DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 14-07-2025

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Maratha Military Landscapes of India

Syllabus: GS-1; Art & Culture

Context

Maratha Military Landscapes of India Inscribed in the UNESCO World Heritage List as India's 44th Entry

About

- ➢ The **Maratha Military Landscapes of India** represent a unique and strategic network of forts, citadels, and military structures developed under the Maratha Empire (17th–19th centuries).

- ➢ These landscapes are significant for their military architecture, engineering, and historical importance.

Key Features of Maratha Military Landscapes

1. **Strategic Fortifications**:

o The Marathas built and fortified **hill forts, coastal forts, and land forts** across Maharashtra, Karnataka, and other regions.

o Examples: **Raigad, Shivneri, Sinhagad, Pratapgad, Vijaydurg, Sindhudurg, Panhala, and Gingee**.

2. **Military Engineering & Architecture**:

o Use of **natural topography** (hilltops, cliffs, water bodies) for defense.

o **Hidden pathways, secret escape routes, and water storage systems**.

o **Bastions, ramparts, and fortified walls** with cannons and watchtowers.

3. **Administrative & Logistic Hubs**:

o Some forts served as **military headquarters** (e.g., **Raigad – Capital of Chhatrapati Shivaji**).

o **Naval forts** like Vijaydurg and Sindhudurg protected maritime trade routes.

4. **Cultural & Historical Significance**:

o Associated with **Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj** and the Maratha resistance against Mughals, British, and other powers.

o Some forts have **temples, granaries, and administrative offices**.

Important Forts to Remember

Fort Name	Location	Significance
Raigad	Maharashtra	Capital of Shivaji's Empire
Sinhagad	Maharashtra	Battle of Sinhagad (Tanaji Malusare)

Fort Name	Location	Significance
Pratapgad	Maharashtra	Battle of Pratapgad (Afzal Khan)
Vijaydurg	Maharashtra	Naval Fort, strong maritime defense
Sindhudurg	Maharashtra	Built by Shivaji to counter foreign invasions
Panhala	Maharashtra	Key fort in Maratha-Mughal conflicts
Gingee (Senji)	Tamil Nadu	Called the "Troy of the East" by the British

Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

- **UPSC (2021)**: Discuss the significance of Maratha military architecture in the expansion of the Maratha Empire. (10 marks)
- **KPSC (2019)**: Explain the role of hill forts in the military strategy of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj.

Sanchar Mitra Scheme

Syllabus: GS-2; Governance

Context

➢ The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) has expanded its 'Sanchar Mitra Scheme' across India, transforming it from a pilot project into a national programme to empower youth as digital ambassadors.

About

➤ The scheme engages student volunteers to promote **digital safety, cyber fraud prevention, responsible mobile usage, and awareness about EMF radiation**.

Key Features

1. **Objective:**
   o Create a network of tech-savvy volunteers (**Sanchar Mitras**) to bridge the digital literacy gap.
   o Educate citizens on **cybersecurity, 5G/6G, AI, and telecom innovations**.

2. **Implementation:**
   o **Training:** Conducted by **National Communications Academy–Technology (NCA-T)** and **DoT's Media Wing**.
   o **Target Group:** Students from **telecom, electronics, computer science, and cybersecurity** backgrounds.
   o **Nomination Process:** Through **local DoT offices** in collaboration with educational institutions.

3. **Activities by Sanchar Mitras:**
   o Conduct **community outreach programs** (villages, colleges, NGOs).
   o Spread awareness on **digital fraud prevention, safe internet practices, and telecom policies**.
   o Promote **DoT initiatives like Chakshu (fraud reporting), Sanchar Saathi, and ASTR (AI-driven SIM verification)**.

4. **Incentives for Volunteers:**
   o **Internships, project collaborations, and participation in events** like **India Mobile Congress (IMC) and ITU forums**.
   o Recognition for outstanding contributions.

Recent Developments

➤ **Nationwide Launch:** Union Minister **Jyotiraditya M. Scindia** inaugurated the expansion, calling it a step towards **India's leadership in "4D" (Democracy, Demography, Digitisation, and Delivery).**
➤ **First Outreach Event:** Held at **BSNL Bhawan, Guwahati**, in partnership with **18 engineering colleges (IIT, IIIT, NIT)**.

