

# MaharashtraAhead

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## A SUPER INDUSTRIAL STATE

The Make in Maharashtra campaign gets a shot in the arm with major international companies investing in the State





(Clockwise from above) Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis addresses the gathering at the Simhashta Kumbh flag-off ceremony, BJP National President Amit Shah and the Chief Minister together with saints at *dhwajaroohan*, the leaders participating in the rituals, Chief Minister being presented a memento, pilgrims and tourists at the *dhwajaroohan*, Amit Shah performing a ritual and waving at the crowd together with the Chief Minister

## A FORMAL FLAG-OFF OF THE KUMBH

The Simhashta Kumbh Mela formally began on August 20, as the massive ceremonial flags of the *akhadas* were hoisted at Tapovan in Nashik city amid loud chants of *mantras* by thousands of *sadhus* and cheers of pilgrims, officials and a host of political leaders. The beatings of drums and well-decorated *akhadas* created a vibrant ambience.

The *dhwajaroohan* saw the presence of Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, Guardian Minister Girish Mahajan, Minister of State for Cooperation Dadaji Bhuse, BJP National President Amit Shah, BJP State Chief Raosaheb Danve, Mayor of Nashik Ashok Murtadak, eminent dignitaries, officials and large number of *mahants* and *sadhus*. Though the Nashik-Trimbakeshwar Kumbh Mela was officially inaugurated on July 14, the hoisting of the flags by the *sadhus* signifies the formal beginning of the event.







05

COVER STORY

## A SUPER INDUSTRIAL STATE

With the recent investment of \$5 billion by Foxconn in Maharashtra over five years—the single biggest foreign investment in the State—and General Motors investing additional ₹6,400 crore in Pune, Maharashtra is gearing up to become one of the most revered manufacturing destinations in the world



14

### WILDLIFE CRUCIAL FOR HUMANKIND

Government of Maharashtra has launched a focused tiger conservation programme with an emphasis on consolidation of areas assigned for tiger conservation



21

### FIELD VISIT NOW, SOLUTIONS ARE A STEP AWAY

With the novel concept of Samadhan Shibir, the State Government has entered into a direct dialogue with the people of Maharashtra



26

### IN PERSON DIWAKAR RAOTE

Minister for Transport says higher and faster compensation will greatly reduce the number of litigations even as one will see many positive changes in the transport department



28

### FESTIVAL LAKHS GATHER FOR THE HOLY BATH

The first Shahi Snan of Simhastha Kumbh Mela 2015 took place on August 29. Lakhs of devotees thronged Godavari to take a holy dip



30

### NUMBER ONE THE TREE OF LIFE

Coconut's multiple uses, minimal upkeep, high ornamental value and long lifespan make it the most important palm in the world. The tree is a significant part of the Konkan region



32

### CULTURE CURRY EMBODYING GANESHA

With barely 25,000 inhabitants, the village of Pen in Raigad district of Maharashtra churns out 2.5 lakh Ganesha idols every year that find takers across the globe



38

### WANDERLUST NATURE'S CANVAS

A little-known gem, Kaas plateau has been attracting visitors after being declared a biodiversity site by UNESCO. Maharashtra's very own Valley of Flowers turns into a riot of colours around August



40

### FORTS MAVAL'S MARVELS

Located in the sub-hills of Sahyadri, the forts of Lohgad, Visapur, Tung and Tikona played a pivotal role in Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's Swarajya campaign

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## NEXT-GENERATION INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

Prime Minister Narendra Modi gave the country the vision of Make in India with the aim to establish it as one of the most promising manufacturing destinations in the world. On the lines of Make in India, Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis has successfully promoted Make in Maharashtra initiative across the world. The programme is already receiving an overwhelming response from the international business community.

As a result, the last ten months have seen increasing confidence of investors in Maharashtra and its image as an investment-friendly destination has got an immense boost on the global platform. Recently, the State signed an MoU with Foxconn, a Taiwanese company, for an investment of \$5 billion, and with General Motors for an additional investment of ₹6,400 crore. These two projects will generate employment and self-employment opportunities for 50,000-

60,000 people. Our cover feature captures the agreements made under Make in Maharashtra and the foreign companies investing in the State.

The feature on Save Tiger gives an in-depth analysis of State's effective efforts and challenges to save tigers and the increasing number of tigers in Maharashtra. A total of 13 tiger projects in the country are located in 300 sq. km. area of and around Vidarbha, making the region the Tiger Capital of India. As a part of the project,



a unique exhibition, an initiative of Minister for Forests, Sudhir Mungantiwar, was organised in Mumbai Mantralaya.

The low rainfall in the State, especially in Marathwada, has created drought-like situation. Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis visited Aurangabad to have a first-hand information and announced many decisions in the context, giving solace to the drought-affected people and farmers of the district. The Chief Minister also visited the Samadhan Shibir organised in Nagpur city, where people participated in large numbers.

In our regular pages, we bring to you features on world heritage structures of Maharashtra, Kaas plateau, Pen Ganpati, forts of Maval region and Sindhudurg coconut. We also have a photo feature on the first Shahi Snan of Simhastha Kumbh Mela 2015, at Nashik-Trimbakeshwar on August 29, where lakhs of devotees thronged the banks of river Godavari for a holy dip, presenting a mesmerising view of divinity.

We look forward to your feedback on the issue.

**Manisha Patankar-Mhaikar**Editor-in-Chief, *Maharashtra Ahead*, DGIPR





The manufacturing facility of car maker Mercedes Benz in Pune, Maharashtra

## A SUPER INDUSTRIAL STATE

With the recent investment of \$5 billion by Foxconn in Maharashtra over five years—the single biggest foreign investment in the State—and General Motors investing additional ₹6,400 crore in Pune, the State is on the path to become one of the preferred manufacturing destinations in the world. **Chandragupta Amritkar** analyses a few developments, agreements and international visits under Make in Maharashtra

**M**aharashtra's image as an investment-friendly destination got an immense boost on a global platform, as it was able to get a successful bid for Foxconn's \$5 billion competing with countries like Malaysia and Indonesia, which are well known for being investment-friendly, and Indian States such as Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat.

The State machinery had been at work from April—ever since Amitabh Kant, Secretary, Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion, Government of India, had hinted to State Governments about Foxconn's intention to expand. Under-

standing the importance of getting this single investment, Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis took a personal interest and met the Foxconn delegation led by its Founder-CEO Terry Gou. In five months, the Chief Minister, Principal Secretary, Industries Apurva Chandra and Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation (MIDC) CEO Bhushan Gagrani, through detailed presentations and personal site visits, were able to convince Foxconn officials that Maharashtra is the State to set up their plant outside China. The plant is expected to be a replica of the company's Zhengzhou plant in east-central China and its second largest manufacturing facility.



Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and Foxconn Chairman Terry Gou sign a MoU at the World Trade Centre. Minister for Industries Subhash Desai, Principal Secretary, Industries, Apurva Chandra, and Chief Financial Officer, Foxconn, David Huang are seen on the occasion

## SEPTEMBER 17: INDUSTRIES DAY

Maharashtra has always been on the forefront of industrialisation of the country. But with global competition on the rise and understanding the importance and role SMEs can play in the State's financial health, the State has announced to observe September 17 as Industries Day. The aim of the step is to provide balanced growth to existing small, medium and large scale enterprises and render assistance for setting up new industries.

### SALIENT POINTS

- Under the Maharashtra Industrial policy, the Government wants to provide a platform to small, medium and large scale industries to showcase their strengths and growth potential. Thus, it has decided to celebrate Industries Day in each district on Vishwakarma Jayanti.
- Celebrating the day will help districts exhibit their growth potential and opportunities received for their development in the year. This will also get all the districts on the same page with regards to industrial growth, as well as provide job opportunities besides helping the Government in ensuring that its policies benefit people at the grassroots level.
- This day, awards to industries at the district level will be given for their exemplary performance.

**CELEBRATING THE INDUSTRIES DAY WILL HELP DISTRICTS EXHIBIT THEIR GROWTH POTENTIAL AND OPPORTUNITIES RECEIVED FOR THEIR DEVELOPMENT IN THE YEAR**

The Taiwanese company will invest \$5 billion in Maharashtra to set up a semiconductor unit. Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis was present at the signing ceremony along with Terry Gou, Chairman, Foxconn, at the World Trade Centre. "The reason I chose to invest in Maharashtra was the State leadership and the response team that followed up on meetings. In two months, I met Devendra Fadnavis seven times. Also the fact that the place for the unit is close to Mumbai, the country's financial capital, as well as the easy availability of skilled labour drove the decision," said a relaxed Terry Gou.

"Gou was impressed with the research environment when he visited Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay, in particular their ongoing research in metallurgy, hardware, nanotechnology. All these fields are in compatibility with his line of programming," said Bhushan Gagrani.

The State Government has offered Foxconn 1,500 acres in the MIDC industrial estate at Talegaon. The unit will manufacture for the local market as well as for exports. The proximity to the proposed Navi Mumbai international airport would facilitate exports. Devendra Fadnavis said Foxconn will make the maximum investment within the first three years. "The investment will not only generate 50,000 jobs, which is scalable, it will create a positive climate for investment," he added.

## GENERAL MOTORS

Earlier, Maharashtra had struck a deal with General Motors Co., which has now decided to close down its Halol plant in



Gujarat and invest ₹6,400 crore at Chakan in Pune district. Gujarat's loss turned out to be Maharashtra's gain.

The carmaker, which entered India in 1996, has been struggling for the past two decades and has mere 1.8 per market share. GM plans to roll out 10 new models from its plant in Maharashtra—the models will be aimed at domestic and export markets and production will commence in two years. The company wants to increase capacity at Talegaon to 2.2 lakh by 2025. “Of the \$5-billion global investments, \$1 billion will come to India. This doubles our investment into India since 1996. This will help create 12,000 jobs in the country. GM cannot remain

**GM plans to roll out 10 new models from its plant in Maharashtra. The models will be aimed at domestic as well as export markets. The production will commence in two years, and aims to create 12,000 jobs in the country**

a global leader without making a serious investment towards expanding our presence in growth markets like India,” said Mary Barra, CEO, General Motors Co. The new models include the Trailblazer SUV, which will go on sale in October, and the Spin MPV, which will reach the market in early 2017. The new models may require a new manufacturing line. GM is also readying an all new Beat hatchback and a sub-4 metre sedan based on M300 platform for the mass market in 2017.

Another US-based automaker Chrysler has assured investment of ₹2,000 crore in the State.

#### CISCO-NAGPUR SMART CITY

Devendra Fadnavis met Cisco's Executive Vice President and Chief Development Officer Pankaj Patel in USA and discussed the presentation on design of smart Nagpur city. US-based Cisco designs, manufactures and sells networking equipment. The State Government then signed an MoU with Cisco on the Smart Cities project, starting with Nagpur as a pilot project. Devendra Fadnavis said, “It is my endeavour to smarten the whole of Maharashtra. It should not start and stop at Nagpur alone. I would like to proceed with the same



Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and Cisco's Executive Vice President and Chief Development Officer Pankaj Patel at the signing of MoU with Cisco

#### WHAT THEY SAID...



**“ I am happy that global major Foxconn's investment in India will provide a boost to the Make in India campaign. This is the opportune time to invest in Maharashtra. According to recent figures, by 2030, Electronic Items Import Bill will surpass our crude import.**

**—Devendra Fadnavis**  
Chief Minister



**“ The reason I chose to invest in Maharashtra was the State leadership and the response team that followed up on meetings. Also, the fact that the place for the unit is close to Mumbai, the country's financial capital, as well as the easy availability of skilled labour drove the decision.**

**—Terry Gou,**  
Chairman, Foxconn



**“ Of our \$5-billion global investments, \$1 billion will come to India. This doubles our investment into India since 1996. This will help create 12,000 jobs in the country. GM cannot remain a global leader without making a serious investment towards expanding our presence in growth markets like India.**

**—Mary Barra**  
CEO, General Motors Co



**“ We are delighted to be partnering with MIDC. This is an important initiative towards making India a more thriving and competitive economy, and a significant step in this direction will contribute considerably in making it easier for the foreign businesses to invest in India, especially in Mumbai.**

**—Richard Heald**  
CEO, UKIBC



## WHAT THEY SAID...



“We are trying to realign Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Make in India programme with Make in Maharashtra by re-analysing all business procedures and trying to drastically reduce the

number of approvals needed to start business in the State. I am sure the MoU we signed with UKIBC will help us improve the ease of doing business in Maharashtra

—Subhash Desai  
Minister for Industries

”



To boost Make in Maharashtra project, we have decided to connect industrial cities and district headquarters with air services. For this, airstrips at some small airports would be required to be extended by at least 1,500 m, in order to ensure at least small aircraft can land there.

—Sudhir Mungantiwar  
Finance Minister



”



“Governments are always keen to attract investment, but yes, because of the ease of doing business, the focus has been a lot more on attracting investments. Now, we are

interacting with departments such as energy, environment and Pollution Control Board, and looking into every permission and clearance that may be needed

—Apurva Chandra  
Industry Secretary

”



Terry Gou of Foxconn was impressed with the research environment when he visited Indian Institute of Technology-Bombay, in particular their ongoing research in metallurgy, hardware, nanotechnology. All these fields are in compatibility with his line of programming

—Bhushan Gagrani  
CEO, MIDC



”

zeal and commitment to upgrade villages to towns and towns to cities in phases across the State.” He added, “Looking at the experiences of Cisco in Barcelona, I am sure this is a good beginning though challenges are different. I believe that smartness enhances efficiency. When you enhance efficiency, things get delivered at right time and right cost and without any interventions. That's exactly what people want from the Government.”

On the Digital India initiative, Devendra Fadnavis said, “I feel that India has a lot of potential to move towards knowledge-based economy. In fact, when our Prime Minister said that 100 cities in India would be developed as smart

**Among major deals Maharashtra had earlier signed are 32 MoUs with various companies. The MoUs signed with MIDC will see companies like Uttam Steel, Tata Autocomp, Mercedes Benz India among others**

cities, it means challenges of cities would be addressed with the use of technology. Technology is a tool, which can equalise and optimise the quality of life. The quality of life which we want our people to actually experience should be achievable. Maharashtra has always been a pioneer in the field of technology.”

The Chief Minister added that Pune is an IT hub like Mumbai. Now Aurangabad, Nashik and Nagpur are also attracting people from IT sector. “One advantage that the

State has is of demography. We all know that 50 per cent of the population is below 25 years of age and it's this population that wants to embrace technology and has been using technology. The highest penetration of mobile phones is in Maharashtra. It also has the highest number of smartphone users.”

## MAHARASHTRA AND THE UK

Maharashtra and the UK Business Ministers witnessed a



(From left) Richard Heald, CEO, UKIBC and Bhushan Gagrani, CEO, MIDC during signing of an MoU for ease of doing business in Maharashtra





Mary Barra, CEO, General Motors Co., presents a car model to Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis in the presence of Minister for Industries Subhash Desai and other dignitaries

memorandum between UK-India Business Council (UKIBC) and MIDC at the formal opening of UKIBC office in Mumbai. British Minister for Trade and Investment, Lord Livingston and Maharashtra Minister for Industries, Subhash Desai in the spirit of the Indian Government's Make in India campaign signed a new agreement between the UKIBC and MIDC, offering the UK support and expertise, as Mumbai works to contribute to an improvement in India's ranking in the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Index.

Subhash Desai said, "We are trying to realign Prime Minister Modi's Make in India programme with Make in Maharashtra by re-analysing all business procedures and trying to drastically reduce the number of approvals needed to start business in Maharashtra. I am sure that the MoU we signed with UKIBC will help us improve the ease of doing business in Maharashtra."

