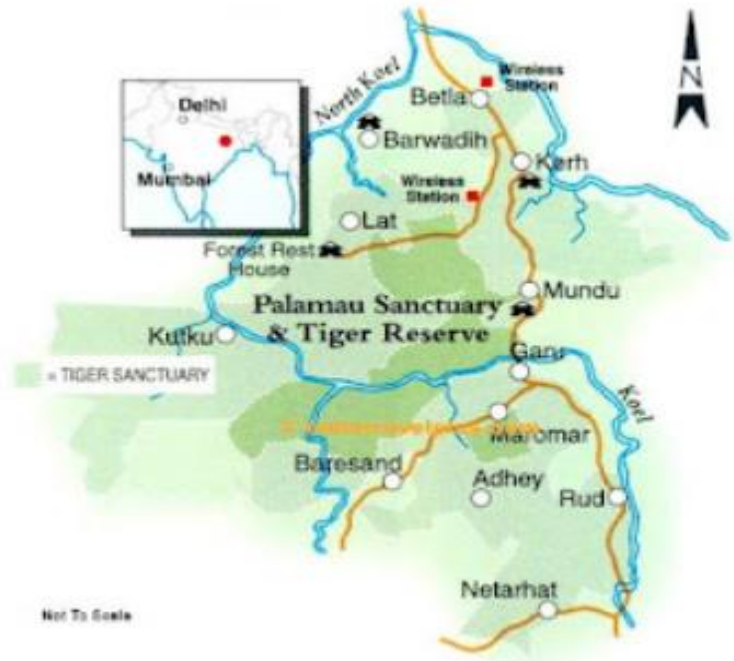
NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

June 16

PALAMU TIGER RESERVE (PTR)

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Env and Eco)

Plan to relocate tigresses to Palamu reserve



an approximate map of PTR

Context: To retain the four tigers which have migrated to Palamu Tiger Reserve (PTR), efforts are underway to relocate at least two tigresses and one tiger from another reserve.

Palamu Tiger Reserve (PTR)

- **Location:** It is situated in the Chhota Nagpur plateau region of Jharkhand. It forms part of Betla National Park and Palamau Wildlife Sanctuary.
- **Established in**: 1974
- **Historical Significance**: PTR was among the first nine tiger reserves in India initiated under 'Project Tiger'. The area was originally designated a protected zone in 1947.
- **Topography and Geology**: The terrain of PTR is characterized by undulating landscapes comprising valleys, hills, and plains.
  - It features geological formations like gneiss, granite, and limestone, with rich mineral deposits including bauxite and coal.
- **Rivers:** North Koel, Auranga, and Burha—flow through PTR, enriching its valleys and supporting diverse ecosystems.
- **Vegetation**: The reserve primarily hosts Northern Tropical Dry Deciduous forests dominated by Sal (Shorea robusta) and associated species. Smaller patches of Northern Tropical Moist Deciduous forests also thrive here.
- **Flora:** Shorea robusta, Acacia catechu, Madhuca indica, Terminalia tomentosa, Butea monosperma, Pterocarpus marsupium, Anogeisus latifolia, Indigofera pulchela, etc.
- **Fauna**: Some keystone and principal species found in the reserve include Tiger, Asiatic Elephant and Leopard, Grey wolf, Wild dog, Gaur, Sloth bear and four horned antelope etc.

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SAHITYA AKADEMI YUVA PURASKAR 2024

(Syllabus: GS Paper 1 – Awards)

Tailor's take on the trade bags Akademi award

Ardhra.Nair @timesgroup.com

Pune: Devidas Saudagar won't ring a bell even in Marathi literary circles, but his novel Usvan (Frayed Stitches) about the trials and tribulations of the tailoring community fetched him the Sahitya Akademi Yuva Puraskar 2024 award in Marathi on Saturday.

The outpouring of a writer who dropped out of school after Std VII, took up tailoring and worked as a watchman for Rs 5,000, Saudagar's book rose from the idea of how ready-made clothes have shrunk the need for stitched ones.

