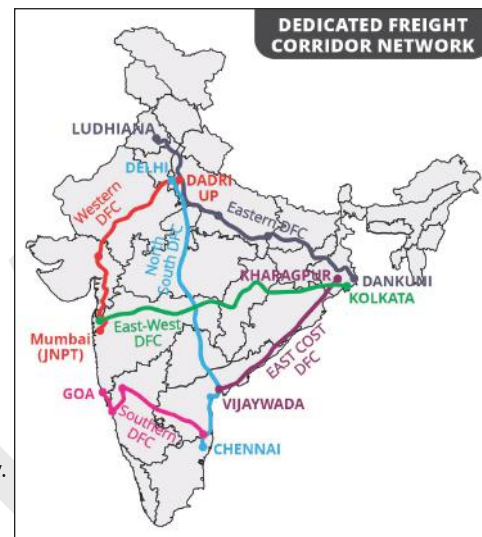


# NEWS TODAY

## 4,000-KM DEDICATED FREIGHT CORRIDOR (DFC) PLANNED TO CONNECT INDUSTRIES IN EAST, WEST TO SOUTH

- Railways is planning to **build nearly 4,000-km DFC connecting industrial areas** in eastern and western parts of the country to southern India **through major ports in Odisha and Andhra Pradesh**. These DFCs are:
  - > **East Coast corridor (1,115-km)** from Kharagpur (West Bengal) to Vijayawada (Andhra Pradesh)
  - > **East-West corridor (1,673 km)** which includes Bhusaval-Nagpur-Kharagpur-Dankuni (near Kolkata) route, and Rajkharswan-Kalipahari-Andal (West Bengal) route.
  - > **North South sub-corridor (975-km)** Vijayawada-Nagpur-Itarsi (Madhya Pradesh) route.
- DFC is a high-speed and **high-capacity railway corridor** dedicated exclusively for freight (goods and commodity) movement.
  - > **Dedicated Freight Corridor Corporation of India Limited, a Special Purpose Vehicle under Ministry of Railways** is tasked with planning & development, mobilizing financial resources, construction etc. of the DFCs.
- DFCCIL is already building two DFCs:**
  - > Eastern Freight Corridor from Ludhiana to Dankuni (West Bengal).
  - > Western Freight Corridor from Dadri (UP) to Jawaharlal Nehru Port (Mumbai).
- Benefits of DFCs:**
  - > **Reduce unit cost of transportation** by speeding up freight train operations & higher productivity.
  - > Segregate freight infrastructure for **focused approach**.
  - > Create **additional rail infrastructure** to cater high levels of transport demand.



## ACHIEVING THE ETHANOL BLENDING TARGETS SET BY THE GOVERNMENT

- Recently, Centre set target of 362 crore litres of ethanol for sugar mills in 2020-21.
  - > Government has set targets of **10% bioethanol blending of petrol by 2022 and to raise it to 20% by 2030** under **Ethanol Blending Programme (EBP)**, launched in 2003.
  - > **National Policy on Biofuels, 2018** also envisages similar indicative targets.
- Bio ethanol is an alcohol produced from **fermentation of carbohydrate and cellulosic material of crops** and other plants and grasses.
  - > Current level of ethanol blending for petrol is around 5%.
- Challenges in achieving the target**
  - > **Insufficient bioethanol domestic production**, e.g. Sugar mills were only able to supply 1.9 billion litres of bioethanol against demand of 3.3 billion litres in 2018-19.
  - > Many sugar mills **do not have the financial stability to invest in biofuel plants**.
  - > Price of **agricultural waste is currently too high** for it to be viable for private investors.
- Suggestions:** Depots be setup where farmers could drop their agricultural waste, fixing price for agricultural waste, special taxes making it attractive to mix ethanol, mandatory blending etc.

## SERIES OF INITIATIVES ANNOUNCED BY THE MINISTRY OF TRIBAL AFFAIRS

- Tribal Health and Nutrition Portal 'Swasthya':** It is an e-portal on tribal health and nutrition which will be providing all health and nutrition related information of the tribal population of India in a single platform.
  - > It will **curate innovative practices, research briefs** etc. collected from different parts of India to facilitate the exchange of evidence, expertise and experiences.
- National Overseas Portal** and **National Tribal Fellowship Portal** to bring greater transparency and easy information to ST students.
- Online Performance Dashboard **"Empowering Tribals, Transforming India"** under Digital India to work towards empowering STs and will bring efficiency and transparency.
- e-newsletter on health and nutrition- **ALEKH**.
- Health status of Tribal People:**
  - > Almost **every second tribal child under five years of age suffers from chronic under-nutrition**, and is underweight, and one in every fourth child is wasted.
  - > **More than half the tribal children and women** in the reproductive age groups are **anaemic**.
  - > Almost **44 out of every 1,000 children born**, die before they complete the first year.
  - > Tribal are **disproportionately affected** by diseases like malaria, sickle cell disease, animal bites, etc.