Richard Heald, CEO, UKIBC said, "We are delighted to be partnering with Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation on this MoU. This is an important initiative towards making India a more thriving and competitive economy, and a significant step in this direction will contribute considerably in making it easier for the foreign businesses to invest in India, especially in Mumbai. It is a unique time in the history of two nations to collaborate and enhance competitiveness by bringing leaders from different spheres

together to make a positive and lasting impact towards improving ease of doing business together and to make a positive and lasting impact. We are indeed very pleased to be able to contribute to this significantly."

#### SIDBI AND MIDC

SIDBI Venture Capital and MIDC have also entered into an agreement to offer finance to micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs). The organisations have jointly created funds to the tune of ₹200 crore to provide immediate finance to the MSMEs. Of the total amount, the MIDC has contributed ₹75 crore, while SIDBI has provided the remaining ₹125 crore. The tie-up is part of the State Government's decision to provide easy loans to MSMEs for expansion, product development and other business purposes.

#### AIRPORTS

The Maharashtra Government plans to develop at least 21 small airports in a phased manner as part of its Make in Maharashtra campaign within four years. "To boost our Make in Maharashtra project, we have decided to connect industrial cities and district headquarters with air services. To achieve our target, airstrips at some small airports would be extended by at least 1,500 m to ensure that small aircraft can land there," said Minister for Finance Sudhir Mungantiwar. The



Maharashtra delegation led by Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis (centre) with team members of Swedish aerospace and defence company, SAAB in Germany

Maharashtra Airport Development Authority (MADC) is developing an airport with 2,500 m to 3,200 m airstrip at Shirdi, while the City and Industrial Development Corporation (CIDCO) of Maharashtra Ltd. will develop a 3,700 m International Airport at Navi Mumbai on public-private partnership model. Chandrapur would also get a greenfield airport in the coming years.

### RAILWAYS

The Ministry of Railways and the Government of Maharashtra signed a MoU for a special purpose vehicle (SPV) for speedy implementation of railway projects in the State. Union Minister for Railways Suresh Prabhu also launched the ₹11,000 crore third phase of Mumbai Urban Transport Project (MUTP). A concession agreement between Konkan Railway Corporation Limited (KRCL) and JSW Infrastructure was also signed for the 33.7 km rail line connecting Jaigad Port with Dighi station on the Konkan Railway at an estimated cost of ₹771 crore. The corridor is expected to handle around 12 mtpa of cargo.

### COASTAL ROAD

The coastal road project is expected to connect the tip of the island city with its farthest western suburbs. "We will begin work on the coastal road and the Mumbai Trans-Harbour Link (MTHL) connecting the island city with the mainland this year itself. We have companies from China, Japan and Korea that are keen on these projects," said Devendra Fadnavis.

### OTHER MAJOR DEALS

Among major deals Maharashtra had earlier signed are 32 memoranda of understandings (MoUs) with various companies (Indian and international). The MoUs signed with MIDC will see companies like Uttam Steel, Tata Autocomp, Mercedes Benz India and Bosch, among a host of others. Health, sugar, breweries, agri-business and engineering are among other sectors where projects are understood to be in various stages of development.

### MAHARASHTRA, A GLOBAL PLAYER

Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis has successfully promoted the Make in Maharashtra initiative globally and has got an overwhelming response from the international business community. He has clinched many key investment and corporate deals with MNCs by showcasing Maharashtra as an investment destination. The Chief Minister has been travelling to project the State to NRIs and present the opportunities available in the State, along with the reforms to promote ease of doing business.

"The State eagerly awaits formation of JVs in important projects such as Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor, Smart Cities, manufacturing, agriculture, aviation, engineering and IT. My Government is committed to giving a boost to Make in India and Make in Maharashtra campaigns, and I personally invite investors to be part of Maharashtra's growth story," he said.

Some of the major achievements from Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis' international visits include:

- **Davos, World Economic Forum:** This year, the well-





(From top) Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis during a media interaction on the sidelines of World Economic Forum and with the Indian delegation at Davos, with President of Tel Aviv University, Prof. Joseph Klafter and team in Israel, and meeting Xie Fuzhan, Governor, Henan Province, in China

known global trade forum where the richest in the world interact and network to become richer, opened up opportunities for Maharashtra's collaboration with international business houses. It was Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis' first international visit, where he secured commitment of global defence manufacturer, Safran to visit Nagpur and consider

**VISY, a major Australian paper maker, will explore Maharashtra as location for its paper plant based on 100 per cent waste paper and rags, without using bamboo or wood, reducing pressure on forests**

locating its aero-engineering and defence-related manufacturing. General Electric Vice President formally announced phase 2 expansion of ₹3,000 crore in Pune. Cognizant Chief, Gordon Coburn, appreciated the ease of doing business in India and announced expansion of its Pune operations, which will create 20,000 jobs and add ₹300 crore of investment. VISY, a major Australian paper maker, will explore Maharashtra as location for its paper plant based on 100 per cent waste paper and

rags, without using bamboo or wood, reducing pressure on forests. The Chief Minister also met leaders of global financial sector and investment banners, Anshu Jain of Deutsche Bank, Danny Pinto of JP Morgan, Minoru Shinohara and Vikas Sharma of Nomura Financial Services, and Martyn Parker-Swiss Re into agricultural reinsurance financing.

● **Hannover, Germany:** Hannover Industrial Fair is the





(From above) Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis during his visit to the Jeep facility in Detroit and with Governor of New Jersey, Chris Christie (left) while on an official tour to the USA in July

world's largest industrial exhibition, and this year, India was the partner country. With more than 300 German companies such as Volkswagen, Bosch, ThyssenKrup, Audi and Mercedes Daimler located in the State, Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis pushed Make in India by promoting Make in Maharashtra. Many German companies expressed interest to expand their current operations in the State. ABB agreed to support setting up robotics training facility at Nagpur and is considering manufacturing robotics in Maharashtra. Ericsson plans to invest over ₹300 crore. Expansion of IKEA stores in Maharashtra is also on cards, with outsourcing to Indian small and medium enterprises and women's groups to supply furniture and textile products.

● **Agritech, Israel:** At the Agritech 2015 Exhibition at Tel Aviv, the Chief Minister stressed that Maharashtra is looking for Israeli technology in water conservation, drip irrigation and post-harvest processing to improve farm incomes in the State. He emphasised Maharashtra will give red carpet welcome to Israeli companies to set up special Israeli industrial zone via MIDC.

● **China:** Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis signed a sister city agreement between city of Aurangabad and city of Dun Huang. These two cities have deep cultural similarities that

date back to 4th century, as the Buddhist monks from the most significant Ajanta caves near Aurangabad carried the art of cave hewing to China, where the earliest caves complex sculpted were Mogao cave near Dun Huang. It was here that the Chief Minister had a successful meeting with Chairperson of Foxconn, Terry Gou, which finally converted into an investment. China has been a large investor in Maharashtra.

● **USA:** One of the most successful trips, the Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, during his visit to the US, interacted with industry executives from the US-India Business Council in New York. Operations & Technology Head of Citibank, P. Jagdish Rao met Devendra Fadnavis. Citibank, which has 11,000 employees in India, with branches across Maharashtra, has assured further 4,000 employment opportunities in Mumbai and Pune. Chrysler India is present in Maharashtra through FIAT Chrysler Automobiles and plans to double the production to 2.45 lakh units by 2018. During his visit, the Chief Minister visited Cisco, Apple, Google and Microsoft and was successful in getting commitments from them. He also met Satya Nadella, CEO, Microsoft. Terming this meeting productive and insightful, he tweeted that the software giant will extend support for a digital village and smart city in Maharashtra. He tweeted that Microsoft has agreed for a Digital Village and technology support for healthcare services in remote tribal areas. A pilot project will be kicked off at Melghat in Amravati in the near future. The Chief Minister also met Joe Minarik of Amazon Web Services (AWS) and briefed him about Maharashtra's new IT policy. Amazon has shown keen interest

in further dialogue for evaluating sites for India AWS Region and also for new investments.

## **Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and Minister for Industries Subhash Desai will visit Japan in September to attract investments in the field of IT, electronics, manufacturing, automobiles, etc**

● **Future visit: Japan:** Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and Minister for Industries Subhash Desai will visit Japan in September to attract investments in the field of manufacturing, electronics, IT, automobiles and infrastructure. Besides, the State Government plans to seek the involvement of Japan in the development of 10 smart cities in Maharashtra. The delegation will hold meetings with leading

Japanese companies and with representatives of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and Japan External Trade Organisation (JETRO).

As per Subhash Desai, the Government will seek JICA's assistance in the ₹11,300-crore coastal road connecting south and north Mumbai, the ₹45,000-crore Mumbai Metro-II project between Dahisar and Mankhurd via Charkop and Bandra, Wadala and Kasarvadavali through Ghatkopar and Thane, and the ₹23,136-crore Mumbai Metro III Colaba-Bandra-SEEPZ corridor. **M**





Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis launching Aaple Sarkar Phase II in Mumbai together with Chief Secretary Swadheen Kshatriya. Additional Chief Secretary (Information Technology) D K Jain is also seen on the dais

## FROM **SWARAJYA** TO SURAJYA

Maharashtra Government's people portal, Aaple Sarkar, in Phase II, will implement the initiative at district level on pilot basis

A people-oriented initiative saw the light of the day with the launch of Aaple Sarkar, a web portal that empowers people of Maharashtra to enter into a dialogue with the State Government. A brainchild of Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, the portal was launched on January 26 with the aim of providing a platform to the common man for redressal of one's grievances and dedicated the portal to the people of the Maharashtra for the purpose of linking them to the State Secretariat. Buoyed by the success of the first phase of the portal, he launched the second phase on August 15 this year. Amidst extending Independence Day greetings, the Chief Minister launching the second phase of the portal said, "Let *Swarajya* be transformed into *Surajya* (People's Raj)."

Aaple Sarkar has been successful in redressing the grievances of people. The endeavour of the portal is to ensure that the complaints reach the right person. With the Right to Services Act, the accountability of the administration has increased. Soon the portal will become a single point for all online services and have a link to Right to Services Act. The grievances from this portal are also taken up during the online Lokshahi Din. The portal has been able to infuse the faith of common people in the Government. Since the launch, the portal has received 9,200 complaints. Of these 78 per cent have been solved.

In its second phase, Aaple Sarkar will be implemented at the district level on pilot basis. It will cover six districts of

### MEET THE PEOPLE: CHIEF SECRETARY

State Government officials should meet people with gratitude, said Chief Secretary Swadheen Kshatriya. "Officers should keep one hour aside for meeting people so that they are at ease while meeting senior gazetted officials in case of need. The officers should mention the meeting time on the display board put up outside their offices. The people are satisfied if their problems are heard. Aaple Sarkar is the best example of proper use of IT," he added.



Maharashtra, namely Thane, Nashik, Pune, Aurangabad, Nagpur and Amravati. Applications received through District Collector, Municipal Councils, Police Department and Zilla Parishads will be taken up. Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis will himself look into the unsolved and investment grievances in the monthly e-Lokshahi meeting.

Dedicating the second phase to people, the Chief Minister expected the third phase of the initiative to be launched on Republic Day next year. Chief Secretary Swadheen Kshatriya, Additional Chief Secretary (Information Technology) D. K. Jain, Principal Secretary to Chief Minister's Office, Praveen Pardeshi and others were present at the launch. **M**

—Ajay Jadhav



# Tiger

is crucial  
for  
**forests**  
and  
humankind

Government of Maharashtra has launched a focused tiger conservation programme, Tiger Day, besides emphasising on consolidation of areas assigned for tiger conservation. But, there is much to be done still, says **Madhav Gogate**

**R**udyard Kipling's famous book, *Jungle Book* was set against a backdrop of an extensive forest blessed with wildlife in the Central Provinces and Berar—the administrative unit of pre-independence British India—located in the central peninsular India. In the present context, the area has Vidarbha of Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. One of the key characters portrayed in the famous book was Sher Khan, the tiger. Even today, Sher Khan commands respect from his readers mainly out of awe or fear. It is no wonder that the animal has been wrongly depicted as an evil force that needed to be subjugated. Such stories wrongly conditioned impressionable minds and established tiger hunting as a macho sport of nobles.

Hunting, coupled with other factors such as shrinking tiger habitats and progressively increasing pressures there on resulted in an alarming decline in India's tiger population to such an extent that some feared a complete loss of this magnificent species before the dawn of 21st century. During

the late 70s, the scare had rung warning bells amongst the conservationists at national and international levels. With active support of World Wild Fund, the issue led to the constitution of Project Tiger by Government of India in 1972.

#### TIGER CONSERVATION IN MAHARASHTRA

Since last four decades, political leadership in above-said *Jungle Book* landscape has persistently pursued the need of tiger conservation; it has been realised that in situ conservation is a multifaceted and complex issue. Strategies to accomplish the task were to be devoted specifically for saving the tiger and eliminating factors such as habitat destruction, forest disturbance, loss of prey, poaching and competition with local villagers and domestic animals that were contributing to the decline of the wild animal.

Within the forest reserves, certain areas were to be designated as core zone or 'sanctum sanctorum,' that is undisturbed pristine forest area out of bounds for human





indicator of healthy forest ecosystem essential for humankind. Thanks to the persistent, unstinted support by the policy makers, the forest and wildlife administrations in Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh individually as also jointly took up conservation. Constitution of continuous landscape in Pench river catchment area that supports interstate electric power generation and irrigation project, as dedicated tiger reserves, can be cited as an example thereof.

Maharashtra with six tiger reserves and wildlife sanctuaries—Nagzira, Mansingh Deo, Chaprala, Bhamragarh, Tipeshwar, Painganga and others—is an important tiger State. Following the report of Wildlife Institute of India, connecting tiger populations for long-time conservation, Maharashtra has notified areas like Karhandla Sanctuary near Umred to have space for spillover population from Tadoba Andhari/Mansingh Deo around Pench and increased the area of Nagzira and Navegaon protected areas. Areas around Tillari irrigation project in Sindhudurg, located in the Western Ghats, will strengthen corridor with adjoining Karnataka.

With such efforts, Maharashtra has come out to be one of the tiger saviour States. The tiger population in the State has almost doubled during the last decade, i.e. from 103 to 190. Vidarbha has major share of over 150 tigers. With additional tiger habitats like Kanha, Pench, Bandhavgadh of adjoining Madhya Pradesh and Udanti–Sitanadi and Achanakmar tiger reserves of Chhattisgarh, a major chunk of tiger land can be approached from Nagpur, making the district a gateway to the tiger land in India.

**WITH SIX  
TIGER RESERVES  
AND WILDLIFE  
SANCTUARIES—  
NAGZIRA,  
MANSINGH DEO,  
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BHAMRAGARH,  
TIPESHWAR AND  
PAINGANGA—  
MAHARASHTRA IS  
AN IMPORTANT  
TIGER STATE**

While one must rejoice the increasing tiger numbers, the mission of tiger conservation is still not accomplished. With large human population located within and around tiger areas, the increasing aspirations of the people to have better living conditions and progress, and greater clout that they have in decision making, the way ahead is certainly difficult.

