

Maharashtra Weekly Current Affairs 18 to 24 December 2023

Maharashtra State News

Raigad Fort

- **Raigad Fort** lies in the **Sahyadri mountains** of Maharashtra, India,
- It is a powerful symbol of **Maratha pride** and resilience.
- It was built in the **17th century** by the legendary **Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj**
- This impregnable fortress **served as the capital of the Maratha Empire** for nearly three decades, witnessing the rise and glory of one of India's most celebrated rulers.

Foreign investors prefer Maharashtra

- **Maharashtra** remains the **top destination for foreign direct investment (FDI)** in India, attracting investments worth **₹28,868 crore** in the last **three months**.
- There is also an **anticipation** of investment of around **₹35,000 crore** in the Raigad district.

Elephanta Caves

- The **Elephanta Caves**, also known as **Gharapurichi Lenī (Caves of Gharapuri)**, are a group of **rock-cut temples** located on **Elephanta Island**, off the coast of Mumbai
- These caves are **carved out of a single basalt rock face**
- **Elephanta caves** are a **UNESCO World Heritage Site**
- The caves are believed to have been excavated **between the 5th and 7th centuries CE**, during the reign of the **Kalachuri dynasty**.
- The caves are **dedicated to the Hindu god Shiva**, with various depictions of his forms and stories.

Paithani sarees

Paithani sarees are exquisite handloom silk sarees, woven with **intricate gold zari work**, originating from **Paithan, a town in Maharashtra**

- They are **often called "Queen of Silks"** for their regal splendor and **intricate weaving techniques**.

- These sarees are renowned for their **vibrant colors, and luxurious texture**, making them coveted possessions and prized heirlooms.
- These sarees are **traditionally woven with pure mulberry silk**
- The intricate zari (gold or silver thread) woven patterns showcasing birds, lotus flowers, paisleys, and geometric designs.

Chanakya Centre for Excellence

- The **Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation** will build the '**Chanakya Centre for Excellence**' at Karla, Lonavala.
- The centre will include **amenities such as a convention hall, exhibition centre, adventure sports arena and waterpark, tent city, a 42 feet tall statue of Chanakya, a museum, and a wellness centre**.
- This centre will **showcase Arya Chanakya's political theory, economic thought, war strategies, lifestyle, and other philosophical ideas**.

A new city called 'Third Mumbai'

- The **MH state government** has finalized a broad skeletal proposal for **developing a new city called the 'Third Mumbai'**.
- Aim is to **provide better housing, infrastructure and robust transport facilities** to the growing population of the **Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR)**
- The city is proposed around the **Navi Mumbai International Airport**
- It will be linked to Mumbai by the crucial connector **Atal Bihari Vajpayee Sewri-Nhava Sheva Atal Setu, also known as Mumbai Trans Harbour Link (MTHL)**.

Kolhapur jaggery

- **Kolhapur jaggery** is a natural sweetener produced in the Kolhapur district of Maharashtra
- It has a unique taste, aroma, and health benefits.
- It earned the prestigious **Geographical Indication (GI) tag in 2014**
- It is made from **organically grown sugarcane** cultivated on the **fertile banks of Panchganga and Krishna rivers**.

- **Sugarcane juice is boiled** and clarified using **natural agents like okra and lime**, then concentrated and molded into blocks.
- It is **rich in iron, calcium, phosphorus, potassium, and minerals**.
- It has a **source of antioxidants** and **aids digestion**.

Lezim dance

- **Lezim is a vibrant and energetic folk dance** form originating from Maharashtra
- It is traditionally **performed by women during festive occasions like Ganesh Chaturthi, Navratri, and weddings**.
- The word "**Lezim**" is derived from the **Marathi word "Lezimga,"** which means "**to play.**"
- Lezim is performed by a group of women, typically ranging from **10 to 50 participants**.
- The dance is **accompanied by energetic drumming on dholkis (cylindrical drums) and sometimes tasha (kettledrums)**.
- The **choreography involves synchronized steps, claps, and movements of the hands and arms**.
- The **dancers stand in two lines facing each other**, creating a lively and visually engaging performance.
- Traditional **lezim attire** typically consists of **colorful saris or ghagra-choli sets**, adorned with ornaments like **ghungroos (ankle bells)**.

