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History, Art and Culture

Commemorate the 300th birth anniversary of Ahilyabai Holkar,

Recently, Maharashtra announced it will produce a multilingual biopic on Ahilyabai Holkar's life for her 300th birth anniversary, showcasing her governance and welfare contributions on Doordarshan and OTT.

• **Aims to** - Raise awareness about India's female historical figures, and popularize her contributions to governance, welfare, architecture, and culture.

About Ahilyabai Holkar

• **Born on** - May 31, 1725, in Chondi, Maharashtra, she was reverently known as 'Punyashlok Ahilyabai'.

• **Reign and Rule -** She ruled the Malwa region after the demise of her husband and father-in-law, known for her progressive and just governance.

• **Public Welfare Focus -** Ahilyabai championed public welfare, undertaking extensive works and funding the restoration of numerous Hindu temples across India.

• **Military Leadership -** She was a capable commander, leading armies alongside Tukoji Rao Holkar to protect her kingdom from invasions.

World Red Cross Day (WRCD)

Annually on May 8th, honoring the global humanitarian network and its dedicated volunteers and staff.

• **Honoring Henry Dunant** - The date commemorates the birth anniversary of Henry Dunant (1828), the visionary founder of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

• **RCD**- Is a global humanitarian organization dedicated to protecting human life and health, ensuring respect for all human beings, and preventing and alleviating human suffering. It is the most extensive humanitarian network worldwide.

• **Core Mission:** To alleviate human suffering, protect life and health, and uphold human dignity, especially during armed conflicts, natural disasters, and other emergencies.

• **The 2025 theme is** - "Keeping Humanity Alive," emphasizing selfless service.

• **The Tripartite Movement** - The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement comprises the ICRC (armed conflict focus), the IFRC (disaster relief coordination), and National Societies (local humanitarian action).

• **Global Significance** - World Red Cross Day raises awareness about the Movement's core principles and encourages public support and engagement in humanitarian activities worldwide.

Geography

Poonch

Pakistan's retaliation after India's Operation Sindoor struck Poonch civilians, killing 12 and destroying property including a Gurudwara. "**All Eyes on Poonch**" reflects rising LoC tensions and calls for peace.

• **Location -** In the western part of Jammu and Kashmir, it shares border with the Line of Control (LoC), the de facto border between Indian- and Pakistani-administered Kashmir, on its north, west, and south.

• **Topography -** largely mountainous and undulating, formed by the southern slopes of the Pir Panjal range, which separates the Kashmir Valley from the Jammu region.

• **Rivers -** The Poonch River and its tributaries flow through the district.

• **History -** Dating back to ancient times. It was known as Dravabhisar around 326 BC during Alexander the Great's invasion.

• In the 7th century AD, the Chinese traveler Hiuen Tsang passed through Poonch and noted its fame for graphics, fine tea, and good horses.

Ancient Wildfire Evidence in Godavari Basin

Scientists recently discovered palaeofire (ancient wildfire) evidence from the Permian Period (250 million years ago) in India's Godavari Basin.

• **Palaeofires** - Preserved in geological records, are vital for understanding past vegetation, climate shifts, and coal formation across geological periods.

• **Advanced Analytical Techniques** - The research employed Palynofacies analysis, Raman Spectroscopy, Rock-Eval Pyrolysis, and FTIR Spectroscopy to examine microscopic organic matter and fossil charcoal.

• **Distinguishing Charcoal Origins** - A key finding was the successful differentiation between in situ (on-site) and ex situ (transported) charcoal, resolving a geological debate about charcoal origins in coal formations.

• **Stratigraphic Patterns and Fire Residues -** Rock layering analysis showed concentrated, well-preserved fire residues during sea-level drops (regressive phases) and dispersed, oxidised charcoal during sea-level rises (transgressive phases).

• **Permian Fire-Prone Earth** - High Permian atmospheric oxygen likely intensified wildfire frequency, influencing carbon cycling and offering insights for modern climate change strategies.

National Dam Safety Authority (NDSA) Flags Damage in KLIP Barrages

NDSA has reported "irreparable damage" to three barrages within Telangana's Kaleshwaram Lift Irrigation Project (KLIP).

• **Kaleshwaram Project** - The KLIP is a significant multi-purpose irrigation project on the Godavari River in Telangana.

• **Irrigation and Drinking Water Goals** - Designed to irrigate about 4.5 million acres across 20 Telangana districts (excluding Hyderabad and Secunderabad), it also aims to supply drinking water.

• **World's Largest Lift Irrigation** - Currently the world's largest multi-stage lift irrigation project, its upstream reach extends to the Pranhita-Godavari confluence.

• **Project Scope and Scale** - Comprising seven links and 28 packages over 500 km, its canal network spans over 1,800 km.