In a federal democratic state, decision making is becoming more and more decentralised—it is the planning at the village level that is rightly assuming greater proportions. Henceforth, harmonisation of local needs and that at landscape level (district/region/State) will be a critical issue. Bringing additional large chunks of forests, to expand the network of tiger areas, will now be more daunting task. Hence, strengthening existing corridors and establishment of new corridors need to be given priority. With this backdrop, let us ponder on and evaluate efficacy of efforts made so far, and explore new ways that are in tune with the changing scenario.

interference. In such areas, the tiger has ideal conditions to flourish and multiply. Successful breeding was to ensure long-term survival of the animal. It was hoped that as tiger populations increased, surplus animals would migrate to neighbouring forests. Wide buffer zones would provide ideal protection to the surplus population. The limited public activities in these areas would help balance forest communities and tiger conservation. For vibrant gene pool and to avoid evil of possible inbreeding, surplus animals should spread out and travel long distances. To encourage this, wherever feasible, such corridors would be secured for easy access to other forests and villages relocated, with their consent, to locations wherein they can enjoy better living standards.

#### ACCOMPLISHMENTS SO FAR

To set right the alarming decline of tigers, it required concerted efforts to educate the opinion makers and stakeholders of society that tiger has a crucial role as an



## RELOCATION OF VILLAGES

Rural lifestyle and manner in which people have been exploiting resources around their village almost to brink puts serious limitation on their co-existence in the tiger land. When competition becomes severe and co-existence impossible, there is no alternative but to relocate such villages elsewhere. However, it is a painful exercise for those who are to be uprooted from their homes. For the welfare and advancement of marginalised communities that live in considerable hardship in remote forests and may not have access to basic amenities, relocation package has to be so attractive that it is accepted by own volition and not as something that has been thrust on them.

The ongoing relocation process is very slow and its ultimate contribution to making tiger land inviolate is not being documented and analysed. There are already diverse views expressed by the groups dealing in tribal and human rights; some ecologists even doubt positive effects of no interference approach. There is, thus, a need to have a holistic review by a multidisciplinary team of the relocations made. Then one must also explore measures that will minimise conflict situation by harmonisation of conflicts rather than focusing only on relocation.

**THE** TIGER POPULATION IN MAHARASHTRA HAS ALMOST DOUBLED DURING THE LAST DECADE—FROM 103 TO 190. WITH MAJOR SHARE OF OVER 150 TIGERS IN VIDARBHA, NAGPUR IS CONSIDERED A GATEWAY TO TIGER LAND IN INDIA

## AN OPPORTUNITY WITH LIMITATIONS

Eco-tourism is a wonderful tool for reaching out to the communities living in remote areas that have remained deprived from development so far. But one must understand that it is a double-edged sword that needs to be handled very carefully and judiciously. Hence, there is a need to educate every stakeholder to understand individual responsibility.

Eco-tourism is spending leisure time with nature and wildlife. The Government has also supported it, as it considered the concept to be an ideal vehicle to reach out to remote areas. In the initial period, the eco-tourism activities remained confined mainly to hospitality, and in some cases, had adverse impact on the very habitat the industry was marketing. It was realised that the problems were due to lack of basic understanding and required educating the stakeholders. The training programmes organised through nature enthusiasts and wildlife experts, thus, prove beneficial. Similarly, the local community needs to be educated that a balanced ecosystem and better wildlife is a key to their prosperity.

The topmost priority of eco-tourism is requirement of resorts that recycle liquid and solid waste and avoid water and soil pollution. Eco-tourism is controlled tourism, where







(Clockwise from top left) A colourful butterfly, lotus flowers in full bloom, a herd of oxen, tigers at Tadoba, a leopard in the wild, Hanuman Langurs, a slice of nature, deers and jackal cubs in the forests of Maharashtra



no activity that can disturb serene natural ambience is allowed. Meaningful participation of local community in nature interpretation, providing services, creation and sale of indigenous crafts and wares, and more importantly, cultural exchange is needed. Introduction of innovative ideas to reduce sound level to minimum to maintain serene jungle atmosphere is essential.

Another challenge of our eco-tourism projects is that of being tiger (mega species) centric instead of nature centric. In fact, we are over-marketing tiger, which has led to more problems. Tiger sighting is a pre-requisite for tourists, and organisers use every trick in the book to achieve this. This not only puts a pressure on the animal, but is also detrimental to the very concept of wildlife conservation. Most of the time, wildlife tourism in India is compared with African Safaris, but the conditions of both are vastly different. There is a need to make our tourists aware of the facts. Moreover, it must be understood that in the Indian context, conservation is primary, while tourism is secondary.

### SCOPE FOR IMPROVEMENT

Government of Maharashtra has launched a focused tiger conservation programme, *Vyaaghra Din*, or Tiger Day, showcased gains made so far and indicated the way ahead. In tune with the changing scenario, the thrust areas include consolidation of areas assigned for tiger conservation, to enhance tiger population safe pastures, as it will enhance wild herbivore population—the very foundation of food chain—rejuvenate water resources in the forest, relocation of villages from the project area, and constitution of State-level tiger protection force.

With erratic and limited rains, situation of fodder and forage that used to sustain herbivores—both domestic and wild—came under stress, resulting in clamour for remission in grazing fees, which was invariably conceded to, from time to time. Some states like Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh have abolished levy of fees altogether. As such grazing fees have continued to be so low that there were no takers to work as commission and paid vendors to vend grazing passes, be it at concessional or commercial rates. Enforcement of grazing regulations that was actually essential to sustain livestock has been compromised. Grazing settlement—essential to set in position optimal use of resources, based on essential needs of the animals and if found surplus, made available for commercial purposes—has now been made a mere ritual. There is a preference to fodder and forage over tree planting, which was and is still being considered part of the prestigious 20-point programme. At least for the tiger lands, including buffers and corridors, there is need for paradigm shift. **M**

—The writer is Retired Chief Wildlife Warden, Maharashtra, and Chairperson, Management Effectiveness Evaluation Team appointed by the MoEF, GoI



# Big B to endorse the Big C

Maharashtra's Save Tiger campaign gets a shot in the arm with veteran filmstar Amitabh Bachchan chosen as brand ambassador



(From left) Amitabh Bachchan and Minister for Forests Sudhir Mungantiwar at the tiger exhibition and the consent letter from the veteran actor

Superstar Amitabh Bachchan will now be the ambassador for Maharashtra's tiger conservation programme. In July, the Tiger Protection Foundation approved a proposal to appoint Big B as the ambassador to promote the Save Tiger campaign. Accepting the offer letter by Minister for Forests Sudhir Mungantiwar, Amitabh Bachchan said, "Your expansive letter has educated me greatly on not just the tiger reserves within the state of Maharashtra, but also the finer points on the importance of this campaign. I wish to accept your kind offer to render my services towards the State Government's initiative for tiger conservation. This letter may kindly be treated as my consent to represent the State of Maharashtra as its Tiger Ambassador."

Sudhir Mungantiwar had written to Amitabh Bachchan on July 29 on the occasion of World Tiger Day. "Considering the popularity and legendary image of Amitabh Bachchan, he was a clear choice to be appointed as tiger ambassador which will be instrumental in bringing awareness among the citizens of the State towards protection and preservation of tigers. I am confident that the involvement of citizens in Save Tiger campaign will convert into a popular movement with the help of Amitabh Bachchan," he said.

Sudhir Mungantiwar said the superstar's association with the project would help raise awareness about saving the striped cat among the public.



Maharashtra has six tiger reserves, including Melghat Tiger Reserve in Amravati, Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve in Chandrapur, Pench and Nagzira-Navegan Tiger Reserves near Nagpur, Sahyadri Sanctuary, which includes Chandoli National Park and Koyna Sanctuary, and Bor Tiger Reserve

**THE STATE WITH SIX TIGER RESERVES HAS RECORDED A STEADY RISE IN TIGER POPULATION FROM 103 IN 2006 TO 169 IN 2010 AND 190 IN 2014, AS REPORTED IN THE TIGER ESTIMATION CONDUCTED EVERY FOUR YEARS**

in Wardha. The six tiger reserves have 190 tigers as per the 2014 census. The State has recorded a steady rise in tiger population from 103 in 2006 to 169 in 2010 and 190 in 2014, as reported in the tiger estimation conducted every four years.

To bring about a major change in tiger conservation, it was felt that new ideas need to be articulated effectively and public support generated after dialogue with stakeholders. On

these lines, a suitable programme is needed to be launched to ensure long-term tiger conservation. Now that Maharashtra Government has found an excellent spokesperson in the veteran actor, who has become the brand ambassador of the tiger conservation movement, it is expected that desired goals would be fulfilled. ■





Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis with his cabinet colleagues, Deepak Kesarkar, Ram Shinde, Sudhir Mungantiwar and Dr. Deepak Sawant at the exhibition

# A giant leap for the big cat

**In the backdrop of World Tiger Day, the State Government has appealed to the people of Maharashtra to come together for protection and conservation of forests and tiger**

India is in the forefront due to the increase in the number of tigers in the last decade, as per the documentation on tigers by National Tiger Conservation Authority. When Project Tiger was started in 1973, there were nine tiger projects in the country. The number has now gone up to 38. According to a report on the status of tigers in India, in 2014, there were 2,226 tigers in the country as compared to 1,700 tigers in 2010. The number of tigers in Maharashtra has also risen from 169 in 2010 to 190 at present.

Although Maharashtra ranks fifth in the number of

tigers in India, five tiger projects from a total of six in Maharashtra and eight tiger projects from other States—which means a total of 13 tiger projects in the country—are located in 300 sq. km area of Vidarbha. One can surely say that Vidarbha is the Tiger Capital of India.

On July 29, the day celebrated as World Tiger Day, Minister for Forests, Sudhir Mungantiwar decided to share with the world Maharashtra's precious tiger presence. An exhibition on tiger was organised in Mumbai Mantralaya on August 4. The showcase that presented State's work on forest development and tiger conservation was applauded by the visitors. The display was further supplemented by the words of Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis.

In his inaugural speech, the Chief Minister said that public participation in forest development has given acceleration to State's tiger mission. He insisted that forests and tiger projects are not just the responsibility of the Government, but constitute the wealth of the State. He appealed to the people to come together for protection and conservation of this wealth. He said that people need to become a nutrient of nature rather than its predator. If this happens, there will be no need of a police force for forest protection, and every person will become a guard for the forest, he added.

Sudhir Mungantiwar appealed to the people that everyone should resolve to be a part of forest and wildlife





(From top) Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis takes a look at the tiger exhibition and addresses the gathering, participants at the exhibition and the Chief Minister being given a memento. Also seen are Chief Secretary Swadheen Kshatriya and Minister for Forests Sudhir Mungantiwar

conservation. He underlined that a tiger exists where there is a forest and the forest cannot exist if the tigers go extinct. Therefore, it must be understood that tiger is an important element of forest's biodiversity. With a view to increase people participation in tiger conservation, he announced a competition on behalf of Talent India for designs, photographs, music and documentaries related to tiger conservation.

The enthusiasm was evident throughout the Mantralaya on the day of the exhibition. A picture of the tiger put up on the ground floor was indeed a centre of attraction. People were seen clicking photographs with the huge exhibit. Many were busy reading the facts on tiger and tiger projects in the State. Many visitors expressed their worry on the challenges for tiger conservation.

A group of women was extremely pleased while commenting on the stunning impressive personality of the tiger. Some were seen discussing the cute cubs, while some were appreciating the two huge fibre tigers at the exhibition. Many of the visitors were seen making plans to visit the six tiger projects in the State. The visitors also watched the documentaries featuring tigers. On the whole, everyone was enjoying the tiger wealth of the State.

Although the staff members at Mantralaya are generally Mumbaikars, it was an opportunity for them as well to experience something new and dazzling. The people who were in the Mantralaya for work almost forgot the reason for their

**FIVE** TIGER PROJECTS FROM A TOTAL OF SIX IN MAHARASHTRA AND EIGHT TIGER PROJECTS FROM OTHER STATES, THAT IS A TOTAL OF 13 TIGER PROJECTS IN THE COUNTRY ARE LOCATED IN 300 SQ. KM AREA OF VIDARBHA

visit and engaged themselves in the exhibition. The need for ever-busy Mumbaikars to have such leisure was also eminently evident. The event also underlined the affinity people have for nature. The exhibition showed the eagerness of people to be with the wildlife. Every exhibit at the venue was inviting visitors to the tiger projects in the State and that must have been the main aim behind holding this total tiger event.

Maharashtra is a State with valleys and rivers, forts and fortresses, hill ranges and exquisitely huge and beautiful seashore. The forests here are blessed with flora and fauna and thus inviting. With the aim that State's forests and tigers therein get exposure and eco-tourism sees acceleration with millions of domestic and international tourists visiting the State, the exhibition was successful as a platform. The crowds at all the floors of Mantralaya during the inauguration spoke of the success story the exhibition had created. Not a routine, it was an interesting way to generate public awareness about State's connection with the big cat. **M**

—Dr. Surekha Mulay



# NOW, SOLUTIONS ARE A STEP AWAY

With the novel concept of Samadhan Shibir, the State Government has entered into a direct dialogue with the people of Maharashtra, writes **Mohan Rathod**



(Clockwise from left) Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis addresses Samadhan Shibir, the participants at the Shibir and the Chief Minister attending to complaints

Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis speaks to everyone and patiently tries to understand the issues brought by them. The belief has brought many citizens to the Samadhan Shibirs organised in the State. Today, at one such camp in Nagpur, the crowd has a complainant with tears in her eyes. She is speaking to Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, detailing him about her problem. While the conversation is on, the Chief Minister asks to be connected to the Police Commissioner immediately.

“Please call the Police Commissioner. The people have come to us for work. If evil elements of society are creating trouble for them, it is our duty to protect them and build confidence in them,” says Devendra Fadnavis.

In a few minutes, the call is made and the Chief Minister addresses the Police Commissioner. “Control the concerned immediately. There should not be a fear psychosis in the city...”

“We are obliged beyond perception. We never imagined that the Chief Minister would take such a prompt cognisance of the matter,” says the lady.

This is one of the many cases addressed at the Samadhan Shibir, a platform launched by Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, where he attends to the grievances of State’s natives. He speaks to them individually and tries to understand their problems.

The Chief Minister then invites Jaisingh Chavan, a handicapped person with disability in both legs who has put

up a brave fight and emerged as an entrepreneur, to sit with him. During the conversation, Sadanand Fulzele, Secretary, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Smarak Samiti, Deeksha Bhoomi, arrives to invite the Chief Minister for Dussehra programme. The Chief Minister confirms his participation for the programme.

Devendra Fadnavis has arrived in Nagpur recently. On his way from the airport, he headed straight to the cancer hospital near Jamtha Stadium. The hospital was not on his itinerary, but he instructed Superintendent of Police, Dr. Aarti Singh to

turn to the hospital. It was 10 p.m. but he was keen to see the hospital that has been built keeping in mind the increasing number of cancer patients in the State. In fact, the Chief Minister had to leave for Lakhandur to participate in the condolence meet on the sad demise of former MP Namdeorao Diwte, but a large number of people were waiting to meet him at Ramgiri, his official residence at Nagpur. He issued instructions to the concerned officers to allow

everyone inside. He added that when people arrive from far away places, the officers must attend to them.