Ajinkyatara Fort

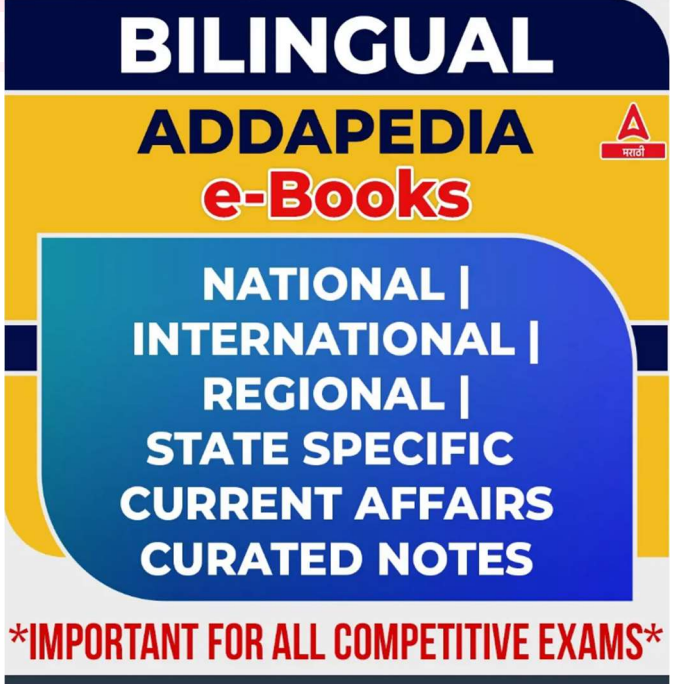
- The **Ajinkyatara Fort**, also known as the **Sinhagad Fort**, stands sentinel atop a **2,130-foot-high peak** in the **Sahyadri mountain range near Pune, Maharashtra**
- It was **built in the 17th century by Shivaji**,
- Ajinkyatara Fort played a **crucial role in numerous battles**.
- Its sturdy walls, fortified gates, and strategically placed cannons **repelled several Mughal attacks**, solidifying its status as a symbol of Maratha resistance.
- The fort changed hands multiple times throughout its history, witnessing the power struggles between the Marathas, Mughals, and British.

Shiv-Srushti project

- The **Shiv-Srushti project in Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar** (formerly Aurangabad) is an ambitious initiative aimed at creating a **cultural and spiritual complex dedicated to Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj**, the revered Maratha king.

The project encompasses:

1. **A grand temple:**
 - Dedicated to **Lord Shiva**, it will be a **replica of the iconic Somnath temple in Gujarat**.
2. **A museum:**
 - Housing **artifacts and exhibits** showcasing the life and **achievements of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and Maratha history**.
3. **Cultural center:**
 - Hosting **performing arts, exhibitions, and educational programs** promoting Maratha culture and heritage.
4. **Theme park:**
 - Featuring **rides and attractions** showcasing Maratha history and values.
5. **Open-air theater:**
 - For hosting **cultural events and performances**.



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Western Railway's 'Coolie No 1' initiative

- In a unique initiative, the Western Railway (WR) has launched an initiative - 'Coolie No 1'
- It is aimed towards mutual benefit of Licensed Sahayaks and passengers.
- The initiative has been started at Mumbai-headquartered WR's Mumbai Division.
- Licensed Sahayaks (licensed porters) play an integral part in the railway system in India and add an important value in the overall train travel experience of long-distance passengers.

Justice Shinde Committee submits report on Maratha reservation issue

- In a significant development vis-a-vis the Maratha vs OBC reservation issue, a committee was formed to define the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for issuing Kunbi-Maratha and Maratha-Kunbi certificates based on old records
- Justice Sandeep Shinde (Retd) headed the committee and has now submitted the report to the MH govt.

Note:

- Kunbis are a sub-caste of Marathas and are covered under Other Backward Classes (OBCs).

Maharashtra to establish onion storage banks

- The Maharashtra government has announced that it will establish onion storage banks across the State and use nuclear technology for irradiation to extend the freshness and shelf life of the bulb crop.
- This step was initiated to ensure that onion farmers don't suffer loss due to price fluctuation and have well-equipped storage.
- Nuclear technology involves using controlled doses of ionizing radiation to make onions safe to eat by killing harmful microorganisms and extending their shelf life.