• **Water Allocation** - The project targets 240 TMC of water for irrigation, Hyderabad's municipal supply, industrial use, and drinking water for nearby villages.

Polity & Governance

Haryana's Artist Support Scheme Launched

Recently,Haryana government has introduced the “Pandit Lakhmi Chand Kalakar Samajik Samman Yojana” to provide financial assistance to senior artists and art scholars.

• **Monthly Honorarium Offered -** Eligible artists will receive a monthly honorarium of 10,000 under this initiative.

• **Target Beneficiaries -** The scheme aims to support senior artists with at least 20 years of dedication to fields like singing, acting, dance, drama, and visual arts.

• **Eligibility Requirements -** Applicants must be Haryana residents aged 60 or older with 20+ years in their art form. Income verification via Parivar Pehchan Patra (PPP) is required, with varying honorariums based on income.

• **Evaluation and Selection Process -** A special committee will assess applications based on artistic merit and financial need, ensuring deserving artists are selected as beneficiaries.

• **Expected Scheme Impact -** The yojana is anticipated to improve the financial well-being of senior artists, acknowledge their contributions, preserve cultural heritage, and foster artistic expression in Haryana.

Environment

Trespassing Threatens Bhimgad Sanctuary

Recently uncontrolled public trespassing into the ecologically vital Bhimgad Wildlife Sanctuary (BWS) in Khanapur taluk raises serious conservation concerns.

• **About Bhimgad Wildlife Sanctuary -** Established in Karnataka's Belgaum district in 2011 within the Western Ghats, the sanctuary is named after Shivaji's 17th-century Bhimgad Fort.

• **Ecological Connectivity and Hydrology -** BWS borders several other protected areas and serves as the headwaters for key rivers like Tillari, Malaprabha, and Mhadei.

• **Unique Bat Habitat -** The sanctuary harbors the Barapede caves, the only known breeding site for the endangered Wroughton’s Free-tailed Bat.

• **Diverse Flora and Fauna -** Featuring tropical and subtropical moist broadleaf forests, BWS is home to endangered species like the sloth bear and black panther, alongside diverse birdlife.

• **King Cobra Breeding Grounds -** Bhimgad's isolated rock formations provide crucial breeding habitats for the King Cobra, the world's longest venomous snake.

Yangtze Porpoise Decline Evidenced by Poetry

Recent research utilizing classical Chinese poetry reveals a significant decline in the distribution of the critically endangered Yangtze finless porpoise.

• **Historical Poetic** - Over 700 poems spanning 1,400 years, from the Tang to Qing Dynasties, mention the porpoise, indicating its historically widespread presence.

• **Mapping Distribution via Poems** - Researchers analyzed poems with location-specific information, finding that half contained crucial data for mapping the porpoise's historical range.

• **Staggering Range Contraction** - The study documented a 65% contraction in the porpoise's range since the Tang Dynasty, with a drastic 91% loss in tributaries and lakes.

• **Human Activities: Primary Driver -** Dam construction since the 1950s is identified as the main factor obstructing migration and severely reducing the porpoise's habitat.

• **Poetry as Ecological Data -** This research highlights the valuable ecological insights that historical art forms like poetry can provide regarding wildlife distribution and the impact of human activities.

Security

Operation Abhyas

Following a Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) directive, recently Bengaluru held a significant civil defence mock drill, 'Operation Abhyas'.

• **Aim of 'Operation Abhyas' -** The primary objective was to enhance public awareness and improve emergency preparedness across various scenarios.

• **Mock Drill Activities -** The exercise included siren alerts, rescue operations from simulated debris, high-rise evacuations, firefighting demonstrations, and first-aid procedures.

• **Context: Heightened National Alert -** This drill occurred amidst a nationwide alert prompted by the recent terrorist attack in Pahalgam and increasing tensions between India and Pakistan.

Science

World Thalassaemia Day 2025

May 8th, marks World Thalassaemia Day.

• **Focusing** - Uniting Communities, Prioritizing Patients."

• **Observance Significance -** Thalassaemia is a group of inherited blood disorders characterized by the body making an abnormal form or inadequate amount of hemoglobin.

• **Hemoglobin -** Is the protein in red blood cells that carries oxygen. This can lead to anaemia and other complications

• **Key Objectives -** The day aims to promote awareness, encourage genetic screening, improve access to quality treatment, strengthen healthcare systems, build community support, and advocate for policy reforms.

• **Observance Origins -** Founded in 1994 by the Thalassaemia International Federation (TIF).

• **Global Impact -** Thalassaemia affects hemoglobin synthesis, with over 300,000 children born annually with significant forms of the disorder worldwide.

• **India faces** - a substantial burden with approximately 10,000 new cases and over 100,000 registered thalassaemia major patients each year.

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