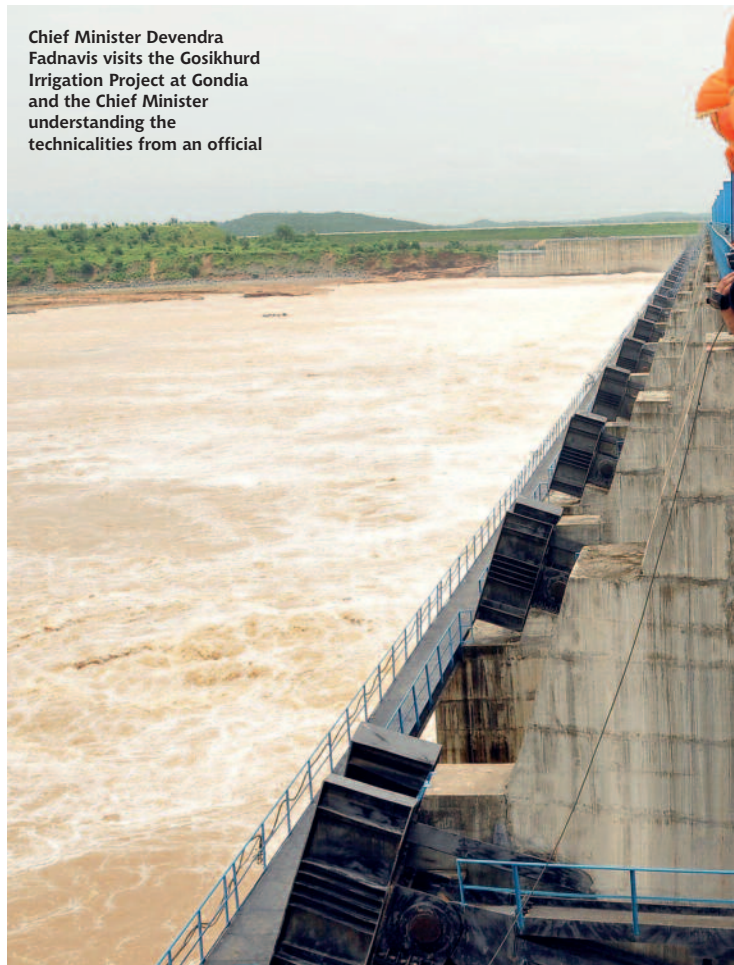
The initiative, Samadhan Shibir was launched with the intention of resolving the day-to-day and pending issues of people. With two successful camps, the initiative has turned into an exceptionally successful dialogue between the people of Maharashtra and their leader. Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis has emphasised that the camps should be looked upon as a bridge between the Government and the people.

The Samadhan Shibir organised at South Nagpur Assembly Constituency was inaugurated by the Chief Minister, who was accompanied by Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways and Shipping, Nitin Gadkari, a special guest, Guardian Minister Chandrashekhar Bawankule, Mayor Pravin Datke and others. The camp turned out to be a busy affair for the Chief Minister, as he met people throughout the day. The Chief Minister shared that 981 complaints were resolved out of 1,336 complaints received. This was the second such camp organised in the State.

To resolve further issues of the city, Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis has started a secretariat at Nagpur and Samadhan Shibir, which have raised the expectations of people. The citizens now have a rightful place to get their problem addressed. The officers in the administrative departments also need to be congratulated for the role played through these camps. Samadhan Shibir will now be organised at every Legislative Constituency in the State, informed the Chief Minister. ■

**Over 981 complaints, out of 1,336 complaints received, were resolved on the first Samadhan Shibir held in Nagpur city. It was the second such camp held in the State**

Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis visits the Gosikhurd Irrigation Project at Gondia and the Chief Minister understanding the technicalities from an official



■ CM@BHANDARA

## A visit to Gosikhurd

The people affected by Gosikhurd National Irrigation Project will be rehabilitated with modern facilities in a planned manner. The State Government has also set aside funds for the maintenance of the rehabilitated 34 Gram Panchayats. The planning has been done to empower the irrigation project within next three years. Presently, a sum of ₹700 crore has been provided for this and, in future, if funds are needed, will be provided. Also, a fund of ₹120 crore will be made available for Bawanthadi project, giving boost to irrigation in Vidarbha,” said Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis.

The Chief Minister visited the Gosikhurd Project recently and inquired about its technicalities. After the visit to the project, he met concerned representatives of people and officials. The meeting was attended by Minister of State for Water Resources Vijay Shitware, Minister of State for Finance





### LOWER WARDHA IRRIGATION PROJECT

- The project will be completed within next three years and 66,000 ha will be brought under irrigation
- The funds should be utilised for land acquisition on priority
- The rehabilitated villages will be state-of-the-art with all facilities provided
- There is a decision to enhance the repair and maintenance sum from 5 to 25 per cent
- The 18 norms prescribed for rehabilitation of villages will undergo changes after decision on all the levels
- The villages that have been rehabilitated, but are deprived of civic facilities will be reviewed and modern facilities will be made available
- The concerned agency will be responsible for repair and maintenance of villages that will be rehabilitated hereafter for a period of five years
- After a village is rehabilitated, a joint inspection will be conducted by Water Resources Department, Zilla Parishad and concerned agency, and then announced as a Gram Panchayat.



and Planning Deepak Kesarkar, people's representatives and officials. The Chief Minister said, for creating irrigation capacity, there will be no dearth of funds. With an objective to provide all amenities to those affected by the project, a decision has been taken to provide funds for their rehabilitation by waiving off all conditions. He also directed Water Resources Department to prepare a consolidate proposal of ₹120 crore to complete the Bawanthadi project.

### LOWER WARDHA PROJECT TO BE COMPLETED WITHIN NEXT THREE YEARS

While completing the Lower Wardha Irrigation Project, the main aim would be to create direct irrigation capabilities of 66,000 ha. The project will be completed in next three years in a time-bound programme. Funds as required will be made available so that incomplete work on the project, including rehabilitation, can be completed. This was stated by Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis during his visit to the Lower Wardha Irrigation Project in Arvi taluka to have detailed information on the project. The Chief Minister also reviewed

the rehabilitation of the villages affected by the project and civic amenities made available to the people.

Minister of State (Industries) Pravin Pote, MP Ramdas Tadas, MLA Amar Kale, Dr. Pankaj Bhojar, Sameer Kunawar, Virendra Jagtap, Ex MP Vijay Mude, Ex MLA Dadarao Keche, Additional Chief Secretary Finance, Sudhir Srivastava, Principal Secretary to Chief Minister Pravin Pardeshi, Chief Secretary Water Resources Satish Gavai, Help and Assistance Secretary K. H. Govindraj, Secretary, Water Resources, S. M. Upashe, Divisional Commissioner Anoop Kumar, Dnyaneshwar Rajurkar from Amravati, District Collector Ashutosh Salil, Amravati District Collector Kiran Gite, Chief Engineer, Gosikhurd Project, Akash Surve, Dhangare and senior officers from various departments were present on the occasion.

The Chief Minister said that the area affected due to the project was huge. He issued instructions to the Chief Engineer to study the region once again and submit a report within two months on the remedial measures to be undertaken. **M**

—**Manisha Sawle**



Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis with Minister for Revenue and Agriculture Eknath Khadse and Guardian Ministers of the Marathwada districts in Aurangabad

## ■ CM@AURANGABAD

# Helping hand to Marathwada

**T**he people of Marathwada have a difficult situation at hand due to irregular and inadequate rains. The year 2011 saw the rainfall at 84 per cent of the annual average, 2012 saw it at 69 per cent, 2013 recorded it at 109 per cent, while last year, the rain was 53 per cent of the annual average. During this monsoon, till August 22, the rainfall was recorded at 31 per cent of the annual average. Also, during the last two years, the region saw hailstorms. The current lack of rain has a backdrop of inadequate rain last year. Therefore, 983 villages and 513 wadis of the region were provided water through 1,291 tankers this mid rainy season.

Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis reviewed the present situation in the region at Aurangabad. The work done for fodder, water and employment was found satisfactory, and the Government expressed its complete support to the people. He assured that the Government under any circumstances will not cut back on funds for fodder, water and employment. The Government has given permission to open camps for animals in Beed, Latur and Osmanabad.

Devendra Fadnavis shared that resource mapping has been carried out for water supply, and instructed that the same should be reviewed often. He said that although the current situation is grim, the region should convert the same into an opportunity. He instructed that works should be started in drought-affected areas under Mahatma Gandhi

National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, with water conservation projects on priority. He shared that the Food Security scheme has been started for the farmers from August 15 and Jeevandayi Scheme has been dedicated to them. He asked the departments to spread this information to every village. To get the ground status of the villages, Gram Sabhas should be held in the presence of a responsible officer. The Chief Minister will undertake another tour of the drought-affected areas of Marathwada in September.

**In 2011, rain in the State was recorded 84 per cent of the annual average. It stood at 69 per cent in 2012, 109 per cent in 2013, 53 per cent in 2014, and till August 22 this year, 31 per cent**

The meeting at Aurangabad was attended by Minister for Revenue and Agriculture Eknath Khadse, and Guardian Ministers of the Marathwada districts, Diwakar Raote, Babanrao Lonikar, Dr. Deepak Sawant, Dilip Kamble and Smt. Pankaja Munde.

While explaining the situation in the region through a presentation, Divisional Commissioner Dr. Umakant Dangat said that four out of eight districts in the region have received less than 50 per cent rainfall than expected. In

other districts, the precipitation has remained at 50 to 75 per cent of the expected average. Out of the 76, 41 and 225 revenue circles out of 421 circles recorded less than 50 per cent precipitation of the expected average. Matters such as water storage, measures taken for water supply, planning for future, crop loan distribution, planning for Rabi harvest, opening fodder camps, farmer suicides and remedial measures were discussed during the meeting. **M**

—Radhakrishna Muli





Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and Union Minister Bandaru Dattatreya with the *beedi* workers and during the inauguration

■ CM@SOLAPUR

## Priority to housing for weaker section

**T**he Government of Maharashtra is making all efforts so that welfare schemes for the poor and *beedi* workers reach them. All the problems on the way will be addressed. If necessary, we will relax the rules to help the schemes for the poor," said Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis at Kumbhari, Solapur.

The Chief Minister was in Solapur for the handing over ceremony of 1,600 homes for Com. Meenakshitai Sane Women Beedi Workers Cooperative Housing Society. The ceremony was attended by Union Minister of State, Labour (Independent Charge) Bandaru Dattatreya, Guardian Minister Vijay Deshmukh, MPs Sharad Bansode, Tapan Sen and others.

Speaking at the ceremony, the Chief Minister said that the State Government will be fully backing the people and institutions constructing homes for the poor and help them in every possible way. "The dreams of the poor have been realised through this housing project, and the quality of the homes built is excellent. The Government will provide every help so that all facilities are available in these houses. Providing homes to the poor is the dream of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and the State Government is committed to this," said the Chief Minister.

The ambitious housing project implemented by former member of Legislative Assembly, Narasayya Adam (Master), Kumbhari, has successfully provided dream homes to the poor. The project has total 5,100 homes, out of which 1,600 have been handed over. The Chief Minister said, "A *beedi* worker

### "MAHARASHTRA WILL ASSIST DEVELOPMENT IN SOLAPUR"

Addressing people during his visit to Solapur, Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis assured State Government's complete support in Solapur's development. He shared with the people that Maharashtra Government has taken a decision on minimum wages for workers such as those involved in making *beedi*, and in order to implement the decision properly, a meeting of all the concerned Ministers, officials and other stakeholders will be held soon.



sees a fierce struggle in one's life. Now, it is time that one enjoys the happiness of moving to one's own home. The success of the project and its noble objective is a happy moment for the workers, as well as for me."

Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis added that the houses constructed for the poor should be self-sufficient. For the same, proper help will be provided to ensure that the housing complexes have all the amenities. He instructed the officers to put up a proposal for a 50-bed hospital to open within a month of the completion of the housing project for workers. He said that the State Government has already initiated a campaign for registration of workers from unorganised sector, and efforts will be made so that they are provided social security, education and health facilities. **M**

—Govind Ahankari

# “ST buses are introducing services for farmers for ease of goods transport”



**M**inister for Transport, **Diwakar Raote** is a man on mission, never mind the umpteen challenges en route. He is all prepped up to give a facelift of sorts to the transport department. Connecting remote corners with efficient transport system, starting high-end bus ports and regulating private players are just the beginning. The recent availability of funds to his department is sure to breathe life into the mission. In an interview with **Mrudula Varaskar**, the State Transport Minister shares his plans. Excerpts:

**Q. With a fierce competition from private players, how do you plan to make the State transport competitive?**

**A.** People are naturally attracted to aesthetically-designed private luxury buses. This apart, the fares of these buses are affordable, as operators have worked out their logistics smartly. They use buses for goods transport and manage to keep passenger fares reasonable. After studying this, we too are going to have a similar pattern. I am also working on waiving toll for ST buses to bring down fares. As a bumper Diwali bonus, we are targeting the launch of 500 swanky buses, especially in

Vidarbha, Khandesh and Marathwada, where the demand is high. So, it is not as if we started AC Shivneri buses only on the popular Mumbai–Pune route and ignored the rest of Maharashtra. For the spread of Marathi language and literature, arrangements will be made soon for people to listen to Marathi poems, stories and literature in Shivneri buses.

**Q. Considering women safety, will there be any reservation for women in these buses?**

**A.** Yes, in Shivenri buses, we will reserve the first 10 seats for women. However, they will need to book the seats a day in advance. In future too, as we plan to widen our network to various routes, safety of women and adequate sanitation facilities will be our priorities.

**Q. Tell us about the expansion plans of bus depots.**

**A.** I am introducing a concept of bus ports on the lines of airports. We will soon open 12 clean, swanky bus ports at major locations. International tenders are invited for these ports. We are going to start mini theatres exclusively for



Marathi movies at these ports. Of existing depots, about 149 don't even have compound walls. The department plans to build these before sprucing them up. We will ensure space for at least toilets if not more, where land availability is an issue.

We have also invited tenders for our ambitious food chain scheme at the bus depots to offer reasonably priced yet tasty food. The menu will be finalised as per local cuisine and the bus fare will include food charges. At key depots, we plan to offer other facilities such as WiFi, food and entertainment.

**Q. What are the plans for rural State Transport buses, popularly known as *lal dabbas* (red boxes)?**

**A.** We are upgrading State Transport buses and introducing a service for farmers for goods transport to reduce their dependence on tempo services. This will save them a lot of hassle and cost of transportation. Rural population has an emotional connect with State Transport buses, which can be utilised for their business needs too.

**Q. There are a lot of private players in the cab segment. Are they going to be regulated?**

**A.** Yes, very soon they will be brought under the Motor Vehicle Act, so that they don't enjoy unlimited freedom without accountability. Once they are regulated, from vehicles to drivers, every aspect of private cab services will be thoroughly checked. Every driver will need to have an NOC of the police department and emergency call facilities; GPS will be extended to the passengers as well.

**Q. The auto rickshaws and yellow taxis can't match up to their professionalism due to their poor service and vehicle quality. How do you plan to tackle that?**

**A.** People are very unhappy with auto and taxi drivers. Drivers need to understand that they are in the service industry and it is their duty to give passengers a good service. Fares are periodically revised by the committees, so they can't complain about that. Yet, they overcharge people outside the airports and dupe passengers. We get a lot of complaints and we are taking them seriously. I want to appeal to them that, no matter what, they should never refuse a ride to women with children and senior citizens. Law enforcement would not help always, they should follow their conscience. The Government is watching them and they can't bog us down with threats of strike or pressure tactics.