Defence Ministry signs deal for 6 next-gen OPVs for Coast Guard

- The Defence Ministry signed a ₹1,614.89 crore contract with Mazagon Dockyard Shipbuilders Limited (MDL), Mumbai.
- It is for procurement of six next-generation Offshore Patrol Vessels (OPV) for the Indian Coast Guard (ICG).
- Out of the six vessels being procured, four would replace the existing aging OPVs and the other two would augment the ICG fleet.

9 overseas firms under ED's scanner in ₹6k cr bitcoin ponzi scam

- The Enforcement Directorate is investigating nine overseas firms, including those in Hong Kong and Estonia.
- These firms were allegedly used to divert funds from a bitcoin-based ponzi scheme operated by Variable Tech.
- The scheme collected 80,000 bitcoins and diverted funds worth INR 6,606 crore (\$915 million) through the nine firms to purchase properties abroad.
- The investigation has resulted in the provisional attachment of properties worth INR 69 crore.

New Covid-19 sub-variant JN.1 detected in Sindhudurg

- A 41-year-old man in Sindhudurg district, Maharashtra, has tested positive for the new COVID-19 sub-variant JN.1
- Recently, the World Health Organisation (WHO) has designated JN.1 as a 'variant of interest' due to its rapidly increasing spread.
- However, the global public health risk is considered 'low.'

Awareness can pave the way for the Ratnagiri nuclear energy project

- Dr. Mashelkar stated that in the present scenario, nuclear energy is essential for the nation, and more power plants need to be built.
- There have been no instances of harm caused by these plants anywhere in the country.

- Thus, if the **government raises awareness** among the citizens, **nuclear energy projects such as the one in Ratnagiri** can take hold.

'Banganga Beautification Project'

- The **Banganga Beautification Project** is a **transformative initiative** aimed at **revitalizing the historic Banganga tank** and its surrounding precinct in Mumbai
- **Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC)** in collaboration with **GSB Trust**, a management organization of the tank is all set to give a **makeover to the centuries-old Banganga tank**, located in **Walkeshwar, Malabar Hill area**.
- The project seeks to **enhance the area's beauty, accessibility, and cultural vibrancy** while preserving its rich heritage.
- It will also help to **attract tourists and facilitate religious rituals**.

US footwear opens a warehouse in Palava

- American footwear giant **Sketchers** has opened a **national distribution centre** in Mumbai as part of its **expansion in the Indian market**.
- The **6,00,000 sq ft facility** at the **Lodha Industrial and Logistics Park** in Kalyan has been designed to **streamline supply chain operations** and can ship up to **60,000 units per day**.

Maharashtra to alter minimum age to enter school to 3 yrs from 2024

- **Admission norms** in Maharashtra will be updated to align with the **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020**
- NEP mandates that **children should be six years old when entering Class I**
- In view of this, **MH will alter the minimum age to enter school to 3 yrs**.
- This updated policy is expected to be implemented for the **2024-25 academic year**.

Person in News: Prabhakar Mande

- **Prabhakar Mande**, a **veteran scholar** in **folklore, folk culture and literature**, dies in Ahmednagar

- **Mande hails from Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar**
- He was **conferred the Padma Shri** in March 2023 for his enormous contribution.
- Mande had **presented more than 25 research papers** on different national and international platforms.

KIT hosts Smart India Hackathon

- The **Kolhapur Institute of Technology (KIT)** hosted the **Smart India Hackathon** with the help of **AICTE Delhi, the defense ministry, the environment ministry, and the Ayush ministry**.
- A team of students from the **Indore Institute of Science and Technology** grabbed the **first prize**.
- The **engineering students of the Indore-based college** developed a **'robust human target detection and acquisition' model**.
- **Odisha-based Gandhi Institute of Engineering and Technology** bagged the **second prize** for **'deep learning for terrain recognition' model**.

MH signs MoU for skill development

- An **MoU** was signed between the **Maharashtra State Skill Development Society, the Commissionerate of Skills, Employment, Entrepreneurship and the National Skill Development Corporation**
- It aims to support **Maharashtra International, an international employment facility centre**.

Silver crown belonging to Tulja Bhavani temple goes missing

- A **silver crown** that has been in the **Bhavani temple** since **before 2011** has been suspected to be **missing from Tulja Bhavani temple's treasury**.
- This silver crown was in **possession of Mahant Chilojibua**.
- Additionally, **other valuable antiquities such as silver jewelry, silver Trishul, and accessories made up of pearl and gold** have also gone missing from the temple treasury.