## GOVERNMENT EXPLORES INCENTIVES TO MAKE AGROCHEMICAL SECTOR ATMANIRBHAR (SELF-RELIANT)

- Proposals include tax incentives, infrastructure development, import curbs etc. to boost domestic production in agrochemicals sector.
  - > **India is the 4th largest producer** of agrochemicals after US, Japan and China. India is **net exporter** of agrochemicals.
  - > However, **India imports** agrochemicals in their various forms (technical + advanced intermediaries) worth over Rs 3,000 crore from China.
- Agrochemicals are broadly classified** as insecticides, herbicides, fungicides, rodenticides, bio-pesticides and nematocides depending on the type of pest they control.
  - > They are **extensively used in modern farming** to enhance crop yield, increase plant growth, neutralize the soil, and protect crops against pests.
- Problems faced by Industry:** Increasing raw material cost, high registration time for new molecule, high environmental pollutant treatment cost and lack of awareness/education among farmers.
- Opportunities for agrochemical sector:** Increasing Food Demand, increasing demand of Horticulture & Floriculture, Increasing Export Potential, Increase usage of Bio-pesticides etc.
- Demands from Industry:** Lowering of GST rate from 12% to 5% for agrochemicals; providing export incentives like export input tax rebate; removing price control clause in the Pesticides Management Bill, 2020, as it discourages fresh investments etc.

# MAHARASHTRA FIRST INDIAN STATE TO DECLARE STATE MANGROVE TREE AS SYMBOL OF CONSERVATION

- Recently, **Sonneratia alba** or **mangrove apple**, an evergreen mangrove species found along the Maharashtra's coastline, was **approved as state mangrove tree**.
  - It grows on newly formed mudflats and play an **important role in combating land erosion**.
  - Distribution of this mangrove species is **confined to west coast and some parts of Orissa**.
- A mangrove ecosystem is the **interface between terrestrial forests and aquatic marine ecosystems**. They are salt-tolerant vegetation that **grows in intertidal regions of rivers and estuaries**.
- Importance of mangroves:**
  - Serve as **breeding, feeding and nursery grounds** for most of the commercial fishes and crustaceans.
  - Protection to the coastline and **minimise disasters due to cyclones and tsunami**; prevent soil erosion.
  - Store more carbon dioxide** than most other forests.
- Recently, **United Nations Environment Programme's Nairobi Convention** has developed **Guidelines on Mangrove Ecosystem Restoration for the Western Indian Ocean Region**.
  - Guidelines aim to **support the restoration of its degraded mangrove** ecosystems and support recovery from the economic impacts of COVID-19.
  - Nairobi Convention** aims to promote a prosperous Western Indian Ocean region with healthy rivers, coasts, and oceans. **India is not part of this convention**.



## ALSO IN NEWS

<p><b>SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Guided by SAGAR, India has <b>dispatched technical equipment and material to Mauritius</b> to help in dealing with the oil spill on its south-east coast.</li> <li><b>SAGAR vision was enunciated by PM in 2015, which aims:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To safeguard our mainland and islands, <b>ensure a safe secure and stable Indian Ocean</b>, and make available our capabilities to others.</li> <li><b>Deepen economic and security cooperation</b> with our maritime neighbours.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Envisage collective action and cooperation to <b>advance peace and security and respond to emergencies</b>.</li> </ul>
<p><b>UK launches £3 million innovation challenge fund in India</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The fund aims to <b>support scientists in academia and industry to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic</b> and climate change.</li> <li>Grants under the Fund are part of initiative under the Tech Partnership known as <b>Tech Clusters</b>.</li> <li>Tech Clusters <b>will support the development of Indian Tech Clusters</b> by breaking down barriers to growth, including building international links.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Nagar Van Scheme</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recently, <b>Itanagar has been selected for implementation of the 'Nagar Van'</b> or Urban Forest scheme of Ministry of Environment, Forest &amp; Climate Change.</li> <li>The scheme aims <b>to develop 200 Urban Forests across the country</b> in next five years with a renewed focus on people's participation and collaboration between Forest Department, Municipal bodies, NGOs, Corporates and local citizens.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Dwarf Planet Ceres given status of an "ocean world"</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This status was given as scientists have determined that Ceres has a <b>brine (solution of salt in water) reservoir</b>, making it "water rich".</li> <li>Ceres is a dwarf planet which lies in the <b>asteroid belt between Mars and Jupiter</b>.</li> <li><b>Criteria for dwarf planet are</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>body orbits around the Sun.</li> <li>Not a satellite of any planet.</li> <li>Has not cleared the neighbourhood around its orbit.</li> <li>Has enough mass for its gravity to pull it into a roughly spherical shape.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Milky Way look alike Galaxy found</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An <b>extremely distant look-alike galaxy</b> (named SPT0418-47) of Milky Way was found, which is 12 billion light-years away from Earth.</li> <li>A galaxy is a large group of stars, gas, and dust bound together by gravity.                     <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sun (a star) and all the planets around it are part of a galaxy known as the Milky Way Galaxy.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Studying distant galaxies will help <b>find answers to how galaxies formed and evolved</b> after the Big Bang.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Lingaraj Temple, Bhubaneswar, Odisha</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Odisha government <b>announced a facelift to the 11th century Lingaraj Temple</b>.</li> <li>It was built by king Jajati Keshari of Soma Vansh and is <b>dedicated to Lord Shiva</b>.</li> <li>The linga of Lord Shiva is regarded as 'Swayambhu' (self-originated) and <b>worshipped as both Lord Shiva and Lord Vishnu</b>.</li> <li>Temple signifies the <b>syncretisation of Shaivism and Vaishnavism</b> sects in Odisha.</li> <li>Temple belongs to <b>Kalinga School of Temple Architecture</b>.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Malayalam New Year</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>First day of the <b>Chingam month</b> in Malayalam calendar is considered as the New Year day.</li> <li>This is also known as <b>Puthuvarsham</b>.</li> </ul>

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