**"WE WILL SOON OPEN 12 CLEAN, SWANKY BUS PORTS AT MAJOR LOCATIONS. WE ARE GOING TO START MINI THEATRES EXCLUSIVELY FOR MARATHI MOVIES AT THESE PORTS"**



**"WE ARE UPGRADING ST BUSES AND ARE ALSO INTRODUCING A SERVICE FOR FARMERS FOR GOODS TRANSPORT TO REDUCE THEIR DEPENDENCE ON TEMPO SERVICES"**

**Q. Isn't there a need of a stringent law like Centre's Motor Vehicle Act against those flouting transport rules?**

**A.** Yes, we are definitely working on it and we will announce it at the right time, hopefully soon.

**Q. Tell us about the proposed Sawantwadi railway terminus.**

**A.** With this terminus, Konkan Railway will have a train service dedicated to the region. But with this terminus, there will be a direct route between Mumbai and Konkan and more trains at faster speeds. We have allocated a budget of ₹25 crore for the terminus. Similarly, permission has been granted for Karhad—

Chiplun and work will begin soon, improving the connectivity to Konkan further. There is another railway route in the pipeline from Kolhapur to Sawantwadi.

**Q. How equipped is the department to handle Ganesh festival given the heavy traffic to Konkan?**

**A.** This year, 2,300 buses will ply on the route. I have personally travelled and inspected the route. We will close the route for heavy vehicles during September 14-16. Some traffic will be diverted to Karad, Kolhapur, Indapur, Vadkhal and Rewadanda, if needed. Roads will be repaired and 16 police squads will be appointed on the route. Bus route from Konkan to Mumbai will be diverted via Karad to control traffic jams. We will open mini depots with toilet facilities at every two-hour halt. I am also in talks with Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways and Shipping, Nitin Gadkari for a toll-free journey during this period. There will be crane facilities to tackle vehicle breakdowns. Palaspe and Ratnagiri will have ambulance facilities for accident victims.

**Q. Do you believe compensation to accident victims needs to be revised?**

**A.** We do not have any insurance policies. Today, we offer ₹3 lakh to passengers and ₹1 lakh to drivers and conductors. There is a lobby that advises victims to go to courts for compensation instead of claiming it from us, yet the highest they receive is ₹7 lakh. Out of this, the victims get only ₹3-4 lakh. I plan to give ₹10 lakh to the families of victims for deaths and disabilities. The process of claims would be made easier too. Currently, there are 82,000 litigations pending, but higher and faster compensation will reduce the number of litigations. Not just the compensation, you will see many positive changes in the transport department with funds now available to me. **M**





## LAKHS GATHER FOR THE HOLY BATH

The first Shahi Snan of Simhastha Kumbh Mela 2015, ongoing in Nashik-Trimbakeshwar, took place on August 29. Lakhs of devotees, including *mahants* (chief priests) of various *akhadas* (sects), thronged the banks of Godavari for the holy dip.

On the day of Shahi Snan, the royal processions of the three *akhadas* of the Vaishnava sect, comprising *mahants* and *mahamandeshwars* atop vehicles, horses and camels decorated with flowers, began from Laxminarayan Temple in Tapovan in Nashik, and reached Ramkund, wielding flags, swords and tridents, amid beating of drums. At Trimbakeshwar, thousands of *sadhus* and *mahants*, took royal bath at Kushavarta Teerth.

The sages were welcomed by Minister for Water Resource and Guardian Minister Girish Mahajan, Minister of State for Cooperation Dadaji Bhuse, Nashik Mayor Ashok Murtadak, Deputy Mayor Gurmeet Singh Bagga, Divisional Commissioner, District Collector, Commissioner of Nashik Municipal Corporation Praveen Gedam, and police officials.

The first Shahi Snan took place with echoes of *Shree Ramchandra ji ki jai* filling the air at six in the morning. The procession started in the presence of Chairman of the Akhil Bhartiya Akhada Parishad, Mahant Shree Gyandasji Maharaj from Akhil Bhartiya Shree Panch Nirwani Aani Akhada. The procession saw participation of *dindis* of Jagatguru Sant Tukaram Maharaj and Sant Eknath Maharaj. *Warkaris* on the beats of *talmridung* created a mesmerising atmosphere by chanting *Dnyanoba-Mauli-Tukaram*.









# THE TREE OF LIFE

Coconut's multiple uses, minimal upkeep, high ornamental and long lifespan make it the most important palm in the world, says **Sameer K**

**K**onkan, well known for its natural beauty, is situated at the coastal line of western India, stretching from Raigad to Mangalore. It has a 720 km long coastline. Maharashtra's Konkan area consists of Raigad, Ratnagiri, Sindhudurg and Thane districts, bounded by the Sahyadri hills on the east and the Arabian Sea on the west. So you can experience the beauty of sea as well as of mountains. The coastline is dotted with tall coconut groves, evergreen mango trees, creeks, harbours, hot water springs, caves, temples and the typical Konkani homes.

The districts of Ratnagiri and Sindhudurg lie at the heart of Konkan and are known for production of Alphonso mango, cashew, jackfruit, spices, coconut, areca nut and *kokam*. The region is a tract of high rainfall ranging between 3000 and 5000 mm a year. Maharashtra Sahyadris, a part of the mountain chain of Western Ghats, are one of the country's water towers as source of Krishna and Godavari—the two major east-flowing rivers of Peninsular India—and a large number of west-flowing rivers. The natural vegetation cover of the region is mangrove forest on the coast and tropical

## Under the palm

- The whole Konkan belt is blessed with coconut trees and orchards. Coconut is an essential part of the Konkan cuisine.
- In 2014-15, 10,230 hectares came under coconut production in Sindhudurg, resulting in production of some 975 lakh nuts and productivity at 9,448 nuts per hectare
- Maharashtra has set up a DSP farm, and plans to launch more schemes to deliver a five-fold increase in coconut cultivation in the State within five years

(Clockwise from left) A coconut palm tree with nuts, fresh coconut water and nuts to be sold, and a coconut farm in Maharashtra



evergreen forest inland, with stunted tree growth and a rich herbaceous flora on the wind-swept plateaus. Today, the fertile alluvial valleys produce rice and coconut as the main crops, the hill slopes harbour mango and cashew nut orchards, and the estuaries and coast support rich fisheries.

Of the two districts, Sindhudurg—an administrative district carved out of the erstwhile Ratnagiri district—is known for its mango,







cashew and coconut crops. Several households here have coconut trees and orchards. Says Dr. Rajan Govind Khandekar, Station Head, Regional Coconut Research Station, Bhatye, "The coconut business in Konkan has flourished because of local demand. Coconut is extensively used in local cuisine and, therefore, the production is driven by local demand."

As opposed to coconuts from Kerala which are smaller in size and have less flesh because it is grown on hill slopes, coconuts of Sindhudurg are planted on irrigated land and are considered much juicier and sweeter, explains Khandekar. Increasing number of tourists has also led to a growth in demand from local hotels where wet coconut is used for food preparations.

However, coconut continues to remain a cottage industry with most farmers owning between two to five trees and bigger farmers between 50 and 100 trees. Although coir-processing units have come up in Sindhudurg, there is a dearth of raw material in the region and has to be imported since the locals often end up using it for firewood.

Interestingly, the coconut palm (*Cocos nucifera* linn) is the most useful palm in the world. Every part of the tree is useful to human life for some purpose or the other. The copra obtained by drying the kernel of coconut is the richest source of vegetable oil containing 65 to 70 per cent oil.

**“The coconut business in Konkan has flourished because of local demand. Coconut is extensively used in local cuisine and, therefore, the production is driven by local demand”**



Apart from copra and oil, which is widely used in making soaps, hair oil, cosmetics and other industrial products, coconut's husk is a source of fibre, which supports a sizeable coir industry. The tender nut supplies coconut water, a popular thirst quencher of health and hygienic value. Virgin coconut oil, extracted from fresh coconut kernel without any chemical processes, is abundant in vitamins, minerals and antioxidants, thus making it the 'mother of all oils'. In Konkan, the value-added products of coconut are yet to catch on since the consumption of the nut itself is high.

As per the data released by Coconut Development Board, in 2014-15, 10,230 hectares came under coconut production in Sindhudurg, resulting in production of some 975 lakh nuts and productivity at 9,448 nuts per hectare. Coconut is a crop of small and marginal farmers, as 98 per cent of about five million coconut holdings in the country are less than two hectares. In the west coast of India, the palm is an essential component in the homestead system of farming. While there is a concentration of coconut plantations in the coastal regions of the country, it is also grown in the hinterlands, where the agro-climatic requirements of coconut cultivation are met.

Coconut is grown in more than 93 countries of the world, with Indonesia, Philippines and India its major producers. It is grown in more than 18.95 lakh hectares in India with an estimated 16,943 million nuts during 2010-11, with an average productivity of 8,937 nuts per ha. Traditional areas of coconut are Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Goa, West Bengal, Puducherry, Maharashtra and Islands of Lakshadweep and Andaman and Nicobar.

A couple of years ago, the Maharashtra Government had sought technical guidance of Coconut Development Board to enhance coconut production in Konkan region and allotted 100 ha to set up a demonstration-cum-seed production farm (DSP farm) for the board based in Palghar, Thane. Almost every variety of coconut has been planted here. The foundation of the DSP farm and more schemes in Maharashtra are expected to deliver a five-fold increase in coconut cultivation in the State within five years. The board also regularly organises training programmes such as Friends of Coconut Tree training (FOCT) and Plant Protection Aspects on Coconut, including Harvesting using the Climbing Device. Several farmers in the region take advantage of these programmes. **M**





# Embodying *Ganesha*

With barely 25,000 inhabitants, the village of Pen churns out 2.5 lakh Ganesha idols every year that find takers across the globe, says **Pallavi Singh**



For most of the year, Pen is an all but forgotten place, a signboard that you pass while heading to Alibaug, a popular tourist destination for Mumbaikars. But come *Shravan*, a holy month of the Hindus, this tiny hamlet is the cynosure of all eyes. Traffic heading into the town suddenly goes up and along every street corner, vehicles with blue plastic sheets covering their frames stand solemnly, before houses that seem busier than ever. This is where Ganeshas come to life—some of them sitting comfortably with a *modak* in their right hand, others dancing with a little drum, and some with a social or patriotic message. This small town that was once a village is now Ganesha's abode. It has been that way for over 100 years when a few men, having migrated from various parts of Maharashtra made Pen their home. The Pen-born, pot-bellied Lord with the twisted trunk is coveted because of his aesthetic appeal, serenity, grace, a subtle blend of colours and a finish that would do any workman proud.

Rains poured over the tiny hamlet as we enter a dimly lit shack in Kasar Ali, where an artisan works on an idol. This third-generation artisan, we are told, single-handedly churns out 3,000 idols a year and is one of the thousands of craftsmen who have turned Pen into a world-renowned manufacturing hub for Ganpati idols. The pace of activity at Pen's *kala kendras* and *karkhanas* gets frantic at the time of Ganesh Chaturthi, a festival the State celebrates with much gusto.

We come across shops adorned with Ganeshas of varied hues. Deepak Samal of Deepak Kala Kendra says idols are given various names. "The nomen-



clature is for convenience and depends on aspects like costume, headgear, seating posture or choice of pedestal. There's Peshwa (reclining on a couch), *kamal* (lotus), *shankh* (conch), *undish* (mouse), Bajirao (with *pagdi*) and Shivaji (seated on a throne similar to the Raigad statue). Following the popularity of *chimboli wala* Ganesha (seated on a crab) among the Hindu Kolis, the artists of Pen developed a new variant—a fisherwoman carrying a basket with Lord Ganesha emerging from the belly of a fish," he adds.

Mangesh Kala Kendra's Sunil Hazare, a fourth-generation artisan says, "Popular figures like Siddhivinayak, Lalbaghcha Raja, Chinchpokliha Raja and Dagduseth Halwai of Pune are all-time favourites. However, artisans have begun to adapt Ganpati in the likeness of Vithoba, Tirupati Balaji, Sheshnag, Shiva-Parvati, Bansuri Sri Krishna and Sai Baba. We stick to traditional themes."

## Navigator

### GETTING THERE

**By Train:** Ratnagiri Passenger leaves Dadar at 3.35 pm and reaches Pen at 5.55 pm, while the Diva-Sawantwadi Passenger leaves Panvel at 7.05 am and reaches Pen at 7.59 am  
**By Road:** Pen is 80 km from Mumbai. It is accessible from Mumbai-Goa Highway and Mumbai-Pune Expressway

(Clockwise from facing page) Artisans colouring Ganesha statues, an artisan giving final touches to an idol, the idols on sale, and an artisan busy working in Pen, Raigad

## FROM HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

The craft dates back to the 1880s when Pen was a small farming village. With the emergence of Mumbai as an industrial and commercial hub, Brahmin communities from the Konkan belt left for Mumbai on bullock carts and settled at various places along the way. The prime work of this priestly class centred on festivities and rituals—crafting *pagdis* (headgear) and making decorations, paper idols and stuffed parrots. They bartered these items for food and shelter.

Ganesh Bhikaji Devdhar or Bhiku Tikli, who migrated from Wade Padel near Vijaydurg to Pen around 1885, gets the credit for converting a pastime into commerce. However, it was a historic event that catapulted this art into a full-fledged industry. In response to the ban by the British on political gatherings in 1893, nationalist leader Bal Gangadhar Tilak transformed Ganesh Chaturthi from a private affair to a *Sarvajanik Utsav* (public festival) as part of his mission to unify India. With its epicentre in Pune, various Ganpati *mandals* were set up to promote cultural programmes. The ten-day affair soon became a festival across the State and saw artisans of Pen take to idol making for Ganesh Chaturthi on a full-time basis.

For *kumbhars* (potters) who remained partially idle in the rainy season, it was the perfect alternative. With the advent of steel, *kasars* (bangle-makers and coppersmiths) were elbowed out of manufacturing utensils and took to making Ganesha idols. Many of the streets, named after its original settlers, like Kasar Ali, Kumbhar Ali and Parit Ali became key centres of idol making.

At Pen, every idol goes through 25 stages, from kneading the clay, which comes in powder form, to sculpting a masterpiece, casting a mould from it, carefully unlocking its pieces, painting the idol, spraying and polishing to the most important aspect—doing the eyes. We see a shift from use of natural sources—black soot, lime, turmeric and Palas tree flowers to the use of fabric paint. Special clays, which are crack-resistant, fluorescent and zinc oxide powders and chrome colours have given rise to idols of greater colours and attraction.

There are about 300 such *karkhanas* in Pen where making Ganpati idols is a ₹10-15 crore industry, employing about 25,000 people in the *taluka* alone. Nearly 500 factories dot Pen, Hamrapur and adjoining areas. Idols from Pen are sought after in the UK, US, Australia and Mauritius. Riding high on the back of its popularity as the abode of the Ganpati, Pen continues to be held in high esteem. **M**





# EPITOMES OF PRIDE

Maharashtra, the land of the warriors, forts, rich flora and fauna, splendid hill stations and beaches, is also home to UNESCO World Heritage Sites that attract visitors from around the world. **Team Maharashtra Ahead** visits the locations



## Ajanta

### MAGNIFICENT MURALS

One of the first World Heritage sites of India recognised by UNESCO, in 1983, Ajanta caves are believed to be built around 2nd century BC. The 29 rock-cut caves of Aurangabad include paintings and

sculptures that are considered masterpieces. The cave complex was built in two phases; the first in Satavahana period in 2nd century BCE and the second in the Vakataka Period around 6th century BCE. Encompassing both Theravada and Mahayana Buddhist traditions, the caves have successfully preserved some of the

best decorated paintings and frescoes of Buddhist art in India.

In their range of time and treatments, the caves provide a panorama of life in ancient India and are a source of all kinds of information—lifestyle, textiles, musical instruments, architecture and customs. It was from this collection of art that a particular

style was formed that travelled with Buddhism to many parts of the world. The main theme of the paintings is the depiction of various Jataka stories, different incidents associated with the life of Buddha, and the contemporary events and social life. The ceiling has decorative patterns, geometrical as well as floral.