- **Official Statements:**
  - o **Sunita Chandra (DoT Advisor):** Emphasized connecting citizens with DoT initiatives through youth engagement.
  - o **Suresh Puri (Assam LSA Head):** Outlined the scheme's **three pillars – Connect, Educate, Innovate.**
  - o **Hemendra Kumar Sharma (DoT Spokesperson):** Stressed the need for **grassroots awareness to combat digital fraud.**

Significance

- **Digital India & Cybersecurity:** Aligns with **PMGDISHA, Cyber Surakshit Bharat, and National Digital Communications Policy (NDCP) 2018**.
- **Skill Development:** Enhances employability in **emerging tech (5G, AI, IoT)**.
- **Governance & Inclusive Growth:** Promotes **last-mile digital literacy**, crucial for **rural empowerment**.

Blood Money

Syllabus: GS-2; International Relations

Context

- **Nimisha Priya**, a nurse from Kerala, was **sentenced to death in Yemen** (2022) for the **2017 murder**.
- Under **Islamic Sharia law**, her family can negotiate **"Diyah" (blood money)** to avoid execution.

Background of the Case

- **Nimisha Priya**, a nurse from Kerala, was **sentenced to death in Yemen** (2022) for the **2017 murder of Talal Abdo Mahdi**, a Yemeni national.
- She alleged abuse and torture by Mahdi, who had confiscated her passport. The killing was claimed to be in **self-defense**, but Yemeni courts convicted her of murder.
- Under **Islamic Sharia law**, her family can negotiate **"Diyah" (blood money)** to avoid execution.

Know more

1. Diyah (Blood Money) in Sharia Law

➢ **Concept:**

o Diyah is **financial compensation** paid to the victim's family to pardon the accused, avoiding **qisas (retributive justice)**.

o Recognized in **Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Iran, and other Sharia-based legal systems**.

➢ **Conditions:**

o Requires **consent of the victim's family**.

o Amount varies (often **~₹50 lakh to ₹1 crore** in murder cases).

2. India's Legal Stand & Diplomatic Challenges

➢ **No Blood Money in Indian Law:**

o Indian Penal Code (IPC) **does not recognize Diyah** – murder trials follow **Section 302 IPC (death penalty/life imprisonment)**.

o **Supreme Court Precedent:** In *Surinder Koli vs State (2014)*, SC rejected blood money pleas, upholding secular criminal justice.

➢ **Diplomatic Hurdles:**

o **India-Yemen Relations:** No active embassy in Yemen (operates via Oman).

o **Negotiation Complexities:**

▪ Yemeni law requires **family consensus** for Diyah.

▪ **Fundraising Issues:** Priya's family struggles to arrange funds (~₹50 lakh).

3. Ethical & Human Rights Concerns

➢ **Moral Dilemma:**

o Is Diyah a **just alternative** or a **loophole favoring the wealthy**?

o **Gender Angle:** Would a Yemeni woman receive similar leniency if she killed an Indian abroad?

➢ **Human Rights Debate:**

o UN bodies criticize blood money for **undermining equality before law**.

o **Death Penalty Debate:** Should India intervene diplomatically against executions?

4. Comparative Legal Systems

- **Sharia vs. Secular Law:**

  o **India:** Follows **retributive + reformative justice** (no monetary settlements for murder).
  o **Gulf Nations:** Blend of **Sharia + Civil Laws** (e.g., UAE allows Diyah but also follows penal codes).

- **Extradition & Consular Assistance:**

  o **Vienna Convention on Consular Relations (1963):** Ensures legal aid but doesn't override local laws.

Caracal

Syllabus: GS-2; Environment & Ecology, Wildlife Conservation, and Biodiversity

Context

- Rare caracal spotted at cheetahs' new abode in MP's Gandhi Sagar Sanctuary

1. Basic Information about Caracal

- **Scientific Name**: *Caracal caracal*

  - ➢ **Family**: Felidae
  - ➢ **Common Names**: Desert lynx, Persian lynx (though not a true lynx)
  - ➢ **Habitat**: Dry forests, savannas, scrublands, semi-deserts (found in Africa, Middle East, Central Asia, and parts of India).
  - ➢ **IUCN Status**: **Least Concern** (globally), but **Critically Endangered** in India (as per Wildlife Institute of India).