"During Covid, there was no work and I started writing full-time. I did a compilation of poems in 2021 and Usvan in 2022. I took it to 10 major publishers but the novel was rejected," Saudagar, among 23 writers from across India selected for the award, told TOI.



Saudagar, who still works as a tailor, bagged the 2024 Sahitya Akademi Yuva Puraskar award in Marathi for his novel, Usvan (Frayed Stitches)

▶Had to drop out, P 18

Context: Devidas Saudagar, relatively unknown in Marathi literary circles, has been awarded the Sahitya Akademi Yuva Puraskar 2024 for his novel "Usvan" (Frayed Stitches).

Sahitya Akademi Yuva Puraskar 2024

- **About:** It recognizes literary works in 24 languages.
- **Age:** 35
- **Category:** The Yuva Puraskar has been awarded for 10 poetry books, seven collections of short stories, two collections of articles and one of essays, one novel, one book of ghazals and one memoir.
- **Inception and Recognition**: Established in 2011, the award includes a cash prize of ₹50,000, a copper plaque, and a commendation certificate for each honored author.
- **Prize:** Yuva Puraskar awardees will receive a casket containing an engraved copper plaque and a cheque of Rs 50,000 at an awards ceremony later.
- **Other Awards**: The Sahitya Akademi Bal Sahitya Puraskar recognizes authors for their significant contributions to children's literature, focusing on novels published within the five years preceding the award year.

Sahitya Akademi Awards

- **About**: The award's purpose is to recognise and promote excellence in Indian writing and also acknowledge new trends.
- **Established:** 1954.
- **Language:** 24 (22 languages of the 8th Schedule to the Indian constitution as well as in English and Rajasthani language).

DTE June 17

WORLD CROCODILE DAY 2024

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Env and Eco)

World Crocodile Day 2024: In 50th year of India's saurian conservation, one of its architects worried for Bhitarkanika

Context: World Crocodile Day 2024 marks India's 50th year of saurian conservation efforts, with concerns raised for Bhitarkanika, a critical habitat for crocodiles in the country.

World Crocodile Day 2024

- **About:** It is celebrated on June 17th. The recurrence is a global awareness crusade to highlight the problematic situation of endangered crocodiles and alligators worldwide.
- **Organized by**: Crocodile Research Coalition, a Belize non-profit organization, in conjunction with the Belize Zoo.
- **Conservation in India**: Bhitarkanika National Park

Crocodiles

- **About**: These are cold-blooded creatures, semi-aquatic reptiles that live throughout the tropics in Africa, Asia, the Americas, and Australia.
- **Crocodiles in India:** India is home to three species of crocodiles:
- **Mugger or Marsh Crocodile (Crocodylus palustris)**: Found in freshwater habitats across the Indian subcontinent.
    - **Protection Status**:
        - ✓ **IUCN List of Threatened Species**: Vulnerable
        - ✓ **CITES**: Appendix I
        - ✓ **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972**: Schedule I
- **Estuarine or Saltwater Crocodile (Crocodylus porosus):** Known for its ability to inhabit marine and freshwater environments.
    - **Protection Status**:
        - ✓ **IUCN List of Threatened Species**: Least Concern
        - ✓ **CITES**: Appendix I (except the populations of Australia, Indonesia and Papua New Guinea, which are included in Appendix II).
        - ✓ **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972**: Schedule I
- **Gharial (Gavialis gangeticus)**: Characterized by its long, thin snout, primarily found in northern India.
    - **Protection Status**:
        - ✓ **IUCN List of Threatened Species**: Critically Endangered
        - ✓ **CITES**: Appendix I
        - ✓ **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972**: Schedule I

INDIAN EXPRESS

Page 10

MIFEPRISTONE

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Sci and Tech)

Context: The US Supreme Court rejected a petition by anti-abortion groups seeking to undo the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) approval of a commonly available abortion pill, called mifepristone.