## Navigator

### GETTING THERE

**By Air:** Aurangabad is the nearest airport for Ajanta. It can be reached from the international airports at New Delhi and Mumbai. Jalgaon has



also developed an airport, which is to start soon.

**By Rail:** Jalgaon is the best station to drop at for Ajanta if you are coming by train. Just 28 km from Jalgaon is Bhusaval, the second largest depot of railways in entire Asia. All super fast, express, mail and passenger trains stop at Bhusaval and most of them at Jalgaon.

**By Road:** The city of Aurangabad is well-connected to other Indian cities. The caves are about two hours away from Aurangabad.

**The caves have successfully preserved some of the best decorated paintings and frescoes of Buddhist art in India**



## Ellora

### A MIX OF TRADITIONS

Ellora, an archaeological site ranging 29 km northwest of Aurangabad, is another group of rock-cut caves that are recognised by the UNESCO. Built by the Rashtrakuta dynasty, the group of caves represents a mix of religious arts of Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism. The caves are a series of 34 monasteries and temples, extending over more than 2 km. These caves were dug side by side in the wall of a high basalt cliff. Dating back to 6–10th century, the cave complex has 12 Buddhist (caves 1–12), 17 Hindu (caves 13–29) and five Jain (caves 30–34) caves demonstrating the religious harmony of the bygone era.

Ellora is also world famous for the largest single monolithic excavation in the world, the great Kailasa (cave 16). The best time to visit these caves is during monsoon, when every stream is filled with rainwater, and the entire environ is lush green.

Like Ajanta, the cultural heritage site of Ellora was recognised by UNESCO in 1983. However, unlike Ajanta, Ellora caves have a distinction that they were never lost to oblivion, due to their close proximity to the trade route connecting the western ports on the Arabian Sea to the mainland Indian cities.



## Navigator

### GETTING THERE

**By Air:** The nearest airport is in Aurangabad.

**By Rail:** The nearest railway station is in Jalgaon and is 53 km from the Ellora caves. There are various trains that stop on this route and at the station.

**By Road:** The city is connected to the national highway, which is why it is easy to reach Aurangabad and from there to Ellora Caves from various cities of the country.



## Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus BUSIEST AND MOST SPECTACULAR

Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus (CST) is a historic railway station in Mumbai. Today, it serves as the headquarters of the Central Railway. It was formerly named as Victoria Terminus in honour of the then reigning royal Queen Victoria. Launched in 1887, the construction of the station took ten years. A bustling terminus, the CST is well connected by rail to all parts of the country.

In the past, Bori Bunder station, located along the eastern parts of Mumbai, was the place for commercial exchanges and trading activities. In the 1850s, the Great Indian Peninsular Railway built its railway terminus in this area and the station took its name as Bori Bunder. On 16 April, 1853 the Great Indian Peninsular Railway operated the historic first passenger train in India



## Elephanta THE ABODE OF SHIVA

The network of sculpted caves located on the Elephanta Island or Gharapuri in Mumbai Harbour is 10 km east to the city of Mumbai. Carved in solid basalt rock, the cave has a main entrance on the north with two other openings on the east and west, respectively, and a central hall with six rows of pillared columns, six in each row except on the western corner, where a shrine of lingam is provided. The caves are known for their rock-cut sculptures depicting Shiva as the Creator and the Destroyer of the Universe. The beauty of the stonework lies in the grace, balance and sense of peace conveyed by the many avatars and acts of Shiva. One idol shows Shiva bringing river Ganga down to earth. He is also depicted as Lord of Yogis seated on a lotus, and as Nataraja, the many-armed cosmic dancer. Left of the Mahesamurti is Shiva as Ardhanarishvara, suggesting the unity of all opposites.

Constructed from mid-6th century AD till 7th century AD, the cave complex of Elephanta was recognised by UNESCO in the year 1987.

### Navigator

#### GETTING THERE

**By Air:** The nearest airport is in Mumbai. The caves are 20 km up from Gateway of India and 9 nautical miles across the sea.

**By Rail:** The nearest railheads are Churchgate (W.R.) and Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus (CST, G.R.).

**By road:** The caves can be reached by ferry from Gateway of India, Mumbai.





### Navigator

#### GETTING THERE

**By Rail:** It is easy to reach CST by rail, as it is very likely that your train might just disembark at this station! However, if you are coming from other central or suburban railway stations, then you can reach CST through local transport.

**By Road:** Mumbai is well connected by road that leads to all major cities in India.

from Bori Bunder to Thane covering a distance of 34 kms.

During the British rule, CST was redesigned and rebuilt by the British architect Frederick William Stevens with inspiration from Victorian Italianate Gothic Revival architecture and traditional Mughal buildings. At that time, the building was the most expensive structure in Mumbai costing ₹2.6 lakh. Even today, the terminus is not only a historical, but also one of the biggest commercial symbols of Mumbai.



(Clockwise from top left) Radhanagari Wildlife Sanctuary, Chandoli National Park, Koyna Wildlife Sanctuary and Kaas in Western Ghats

### Western Ghats

#### A BIODIVERSITY HOTSPOT

Along the south-western coast of India lies the mountain range of Western Ghats. Older than the Himalayas, the mountain chain represents geomorphic features of immense importance with unique biophysical and ecological processes. The mountains intercept the rain-bearing

westerly monsoon winds, and thus make an area of high rainfall, hence getting the title of monsoon mountains. The Western Ghats have an exceptionally high level of biological diversity and endemism. The green stretch includes some of the best non-equatorial tropical evergreen forests and is home to 325 flora, fauna, bird, amphibian, reptile and fish species.

**A cluster of 39 sites in the Western Ghats got inscribed in the World Heritage list in 2012. These include tiger reserves, national parks, wildlife sanctuaries and reserved forests of Maharashtra**

A cluster of 39 sites spread over 7,953.15 sq km in the Western Ghats was inscribed in the World Heritage list in 2012. These include tiger reserves, national parks, wildlife sanctuaries and reserved forests in Maharashtra, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Four sites are in Maharashtra—Kaas plateau, Koyna Wildlife Sanctuary, Chandoli National Park and Radhanagari Wildlife Sanctuary.





# NATURE'S CANVAS

A little-known gem, Kaas plateau, Maharashtra's very own Valley of Flowers, turns into a riot of colour around August, says **Gouri Agtey Athale**

It's getting to be that time of year when one heads out and enjoys nature, now that monsoon is almost over and the countryside is a beautifully inviting green. For people of Maharashtra, especially Mumbai and Pune, outdoors, once meant a trek to the mountain forts. Then came the beaches and Konkan, but, for the past few years, it's been a day picnic to Kaas, a volcanic plateau near Satara, where flowers bloom on the hill top.

It is at Kaas, one can hear the silence amidst the grand mountain range of Sahyadri, with winds blowing over grassy stretches and colourful wild flowers. Kaas has a wild, untamed feel mainly because hardly anyone ever went there till photographs of its beauty, flowers and grasses went viral a few years ago. Since 2012, when UNESCO declared it a biodiversity site, its visitors have increased tremendously. Today, every long weekend or holiday, especially around August,

means crowds thronging to the plateau.

The rush has also alarmed nature lovers, scientists, officials of the forest department and police, who have become active in the area to ensure that the plateau is not disturbed in any way. So, a visit here means that you need to register online. That done, once at Kaas, you need to pay a nominal fee and then go park at the foot of the hill, on the other side and then walk back up. It is not a tough walk, as the wild and natural beauty will keep you busy in admiring and clicking.

Last year, we were accompanied by an European friend, who has lived for over a decade in Switzerland and the Bavarian highlands. His reaction, "This is so Alpine!"

That was an honest observation, as the scenic place is famously called Western India's very own Switzerland. The plateau is a narrow table top, more like a wide ledge on top of the hill. The valleys on either side have water bodies, the backwaters of the Koyna on one side and river Krishna on the other. The grass is differently coloured, so at places you get this sea of waving white grass, which on closer examination turns out to be tiny white flowers on the grass. Or that mauve—purple haze in the distance, which also turns out to be a kind of grass, forming a carpet.

Kaas is home to around 850 known species of plants of which about 600 are of the flowering

(Clockwise from top left)  
A scenic view of Kaas plateau and a variety of flowers growing in the valley, near Satara, Maharashtra






variety. Many endemic species of plants have also flourished here. These plants can only survive in this region, owing to the volcanic rock soil of the plateau. Its unique ecosystem also allows endangered species of plants to thrive. With these species on the brink of extinction due to the changes in climatic and geological conditions, the plateau is visited by many biologists for study.

Kaas is at its best immediately after the ten-day Ganesh Chaturthi festival, which this year will end on September 27, but people start visiting from August-end if the monsoon's been good. Driving the 21 km from Satara to the plateau, the scenery changes and there is no hint of what you are going to get. The hillsides are the usual grassy green uplands. As you climb, the breeze gets cooler and the air fresher, making you want to get down from the car and just soak in the clean open space.

## Navigator

### TO GET TO KAAS

 Kaas is located in the Sahyadri range, 22 km from Satara. It is 280 km southeast of Mumbai. Satara is well connected to Mumbai via trains and takes around four hours to reach. The fastest way to reach is by road, through NH-4, the Mumbai-Bengaluru highway. Pune is at a two-hour drive from Satara. Enter Satara and look for a signpost for a tunnel, which points you to the Kaas plateau. Follow this road for 21 km. Car parking on the plateau is banned, so make sure you have catered for at least three-four hours to enjoy the walk, the view and the ambience. There is no cell phone connectivity on the plateau and no eating places on top, so carry your own water and food.



Walking is an activity one has to do at Kaas. By the time we managed to get out of our city routine, it was late September and well past the date to see the unique flowers. What remained though were these six-eight inch high flowers, mauve, pink and white, delicate and protected. Going ahead, we came upon a natural lake, partially covered with tiny flowers that looked like small lotuses. Their leaves and roots looked like those of a lotus, but the flowers, small white ones, were furry.

Catering to varied requirements, a go-karting/dirt racing track is coming up on the way to the plateau top. On the way are eateries that are clean and with no plastic litter. As the plateau is more of a ledge and not very wide, so steps, about 15 ft wide, have been cut into the hillside giving the effect of hanging out over the valley. **M**





# MAVAL'S MARVELS

Located in the sub-hills of Sahyadri, the forts of Lohgad, Visapur, Tung and Tikona, played a pivotal role in Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's Swarajya campaign, says **Dr. Sachin Vidyadhar Joshi**

**T**he main range of Sahyadri runs parallel to the Arabian Sea, stretching from north to south. Few small sub-hill ranges run perpendicular to the mountain range to Pune, Satara and Nashik districts in the east. Not as long as Satmal and Balaghat ranges, these sub-hill ranges extend approximately 20-30 km inland from the main range. These ranges lie close to each other, making a formation of deep valleys, and have many small rivers flowing from the west to east and meeting main rivers such as Krishna, Indrayani and Bhima, among others. The part of river basin that lies in Pune is termed as Maval (a Marathi word that stands for the direction in which the sun sets) from times immemorial. Maval is divided into 12 sub-regions, named after the 12 small river basins that together are called Bara Maval. Blessed with nature's beauty and diversity,

Maval is one of the world's highly biodiversified regions. Besides, it is known for numerous forts of significant historical and military importance.

Maval region played a pivotal role in Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj's Swarajya campaign. The hilly region is known for many small and large forts, historically constructed by Adilshahi dynasty of Bijapur and Nizamshahi dynasty of Ahmednagar. Forts such as Koraigad, Lohgad, Sinhagad and Rajgad are known to exist from the early medieval period. After the decline of the Nizamshahi dynasty, Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj captured almost all of its forts and reconstructed some of them. Rajgad, Torna and Ghangad were some of the forts strengthened for defence purposes.

Tung and Tikona forts are located in Pavana river basin, while Lohgad and Visapur forts are in the Indrayani river basin. Lohgad is one of the many hill forts of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. It divides the basins of Indrayani and Pavana, also known as Nane Maval and Pavan Maval, respectively. Lohgad and Visapur are twin forts situated on a single plateau, with the latter located on the eastern side. Withstanding wind and rain for more than 350 years, these forts are still in good condition. Lohgadwadi is a small village situated at the base of the Lohgad fort, while Bhaje village is situated at the base of Visapur, close to the Bhaje caves.

The Lohgad-Visapur region was one of the important centres during the Satavahana period from the trading and religious point of view. The Buddhist caves of Bhaje indicate that the region has been inhabited for last 2,200 years. These caves were carved on the slope of Visapur hill in the 2nd century B.C., and around the same time or a century later, a group of six caves was





(Clockwise from facing page) Tikona Fort, Visapur Fort, Tung Fort, Lohgad *machi* (Vinchu Kata) and Lohgad Fort in Maval, Maharashtra

excavated on the slope of Lohgad hill. Remains of these caves can be seen between the hill from Lohgadwadi and the topmost part of the fort. The strong medieval forts of Lohgad and Visapur were constructed 1,500 years later than the caves.

Tung and Tikona forts in Pavan Maval have a similar case. Here, caves were carved inside the hill on which the Tikona fort stands. These caves date back to the Satavahana period. Fort Tikona came much later, around 12-13th century A.D., and was constructed by the Yadavas of Devgiri. Architectural remains of Yadava period still exist in the fort. Caves were also carved on the slope of Tung hill.

Out of the many forts located in the Maval region, Lohgad was the most important from the military point of view. In the beginning of 15th century, the fort was under the Nizamshahis of Ahmednagar. Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj conquered many forts in Konkan and plateau region by 1657-58 A.D. He captured the forts of Lohgad, Visapur, Tung and Tikona. But these four forts were handed over to the Mughals through the treaty of Purandar in 1665. Recaptured in 1670-71 A.D., these forts remained with Marathas till 1701 A.D.

There are variety of structures observed at Lohgad fort. Remains of two settlements are clearly visible even today. A large, 12-angled water tank is located at the central part of the fort. Remains of the Nizamshahi settlement are at the north of the tank. Structural remains such as houses and administrative structures of the Maratha period are located on the southern part of the tank. A group of three caves is just behind these structural remains. Approximately 20 small and large rock-cut water cisterns are found on the fort. The interesting part of the fort is the lower fort area or *machi*,

which looks like the tail of a scorpion. The most fascinating architectural elements of the fort are its gateways, which were built in different eras.

Another strong fort of Malvan, Visapur was actually constructed to protect the Lohgad Fort. Many medieval structures still stand in moderate condition at the fort.

Constructed at the time of Yadavas of Devgiri, Tikona Fort was reconstructed by Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj for military purpose. Two small gateways are located on the north and east sides of the fort. Tung or Kathingad is another small fort located in Pavan Maval. An important characteristic of this fort is the absence of a plateau, as it was built on the various contour levels of the hill. Mughals captured the fort in 1703 A.D. after taking over Tikona. Tung and Tikona guard Maval Valley from one side, while Lohgad and Visapur guard it from the other side.