2. Caracal in India

- ➢ **Distribution**:

  - o Historically found in Gujarat, Rajasthan, Haryana, and Madhya Pradesh.
  - o Now **rare**, with sightings mainly in **Rann of Kutch (Gujarat) and Aravalli hills (Rajasthan)**.
- ➢ **Protected Areas**:

  - o **Kutch Desert Wildlife Sanctuary (Gujarat)**
  - o **Ranthambore National Park (Rajasthan)**
  - o **Sariska Tiger Reserve (Rajasthan)**
- ➢ **Conservation Status in India**:

  - o **Schedule I** of the **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972** (highest protection).
  - o Listed in **Appendix I** of **CITES** (prohibits international trade).

3. Why is Caracal Significant?

- ➢ **Biodiversity Indicator**: Its presence indicates a healthy ecosystem.
- ➢ **Threats**:

  - o Habitat loss due to agriculture & urbanization.
  - o Poaching for fur and illegal wildlife trade.
  - o Human-wildlife conflict (preys on livestock).
- ➢ **Conservation Efforts**:

  - o Included in **India's Recovery Program for Critically Endangered Species**.
  - o **Project Caracal** (initiatives in Gujarat for habitat restoration).

4. Recent Developments

➤ **2021**: **National Board for Wildlife (NBWL)** approved a **Caracal conservation breeding program** in Gujarat.

5. Comparison with Other Wild Cats

Species	IUCN Status (India)	Key Habitat in India
Caracal	Critically Endangered	Gujarat, Rajasthan
Asiatic Lion	Endangered	Gir Forest (Gujarat)
Bengal Tiger	Endangered	Sundarbans, MP, Karnataka
Leopard	Vulnerable	Across India

Kuno National Park

Syllabus: GS-3; Biodiversity

Context

➤ Nabha, female cheetah brought to Kuno from Namibia, dies of injuries sustained in enclosure.

1. Introduction

➤ **Location**: Sheopur district, **Madhya Pradesh**

➤ **Area**: **748 sq. km** (Core area: 414 sq. km; Buffer: 334 sq. km)

➤ **Established as a National Park**: 2018 (Earlier part of **Kuno Wildlife Sanctuary**, established in 1981)

➢ **Significance**: Part of **Project Cheetah** (India's cheetah reintroduction program)

2. Ecological Importance

➢ Lies in the **Vindhyan Hills**, part of the **Kuno-Palpur Wildlife Corridor**

➢ **River**: Kuno River flows through the park

➢ **Vegetation**: Dry deciduous forests, grasslands (similar to African savannas)

➢ **Wildlife**:

  ○ **Mammals**: Leopard, sloth bear, Indian wolf, spotted deer, sambar, chinkara, nilgai

  ○ **Birds**: Over 120 species, including Indian vulture, crested serpent eagle

  ○ **Reptiles**: Python, monitor lizard

3. Project Cheetah (Cheetah Reintroduction Program)

➢ **Objective**: Reintroduce African cheetahs (extinct in India since 1952)

➢ **First Batch (2022)**: **8 cheetahs** from Namibia

➢ **Second Batch (2023)**: **12 cheetahs** from South Africa

➢ **Challenges**: Adaptation, prey availability, human-wildlife conflict

4. Historical & Conservation Significance

➢ Initially proposed as a **second home for Asiatic lions** (from Gir, Gujarat)

➢ **Wildlife Institute of India (WII)** identified Kuno as suitable for large carnivores

➢ Part of the **Shivpuri-Dholpur-Kuno-Madhav (SDKM) Tiger Corridor**

5. Tribal & Human Aspects

➢ **Villages Relocated**: 24 villages shifted (1998-2018) for wildlife conservation

➢ **Tribal Communities**: Mainly Sahariya tribe (rehabilitated under the **Gujjar Rehabilitation Program**)