Gegeneophis chandgadi (New Legless Amphibian)

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Why in News?

Scientists have discovered a new species of rare, subterranean, legless amphibian named Gegeneophis chandgadi in a backyard in rural Maharashtra.

- **Family -** Belongs to the family Indotyphlidae.
- **Order -** Gymnophiona (commonly known as **caecilians**).
- **Genus Endemism -** The genus ***Gegeneophis*** comprises caecilians endemic to India, predominantly distributed across the Western Ghats.
- **Nomenclature -** Named after **"Chandgadi"**, a local dialect of the Marathi language spoken in the region where the species was identified.
- **Appearance -** Features a slender, worm-like, flesh-colored body. Often mistaken for earthworms, caecilians represent an ancient, limbless evolutionary lineage of amphibians.
- **Annuli (Body Rings) -** The species possesses distinct primary body rings (*annuli*) along the entire length of its body, with secondary rings concentrated along the posterior half.
- **Subterranean Lifestyle -** Highly adapted for a subterranean (fossorial) life, spending almost its entire lifecycle burrowing underground beneath soil, leaf litter, and woodpiles.
- **Discovery Site-** Uncovered in Buzawade village within Chandgad tehsil, Kolhapur district, Maharashtra.
- **Habitat -** Inhabits the ***Northern Western Ghats***, a globally recognized biodiversity hotspot known for high levels of endemic herpetofauna.
- **Sensitive Bio-indicators -** Caecilians are highly sensitive to habitat degradation, microclimate shifts, and land-use changes.
- The discovery of a new subterranean amphibian in a domestic backyard underscores the ecological importance of rural micro-habitats.

Reference

[Research Matters | Caecilian identified in a backyard in Maharashtra]