Mifepristone

- **About:** It is a crucial component of the medical abortion regimen, initiating the process by blocking progesterone, a hormone vital for pregnancy maintenance.
- **Complementing Drug:** Following mifepristone, misoprostol is administered to induce uterine contractions, facilitating the expulsion of the pregnancy tissue, similar to a miscarriage.
- **Approval by**: FDA in 2000 for pregnancies up to 10 weeks, mifepristone has since been utilized by over six million individuals for abortion purposes, representing a significant portion of abortions in the US.
    - Since FDA approval in 2000, mifepristone has a mortality rate of 0.0005%, comparable to common pain relievers.
- **Timing:** It can be initiated soon after pregnancy confirmation and within 70 days of the last menstrual period.
- **Safety and Research Findings**: Extensive studies affirm mifepristone's safety, with rare incidences of serious complications reported over years of research and widespread use.

Court Rule

- **Supreme Court's Decision Basis**: The Supreme Court based its ruling on the "personal stake requirement," requiring plaintiffs to demonstrate a personal interest in the case's outcome.
- **Legal Precedent Explanation:** According to a 1982 precedent, plaintiffs must show a distinct and palpable injury connected causally to the challenged action.
- **Lack of Demonstrated Injury**: The court found that the doctors and medical associations lacked standing to challenge the FDA's regulation as they failed to show any actual harm resulting from mifepristone's availability.

MIFEPRISTONE

Commonly available pill, part of a two-drug regimen along with misoprostol, used for medical abortions

THE US Supreme Court on June 13 rejected a petition by anti-abortion groups seeking to undo the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) approval of mifepristone, a commonly available abortion pill. In a unanimous ruling authored by Justice Brett M Kavanaugh, the court held that the petitioners lacked a direct stake in the dispute, and thus could not sue the FDA.

While this verdict preserves access to mifepristone in the US for the time being, the court has kept the doors open to other attempts to limit the availability of the drug.

This development comes nearly two years after the United States' apex court overturned *Roe v. Wade*, effectively repealing the federal right to abortion.

The drug

Mifepristone is part of the two-drug regimen used for medical abortion. The patient first takes mifepristone to induce an abortion, and then misoprostol to empty the uterus. Mifepristone blocks progesterone (the hormone that helps maintain a pregnancy), misoprostol triggers uterine contractions, causing the body to expel the foetus as in a miscarriage.

The regimen was approved for use up to 10 weeks of pregnancy by the FDA in 2000. Since then, more than six million people have used mifepristone for abortion. Currently, the pill is used in about two-thirds of abortions in the US. Studies have found the pill to be safe, and years of research have shown that serious complications are rare.

The case

In 2022, four pro-life medical associations, as well as several individual doctors, sued the FDA in the US District Court for the Northern District of Texas. The petitioners challenged the FDA's approval of mifepristone, and the changes the federal agency made in the pill's conditions of use, which allowed the drug's distribution through mail and telemedicine.

In April 2023, federal judge Matthew J Kacsmaryk held that the FDA's approval of the drug should be suspended, removing mifepristone from the market.



Mifepristone is FDA-approved for use till 10 weeks of pregnancy. *Reuters*

Subsequently, an appeals court in New Orleans partially overturned this ruling, to the extent that it invalidated the FDA's approval of the pill. The Supreme Court then put the appeals court's ruling on hold, and agreed to hear the case.

Apex court's ruling

To reject the petition by the anti-abortion groups and individual doctors, the Supreme Court cited the "personal stake requirement" laid down in one of its 1982 judgments. The personal stake requirement basically means that the party seeking relief has to have a "personal stake in the outcome of the controversy", i.e. there has to be a causal connection between the appellant's asserted injury and the defendant's challenged action.

The Supreme Court found that the doctors and medical associations challenging the FDA's regulation failed to show an actual injury because the plaintiffs didn't include people actually involved — like doctors prescribing mifepristone, or pregnant women who took it. It said the plaintiffs could not show any harm suffered from mifepristone's availability.

In its judgment, the court said that federal courts do not operate as an open forum for citizens "to press general complaints about the way in which the government goes about its business".