In his mission to conquer Konkan, Mughal chief Kartalab Khan marched towards Umberkhind, a region close to the forts of Lohgad, Visapur, Tung and Tikona. Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj defeated Kartalab Khan near the Ambenali pass in a battle where all the four forts played a vital role, contributing to the strength of Maratha Empire. **M**

—The writer is a Researcher at Department of Archaeology, Deccan College Post Graduate and Research Institute, Pune

**A variety of architectural remains indicate that the region of Nane Maval and Pavan Maval was important from the religious, trading and military point of view**



# TOWARDS HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT

New Delhi has announced extending full cooperation to the Naxal-affected areas of Maharashtra, besides providing necessary security and support



Union Minister for Home Affairs Rajnath Singh, Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways and Shipping, Nitin Gadkari, Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis, Union Minister for Chemicals and Fertilisers Hansraj Ahir and Minister of State for Tribal Development Ambarishraje Atram were present at the meeting in New Delhi

A review meeting for development and providing security to Naxal-affected areas of Maharashtra was held under the Chairmanship of Union Minister for Home Affairs Rajnath Singh in New Delhi. Lauding the plan outlay implemented by the State Government for the development of the areas, the Minister assured Centre's cooperation in providing transport and communication network, industries, skill development, educational facilities and security to the areas.

The Chief Minister said that Maharashtra Government plans to set up industries and create skilled manpower in Naxal-affected areas. Gadchiroli is blessed with natural minerals, and allied industries should be developed here with youth imparted skills for employment. He proposed better communication network and health facilities to help economic development of the region. Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways and Shipping, Nitin Gadkari, Union Minister for Chemicals and Fertilisers Hansraj Ahir, Minister of State for Tribal Development Ambarishraje Atram, MPs Ashok Nete and Nana Patole, senior officials from Centre and State were present in the meeting. **M**

## PRIME MINISTER PRAISES JALGAON'S DIGITAL GUDDI-GUDDA BOARD

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has praised the digital Guddi-Gudda board of Jalgaon district, a case study of Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao scheme of Union Ministry of Women and Child Development. The Prime Minister met Jalgaon MP A. T. Nana Patil, MP from Raver constituency, Raksha Khadse and Jalgaon District Collector Rubal Agrawal in New Delhi. He was informed about the board, an audio-visual display unit with a school-going girl's face cut out. The girl holds a 17-inch digital display board with awareness messages about declining girl child ratio, women empowerment schemes and toll-free numbers for women security. One can easily upload information on the board.



## CENTRE'S AID TO MUMBAI-NAGPUR EXPRESSWAY

Union Minister for Road Transport, Highways and Shipping, Nitin Gadkari assured Minister for Public Works (Public Undertakings) Eknath Shinde of financial aid from the Centre to State's largest infrastructure project, the 819-km six-lane Mumbai-Nagpur Super Expressway, at a meeting held in New Delhi recently. A presentation of the expressway was made during the meet. Details of the areas from where the expressway will pass, time it will take to cover the distance between Nagpur and Mumbai, places where flyovers will be built, development of adjacent areas, security measures and facilities to be provided were shared. Minister Eknath Shinde said that the expressway will make invaluable contribution to State's development, as it will





## STATE GOVERNMENT FIRM ON REDUCING SCHOOL BAG WEIGHT

**D**uring a meeting held by Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE), under the chairmanship of Union Minister for Human Resource Development, Smriti Irani, the Minister of State for Home (City), Urban Development, GAD, Law and Judiciary, Parliamentary Affairs, Dr. Ranjit Patil said that the State Government is positive about reducing the weight of school bags. Dr. Ranjit Patil apprised the dignitaries about the report submitted by the experts on reducing the



school bag weight and measures taken for the same. He also requested Centre to amend the Right to Education Act and revoke its no-detention policy for students of standard I to VIII, as it becomes difficult for students in standard IX and X.

Union HRD Minister, Smriti Irani assured that necessary changes will be made in the Right to School Education, 2009, with feedback from various States and requested them to submit their suggestions and recommendations within a month or so. Ministers of States and administrative officers of various States participated in the meeting.



## STATE'S TRIBAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEMES

**M**inister for Tribal Development, Vishnu Savra met Union Minister for Tribal Development Jai Oram at Shastri Bhavan, New Delhi. He apprised the Union Minister about various schemes implemented by the State Government for the welfare of tribal communities and sought funds for effective implementation of the schemes in the State. The Union Minister assured all cooperation and funds to the State. Vishnu Savra informed the Union Minister of Eklavya Model Residential schools in tribal-dominated areas. He said that Centre has approved 14 such schools of which 11 have opened. He made a request of ₹96 crore for opening six more schools. He also discussed other welfare measures taken by the State Government for the tribals. Secretary, Tribal Development, Rajgopal Deora and Joint Secretary, Ministry for Tribal Development, Manoj Kumar Pinga, were present at the meet.



## FREEDOM FIGHTERS FROM THE STATE HONOURED

On the 73rd anniversary of Bharat Chhodo Andolan, five freedom fighters from the State, namely Satyanarayan Sharma (87) of Nagpur, Manikrao Takalgankar (92) of Hingoli, Pandurang Borse (84) of Jalgaon, Mangladevi Patankar (85) and Raosaheb Charge (85) of Satara were felicitated by President of India, Pranab Mukherjee, at a grand function held at Rashtrapati Bhavan, New Delhi.



## HEALTHCARE AT ONE'S DOORSTEP

**T**he Shiv Arogya Seva implemented in Maharashtra is a boon for patients in remote areas, and has an invaluable and huge contribution in country's telemedicine programme, said Union Minister for Health J.P. Nadda. Minister, Public Health, Dr. Deepak Sawant made a presentation on the successful implementation of the Seva through telemedicine in New Delhi. It showed a camp held in the primary health centre in the tribal region of Seemadoh, Melghat in Maharashtra. The doctors present at the camp took digital readings of cardiology, ophthalmology, paediatric and others. The readings were seen live by doctors in a Mumbai studio and by Union Health Minister J.P. Nadda and Dr. Deepak Sawant in a Delhi studio. The Union Minister congratulated the doctors on the feat. Telemedicine connects remote areas to the centres of excellence in the health sector via satellite. Shiv Arogya Seva makes the most advanced use of this technology.

—**Dayanand Kamble**, Deputy Director, MIC, New Delhi

pass through Vidarbha, North Maharashtra and Konkan.

Union Minister Nitin Gadkari assured full cooperation from the Centre, and said the project will have IT parks, smart cities, educational institutions and recreational hubs wherever possible. The expressway will also be equipped with an optical fibre network, CCTVs and Wi-Fi.

Member of Parliament, Shrikant Shinde, Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation Deputy CMD Anil Diggikar and Joint MD, S.M. Ramchandani, National Highway Authority's Atul Kumar, Member, NHAI, Sudhir Kumar and others were present in the meeting. Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis had earlier said, "The primary objective of the mega-project is to enhance road communication, criss-crossing and connecting backwards regions."



## MUMBAI METRO GETS ₹35,000 CRORE FOR EXPANSION



The Government took a decision in the 138th annual meeting of Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA) to sanction ₹35,400 crore for 118-km expansion of Metro network in Mumbai.

This metro network will include Dahisar–Charkop–Bandra–Mankhurd Metro-2 corridor (₹12,000 crore and 40 km), Wadala–Ghatkopar–Thane–Kasarvadavali Metro-4 via Wadala GPO and R.A.Kidwai Marg (₹12,000 crore and 40 km), Dahisar–E–Andheri–E–Bandra–E Metro-5 corridor (₹8,100 crore and 27 km) and Jogeshwari–Vikhroli Link Road Metro-6 corridor (₹3,300 crore and 11 km).

The State Government has also approved two new detailed project reports—one for the 16.5 km Andheri–E to Dahisar–E Metro corridor and the other for 18.6 km Dahisar to D.N. Nagar Metro corridor—prepared by Delhi Metro Rail Corporation, at ₹4,737 crore

and ₹4,994 crore, respectively. The proposal to raise funds from various financial institutions such as World Bank, Japan International Cooperation Agency and others has also been approved.

The Government has given

**The Government has given approval to the expenditure of ₹743.73 crore for the construction of three elevated roads to clear traffic chaos at BKC and Santacruz–Chembur junctions**

administrative approval to the expenditure of ₹743.73 crore for the construction of three elevated roads to clear traffic chaos at Bandra–Kurla Complex and Santacruz–Chembur junctions.

The 1.3-km elevated road running from MTNL junction to LBS Flyover and the 3.45-km elevated road from Kurla (Kapadia Nagar)

to Vakola near Western Express Highway (₹480.63 crore) will help clear SCLR junction. The 1.9-km elevated road from Bharat Diamond Bourse in 'G' Block to Vakola junction near Western Express Highway (₹263.09 crore) will help decongest BKC junction as the motorists will be able to reach Vakola straight from the 'G' Block in the Bandra–Kurla Complex avoiding BKC junction.

Meanwhile, MMRDA gave boost to the BKC by demarcating 20 ha of plot in 'G Text' Block for an international finance service centre and approving ₹95.57 crore for making it Wi-Fi enabled and providing smart parking, integrated building monitoring system, command and control centre, among other facilities.

The Government has also approved the development of Kalyan Growth Centre, at ₹1,089 crore, across 27 villages. This centre will be well connected and create job opportunities outside Mumbai and contribute to the development of the region.

The MMRDA has decided to provide funds worth ₹60.61 crore for the development of Palghar, Thane and Raigad districts on the outskirts of Mumbai. The decision was taken at a meeting chaired by Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis. The funds will be used for providing amenities, implemented according to the plans submitted by the Thane, Palghar, Karjat, Kulgaoon–Badlapur and Raigad Zilla Parishads.

## DHIRUBHAI AMBANI AEROSPACE PARK ALLOTTED LAND AT MIHAN

Under the Make in India initiative, the Chairman of Reliance Group, Anil Ambani has decided to set up country's first greenfield aerospace project with capital investment of over ₹6,500 crore in 289 acres of land in MIHAN SEZ at Nagpur. The Government of Maharashtra in just 16 days made the land available for the project. This project has initialised the global industrial investment process and will be an important project for Nagpur. The State Government will extend full cooperation to entrepreneurs, assured Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis during a function organised to hand over the land allotment letter to Reliance Aerostructure Ltd, the defence arm of Reliance Group.

Union Minister for Road Transport, Highways and Shipping, Nitin Gadkari, Minister for Industries, Subhash Desai, Guardian Minister Chandrashekhar Bawankule,

## STATE INSURES 500 VILLAGES UNDER CROP INSURANCE SCHEME

Vice President of India, Mohammed Hamid Ansari called upon the insurance players to develop sustainable agricultural insurance products to help rural people withstand vagaries of nature. Speaking at the

## RAJ BHAVAN SUNRISE GALLERY OPENS FOR PUBLIC

Governor Ch. Vidyasagar Rao announced the opening of the Sunrise Gallery and Devi Mandir in Raj Bhavan for general public from September 1. The newly created Sunrise Gallery—a sea-facing deck overlooking the Marine Drive and the Devi Temple inside the Raj Bhavan premises—will now be accessible to people through online registration. The Governor announced this while launching the online request portal [www.rajbhavan-maharashtra.gov.in](http://www.rajbhavan-maharashtra.gov.in) at Raj Bhavan in presence



of officials of the National Informatics Centre and the State Bank of India. The portal has been designed on the lines of the portal of Rashtrapati Bhavan.

Accordingly, entry to Raj

Bhavan will be allowed to ten persons per day from Tuesday to Sunday excluding public holidays. People will have to register online, which will subject to confirmation through email/SMS.







Mayor Praveen Datke and others were present on the occasion.

The Chief Minister said, the aerospace park is first of its kind in India's defence manufacturing sector. "I congratulate Anil Ambani and Reliance Group for choosing MIHAN. This initiative is a milestone towards making Nagpur an aviation hub. It has started attracting global investors to Maharashtra and will generate direct and indirect employment of around 20,000. I also appreciate our officers for setting an example for ease in doing business for completing the process of land allotment in 16 days only," he added.

Union Minister Nitin Gadkari expressed happiness over the

entry of Reliance Aerostructure and said that by setting up MIHAN taskforce the infrastructure is made available in the area attracting investors to the region.

Anil Ambani said, "We are committed to the defence sector. The project at MIHAN would be the largest greenfield project not only in India, but in South East Asia, and we appreciate Government of Maharashtra's initiatives to help us in this project."

MIHAN was selected over other sites because of its facilities and infrastructure such as Medicity, human resource, proximity to Indian Institute of Management and airport, telecom connectivity and social infrastructure, among others.

concluding ceremony of the Diamond Jubilee celebrations of the Insurance Institute of India in Mumbai. Hamid Ansari said, "It is necessary to protect the farmers from natural vagaries and ensure their credit eligibility for the next season. The high rate of suicides of farmers and the subsequent social and economic impact on the family needs to be redressed."

The Vice President observed that crop insurance presently covered only about 12 per cent of sown area. He said, for micro-insurance to succeed, demand had to be generated through building awareness.

Addressing the audience, Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said that Maharashtra is the first State in India that has taken an initiative to insure farmers in 500 villages as a pilot project under Crop Insurance Scheme.

"Considering the challenges of changing climatic conditions, insurance companies should address agriculture sector. It should chalk out schemes attracting farmers. The Government has taken the initiative to insure farmers and make the assessment of their losses at the village level," he said.

Insurance Institute of India has done good work, but there is a need for skilled manpower, which the institute should take up as challenge, he added.



## JUSTICE M.L. TAHALIYANI BECOMES MAHA LOKAYUKTA

Justice Madanlal Laxmandas Tahaliyani, retired Judge of the Bombay High Court, has been sworn in as the new Lokayukta of Maharashtra.

Governor Ch. Vidyasagar Rao administered the oath of office to Justice M.L. Tahaliyani at a ceremony at the Darbar Hall of Raj Bhavan in Mumbai. Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, Education Minister Vinod Tawde,



judges of the Bombay High Court, among others were present on the occasion.

Justice M.L. Tahaliyani succeeds Justice (retd) P. B. Gaikwad, whose term as Lokayukta ended on July 1, 2014.

## PRIMARY AGREEMENT TO BUY DR. BABASAHEB AMBEDKAR'S LONDON HOUSE COMPLETED



The primary agreement of purchase of the London house where the architect of Indian Constitution, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar stayed for some time has been completed by the State Government. Soon the rest of the process will be completed, said Minister for Social Justice Rajkumar Badole. The London house will now be transformed into an international memorial.

The deed of exchange by the State Government has been completed with the owner, Douglas Millie. Rajkumar Badole and first Secretary to Indian High Commission Office in London M. P. Singh were present on the occasion.

Minister for Social Justice, Rajkumar Badole said, 10 per cent of the purchase price of the London House, where Dr. Babasa-

heb Ambedkar stayed, has been paid, and after the completion of agreement formalities, the remaining amount will be paid. The keys of the house have been acquired from the owner.

**The London administration has given heritage status to the house, where Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar lived while studying at the LSE**

The London administration has given heritage status to the house. A plaque outside the house mentions, "Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar lived there while studying at the LSE," informed M.P. Singh.





Governor Ch. Vidyasagar Rao conferred Maharashtra Bhushan, the highest civilian award of Government of Maharashtra, on Shiv Shahir Babasaheb Purandare at a glittering function held at Raj Bhavan, Mumbai. Also seen are Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and Minister for Industries Subhash Desai

## A LIFE DEDICATED TO BRILLIANCE

The State Government bestows Maharashtra Bhushan on Shiv Shahir Babasaheb Purandare

**T**he Government of Maharashtra bestowed Maharashtra Bhushan, its highest honour, on writer Babasaheb Purandare recently. The veteran historian, also known as Shiv Shahir (Shivaji's bard) as he has been writing on the life of the Maratha leader, was conferred the award by Governor Ch. Vidyasagar Rao at Raj Bhavan, Mumbai.

Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, Minister for Cultural Affairs Vinod Tawde, Minister for Industries and Guardian Minister Mumbai City Subhash Desai, Minister for Rural Development Smt. Pankaja Munde, Minister for Transport Diwakar Raote, Minister for Housing Prakash Mehta, Minister of State (Finance and Planning) Deepak Kesarkar, Minister of State (Woman and Child Development) Vidya Thakur, Minister of State (Social Justice Department) Dilip Kamble, Mumbai Mayor Snehal Ambekar, MPs Arvind Sawant and Sanjay Raut were present on the occasion.

"Shiv Shahir Babasaheb Purandare has carried out an

eminent work over the last 75 years which should make all of us proud. He has carried the history of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj not only throughout India, but across the world. Once you read *Shivcharitra* and *Janata Raja*, you do not need a special course on national pride," said Devendra Fadnavis.

In his speech, Maharashtra Bhushan Shiv Shahir Babasaheb Purandare said he is happy that his work has reached the common man. He said that his study on the Maratha leader will continue. "Although the award is a matter of happiness for me, I consider it as a responsibility. I shall strive so that the work I have carried for the last 80 years continues," he said, adding, "The award comes with a cash of ₹10 lakh. I would like to add my own ₹15 lakh to the kitty and a total of ₹25 lakh will be donated to Master Dinanath and Mai Mangeshkar Hospital for helping cancer patients."

A committee constituted under the chairmanship of the Chief Minister had selected Balwant Moreshwar alias Babasaheb Purandare for the award. He began writing stories related to the period of Shivaji's reign at a very young age. The stories were later compiled in a book, *Thingya*. His other works include books, *Raja Shivchhatrapati* and *Kesari*, and one on the life of Narayanrao Peshwa. But the most well-known is the drama *Janata Raja*, a play on Shivaji Maharaj published and first staged in 1985. For his works in the field of drama, he was awarded the Kalidas Samman by the Madhya Pradesh Government for the year 2007-08. **M**

—Varsha Phadke



# VITAL DIALOGUES, INTERESTING DISCUSSIONS

The various platforms of Directorate General of Information and Public Relations bring the audience latest information from the Government and the State



(From left) Devanand Shinde, Vandana Krishna, Pravin Dixit and Col. V. N. Supnekar



## DILKHULAS

### A platform with a mission

Vice-Chancellor Devanand Shinde has said that efforts aimed at qualitative research are on at Shivaji University, a prime university creating skilled manpower for employment and self-employment. In his interview on *Dilkhulas*, he said, use of ICT is an exemplary project of the university, which provides services through data centre, knowledge network and computerisation of administrative departments, helping students and people.

Vandana Krishna, Director General, Rajmata Jijau Mother-Child Health and Nutrition Mission was invited to *Dilkhulas* on the occasion of World Breastfeeding Week. Speaking about breastfeeding, Vandana Krishna said that many myths prevail around the practice. While guiding about the proper method, time and process of breast-feeding, she said that it is essential to provide mother's milk to the newborn. This is a kind of tonic, as the milk contains balanced nutrition constituents that are not available in the milk or powder available outside.

Praful Rangari added that the quantum of milk output of a mother depends on her mental conditions. All the family members such as the mother-in-law and husband should understand this and encourage the new mother to breast-feed. The mother should have an ideal, quality diet containing milk, eggs, bananas and vegetables.

Vandana Krishna explained the concept of 'Initiation to successful breast-feeding'. This begins with the child being handed over to the mother within half an hour after the birth. The milk in the mother's body gets created due to the touch of the child. After this, the child strives for milk on his own. This is called 'Initiation to successful breast-feeding'.

Giving and taking a bribe are equal crimes in the eyes of the law. During the last two years, the Anti-corruption

Department of Maharashtra has taken action in such matters on a large scale. The major role played in this was that of Pravin Dixit, Director General, Anti-corruption Department. During his interview to *Dilkhulas*, he enumerated the items that constitute a bribe and the way a citizen can lodge a complaint if asked for a bribe.

Pravin Dixit said that the complainants have the option of calling the helpline number 1060. A web application has also been prepared for the same. People can also visit the

website [www.acbmaharashtra.net](http://www.acbmaharashtra.net).

Complainants can now lodge their complaint through a mobile app. Also, to avoid any unnecessary defamation of the Government staff, proper investigation is carried out for the complainant as well.

In his interview, Col. V. N. Supnekar, Director, Disaster Management Cell, Yashada, Pune informed people about the measures taken by the Government in case of a natural calamity and the way citizens should handle such disasters. He talked about how National Disaster Management Authority, State Disaster Management Cell and District

**It is essential to provide mother's milk to the newborn. This is a kind of tonic, as the milk contains balanced nutrition constituents that are not available in the milk or powder available outside**

—Vandana Krishna

Disaster Management Cell overcome disaster and the care taken so that the disasters do not happen. He further said, in case of a disaster, it is important have self security and an attitude of helping others. By understanding the format of disaster management, even a common man can become a part of disaster management. He also spoke about the role of media in disseminating information about disaster management.

—Meera Dhas





(From left) Minister for Transport Diwakar Raote, Minister for Industries Subhash Desai, Dr. Tatyrao Lahane, Chandrakant Dalvi and Prabhakar Save

## JAI MAHARASHTRA

### Straight from the studio

In the month of August, *Jai Maharashtra* featured interviews with experts from various fields. The personalities included Minister for Transport Diwakar Raote, Minister for Industries Subhash Desai, Dean, J. J. Group of Hospitals, Dr. Tatyrao Lahane, Cooperation Commissioner and Registrar of Cooperative Societies, Chandrakant Dalvi and agri expert Prabhakar Save.

In his interview, Minister for Transport, Diwakar Raote shared the measures taken for Ganeshotsav. Thousands of people working in Mumbai reach Konkan for the festival, for which State Transport Corporation has meticulously planned its operations. State Transport is sending additional fleet of buses to Konkan. It has 249 depots and more than 500 bus stations of its own. Diwakar Raote said that the face of these bus depots will change in coming years. He also explained the decision to reserve seats for ladies in Shivneri buses.

In his interview, Subhash Desai, Minister for Industries, talked about Make in Maharashtra. He provided information on the programme and said that his recent visit to the USA was to encourage investments in the State and the tour was quite successful. Maharashtra is a leader in the field of industries. Manpower, knowledge of English and space are the reasons for this. Subhash Desai said that in the ensuing period, the State will take further lead in

industries and there would be more investment in the State.

"The body is ephemeral and everything is lost in death. If you want to live even after death, just go for organ donation. A dead human body can become a ray of hope for at least seven people." This was an emotional appeal made by Dr. Tatyrao Lahane, Dean, J. J. Group of Hospitals, Mumbai. The senior doctor said that organ donation is not limited to eye or kidney and one can donate various organs.

Chandrakant Dalvi, Cooperation Commissioner and Registrar, Cooperative Societies, Maharashtra is a pioneer in the field of cooperative movement. Cooperation plays an important role in the economy of the State. The State has around 2 lakh registered cooperative societies. The survey of these societies has started from July 1 and will be completed by September 30. Post the survey, societies with deferred information will be sorted out and their registration will be cancelled.

The economics of increased cost of production and lower prices available in the market for agricultural produce do not match. However, with the problems created due to changed situations, the field is throwing some new opportunities. Agro-tourism is one of them. Agro-tourism is leisure travel created by the farmer on his agricultural field. This tourism has many facets; studies in agriculture, nature and life in a rural area are some of them. Prabhakar Save explained the facets of agro-tourism during the programme.

—Atul Pande



## MAHANews

### Over to Simhashta Kumbh

Mahanews has started a new column titled Simhashta Samvad on the occasion of the ongoing Simhashta Kumbh Mela at Nashik and Trimbakeshwar. Held every 12 years, the Mela is a precious addition to the cultural celebrations of Maharashtra. The State Government is implementing all measures to ensure that millions of devotees turning out here do not face any inconvenience and celebrations go on smoothly. For this to happen, it is essential to carry the news of various measures taken by the Government for the Kumbh Mela. The special column aims to help that.







## LOKRAJYA

### Welcome to the Lokrajya Gram

**B**estowed by stunning natural beauty, Sindhudurg district is now striving for creation of a new identity as Lokrajya Gram. It is the first literate district, first district to implement e-office system, a district coming to the fore with a stable population and a better male-female ratio compared to other districts of the State in Census 2011. Sindhudurg is also a Nirmal Gram and moving towards a dispute-free identity. The district has been progressive in implementation of Government schemes and, for that matter, any innovative scheme.

Now, the concept of Lokrajya Gram is being effectively implemented by Sandhya Garware in the district based on the spontaneous response of people to *Lokrajya* magazine. Twenty-three villages in Devgad taluka of the district have become Lokrajya Gram. Through this initiative, the mouthpiece of Government of Maharashtra, *Lokrajya* will be able to reach every

**District of Sindhudurg is the first one in the State to implement an e-office system and with a stable population and better male-female ratio as compared to other districts**



## LOKMANYA LOKRAJYA

*Lokrajya* is a successful medium to take various Government projects, policies to the remotest corner of the State, said Satara District Collector Ashwin Mudgal. He and his team members are proud subscribers of the magazine.

The July issue of *Lokrajya* took review of the Jalyukta Shivar Abhiyan implemented in the State. The issue has played a pivotal role in making the scheme a mass movement, said Satara District Information Officer Prashant Saptpute. He also underlined the news about Rajasthan Government praising the project carried in the magazine. Rajasthan Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje had complimented the work done by Satara District Collector Ashwin Mudgal.

Akola District Collector Shrikant, during a competitive exam guidance workshop, made students understand the importance of *Lokrajya*. Yavatmal District Collector Sachindra Pratap Singh had a detailed look at the issue and expressed satisfaction on the useful information it carried.

## THE MAHAMANAV ISSUE

Five hundred copies of the April edition of *Lokrajya*, depicting various facets of Bharat Ratna Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, were distributed in association with Blue Sky Charitable Trust, Sangli. Chief trustees of the organisation, Prof. P. S. Kamble, Prof. S. M. Patil, Varsha Kamble, Nandini Malvi, Harsha Bansode took the initiative.



Simhastha Samvad at *Mahanews* started on July 27. Through information on places such as Nashik, Trimbakeshwar, Tapovan, Kumbh Mela 2003 and Kumbh Mela 2015, the ghats created this year, guidance on how to reach the ghats, security arrangements, social facets of the event, healthcare, remedial measures taken by the Government, local administration, Municipal Corporation, ST Corporation, MSEDCL, disaster management and other information are being provided by the column. It is going to be utmost useful to anyone visiting Nashik during the Kumbh.



— Brijkishor Zanwar

home in these villages. The District Information Office at Sindhudurg makes constant efforts to ensure that *Lokrajya* reaches every home.

The subject of making rural population subscribers of *Lokrajya* was taken up at a monthly meeting of Gram Sevaks in Devgad Panchayat Samiti through the Block Development Officer. There was an appeal to these villages from Dr. Manoj Sarang, Sabhapati, Devgad Panchayat Samiti and District Information Officer (I/C), Sindhudurg.

Devgad Block Development Officer, Vijay Chavan has helped the creation of Lokrajya Grams. He strives to maintain the positive vibes and implement Government schemes with heart and soul. He is known as one of the best officers in the District administration.

—Sandhya Garware

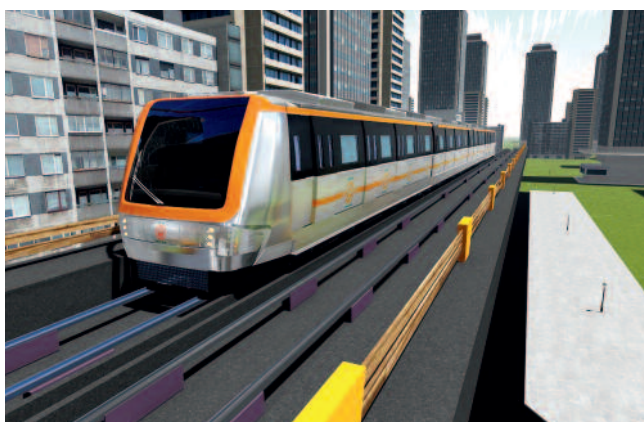


# MIHAN'S PRIZED POSSESSION

The proposed aerospace park in MIHAN will not only give a boost to Nagpur metro rail, but also provide employment and facilitate development



Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways and Shipping, Nitin Gadkari and Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis unveiled the Nagpur Metro Rail logo



With Reliance Industries deciding to set up an aerospace park in MIHAN, Nagpur metro rail has assumed a lot of importance. Multi-modal International Cargo Hub and Airport at Nagpur (MIHAN) is an important project for Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar International Airport, Nagpur. The aerospace park is expected to increase employment. Lot of people living in different parts of Nagpur will travel to MIHAN for work and the metro rail will provide a safe and fast way of reaching there and coming back home.

The work on the ₹8,680 crore project has started. The construction of wall at grade stretch from the car depot in MIHAN to New Airport station is in progress. The *bhoomipujan* of the work was performed by Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways and Shipping, Nitin Gadkari, on May 31.

The State Government has extended full cooperation to Nagpur Metro Rail Corporation Limited (NMRCL), the special

purpose vehicle (SPV) set up to construct and run the metro rail. Managing Director, NMRCL, Brijesh Dixit has plans to begin construction of the elevated corridor on Wardha Road by December this year. He said that three foreign financial institutions—AFD of France, KfW of Germany and European Investment Bank of European Union have shown interest in financing the project.

NMRCL would employ 10,000 locals for the construction work, opening new vistas of employment for local population and boosting economic growth of Nagpur and that of the State. One of the most important aspects of the project is solarisation. NMRCL has decided to go in for 14 MW solar power right from the beginning. It plans to meet 40 per cent of its electricity requirement through solar energy. The solar

panels will be installed by an operator on the roof of metro stations, along the boundary wall at grade sections and in the two car depots. It also plans to run the feeder vehicle service on solar energy.

The Nagpur Metro Rail will have two corridors—North-South (19.658 km long with 17 stations) and East-West (18.557 km long with 19 stations). Except the MIHAN Depot to New Airport stretch, which will be at grade or ground level, the remaining portion will be elevated. Some of it will be at level two, that is above the flyovers.

NMRCL has drawn up plans to generate revenue from non-ticket sources such as increasing FSI (floor space index) of the area along the metro rail corridor to 4. This in turn will help in generating almost half of the revenue expected. Commercial use of station space is also planned. **M**

—Ashish Roy







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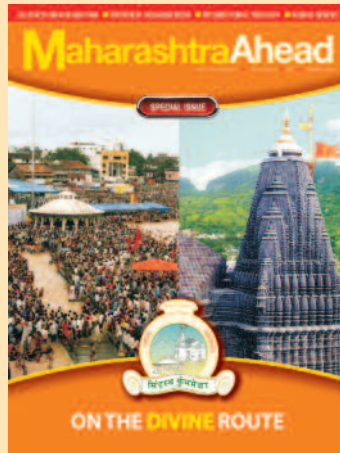
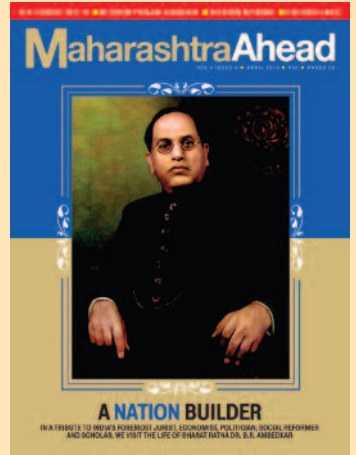
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