KHADIJA KHAN

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OPTICAL FIBRE CABLE

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 – Sci and Tech)

European Commission levies anti-dumping duty on optical fibre cables from India

Gulveen Aulakh
gulveen.aulakh@livemint.com
NEW DELHI



The order follows an investigation by the European trade agency that began in October last year. REUTERS

The European Commission Directorate General for Trade has levied provisional anti-dumping duty—ranging between 8.7% and 11.4%—on nearly a dozen Indian optical fibre cable makers, while exempting imports from HFCL Ltd and its subsidiary HTL Ltd.

According to an order issued on 14 June, a duty of 8.7% has been levied on exports from Birla Cable Ltd, Universal Cables Ltd and Vindhya Telelinks Ltd to the European Union.

As per the order, Sterlite Technologies and Sterlite Tech Cables Solutions Ltd will incur 11.4% duties on their exports while a 9.9% duty has been levied on Aberdare Technologies Private Ltd, Aksh Optifibre Ltd, Apar Industries Ltd, Polycab India Ltd, UM Cables Ltd, and ZTT India Private Ltd. All other exporters will incur a duty of 11.4%.

"This decision is a huge achievement for us and speaks volumes about the trust that we have garnered globally for our fair-trade practices and transparency of processes. We firmly believe that this decision will enable us to play a central role in Europe's digital transformation," Mahendra Nahata, managing director at HFCL, said in a statement to BSE Monday.

The order follows an investigation by the European trade agency that began in October last year into complaints by European optical fibre cable (OFC) industry, represented by Europacable, about dumping by Indian exporters.

During the middle of November 2023, notices were sent to Indian manufacturers where European Commission requested initial sales data and extensive data on manufacturing, sales, exports, and pricing for October 2022—September 2023 from export producers.

As per the statement by HFCL, the information and data were verified by European Commission with intensive validation conducted at the premises of all relevant Indian manufacturers by sending its officials to India in April. This was done to determine whether Indian manufacturers were pricing their products for export to Europe lower than their domestic sales prices or below their cost, it added.

The decision to levy anti-dumping duty comes on the back of levies being imposed on OFC imports from China in November 2021. The duties have since been increased.

In international trade parlance, dumping happens when a country or a firm exports an item at a price lower than the price of that product in its domestic market, hurting manufacturers in the destination country.

Global trade norms allow a country to impose tariffs on dumped products to provide a level-playing field to domestic manufacturers vis-a-vis foreign producers and exporters. This also ensures fair trading practices.

Context: The European Commission Directorate General for Trade has imposed provisional anti-dumping duties, ranging from 8.7% to 11.4%, on around eleven Indian optical fibre cable manufacturers.

Optical Fibre Cable

- **About:** Optical Fibres are thin, cylindrical strands made of glass, typically as thin as a human hair.
- **Capabilities**: They transmit various forms of digitized information over long distances at speeds approaching that of light.
- **Strength and Flexibility**: Optical Fibres are strong, lightweight, and highly flexible, suitable for diverse environmental conditions.
- **Nobel Prize Recognition**: Charles Kao was awarded the 2009 Nobel Prize in Physics for his pioneering contributions to Fibre optic communication.
- **Working Principles**
  - **Total Internal Reflection (TIR)**: Optical signals are guided within the Fibre through TIR, where light reflects internally due to the higher refractive index of glass compared to air.
  - **Signal Encoding**: Information is encoded as rapid light pulses (binary digits) that travel through the Fibre via TIR.
  - **Signal Transport:** Optical Fibres transport encoded signals over long distances with minimal signal loss, ensuring high integrity at the receiver end.

Benefits of Optical Fibres

- **High Speed**: Capable of transmitting data at speeds exceeding 10 Gbps, surpassing copper wire's capabilities.
- **Long Range Transmission:** Minimal signal loss allows data to travel far distances efficiently.
- **Immunity to Interference**: Optical Fibres are less susceptible to electromagnetic interference, ensuring reliable data transmission.
- **Durability**: With a glass core that insulates against electric currents, optical Fibres are highly durable against environmental factors.

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