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# Content

● SC Declines Interim Stay of Patna HC Decision.....	3
● Bihar Floods Recognised as National Priority .....	3
● Bihar Passes Bill to Prevent Paper Leaks .....	4
● Budget 2024: Rs. 26000 Crore for Bihar Highways.....	4
● Bihar's 'Special Category' Status Denied .....	5
● MSP for Makhana .....	5
● Encroachment at Karbatal Wetland .....	6
● Bihar Floods.....	6
● World's Largest Ramayan Temple in Bihar.....	7
● Bihar's First Transgender Sub-Inspectors.....	8
● Bihar Bridge Collapse Over Gandaki River.....	9
● Workers Trapped in Floodwaters in Bihar.....	9
● Bihar Appeals Supreme Court .....	10
● Scheme for Mango Cultivation.....	10



## SC Declines Interim Stay of Patna HC Decision

### Why in News?

Recently, **The Supreme Court** has refused to stay the Patna High Court's order that set aside the increase in reservation for **SC/STs, Backward Classes, and Extremely Backward Classes** in Bihar from 50% to 65% in public employment and educational institutions.

### Key Points

- The Patna High Court set aside the **amended reservation laws in Bihar**, which **increased quotas for Dalits, tribals and backward classes from 50% to 65%**, declaring the amendments as **"ultra vires" of the Constitution, "bad in law" and "violative of the equality clause"**.
  - The amendments had followed a **caste survey**, which put the percentage of Other **Backward Classes and Extremely Backward Classes** at 63% of the state's total population, while **SCs and STs** were stated to have accounted for more than 21%.
- **After the quotas were hiked, reserved seats in the state**, including those for the economically weaker sections, **came to be 75%** of the total.

### Reservation

- **Reservation** is a form of **positive discrimination**, created to **promote equality among marginalised sections** and to protect them from social and historical injustice.
- It gives **preferential treatment to marginalised sections of society in employment and access to education**.
- It was also originally developed to correct years of discrimination and to give a boost to disadvantaged groups.

## Bihar Floods Recognised as National Priority

### Why in News?

Recently, The **Union Budget 2024** allocated Rs 11,500 crore for **harnessing and utilizing the waters of Kosi** - a

river that is known to be highly unpredictable and prone to shifting its course.

- The **Kosi river is referred to as the "sorrow of Bihar"** due to the widespread destruction it causes across a large area in the northern part of the state after **flowing in from Nepal**.

### Key Points

- According to the sources, **it was the first time the problem of floods in Bihar was recognized as a national priority**.
- The state received significant benefits despite not obtaining **special category status**, including four expressways, a two-lane bridge over **the Ganga**, a power plant, airports, and medical colleges.
- Additionally, the Budget announced an **industrial node in Gaya, sports infrastructure, and assistance for accessing funds** from multilateral institutions.
  - **Development plans for the Vishnupad and Mahabodhi temple** corridors in Gaya, as well as Rajgir and **Nalanda**, were also highlighted.

### Kosi River System



- The **Kosi is a trans-boundary river** which flows through **Tibet, Nepal and India**.
- It has its source in **Tibet** that includes the **world's highest upland**, it then **drains a large part of Nepal** before emerging onto the **Gangetic plains**.
- Its **three major tributaries, the Sun Kosi, Arun and Tamur** meet at one point just upstream of a 10 km gorge cut through the **Himalayan foothills**.

Note:

- The river crosses into **northern Bihar** where it branches into distributaries before joining the **Ganges near Kursela in Katihar district**.
- The Kosi carries **the maximum amount of silt and sand after the Brahmaputra in India**.
- It is also known as the **“Sorrow of Bihar”** as the annual floods affect about 21,000 sq. km. of fertile agricultural lands thereby disturbing the rural economy.

## Bihar Passes Bill to Prevent Paper Leaks

### Why in News?

Recently, The Bihar Assembly passed **Bihar Public Examinations (PE) (Prevention of Unfair Means) Bill, 2024** aimed to **curb the questions paper leaks and other malpractices in government recruitment examinations** in the State.

### Key Points

- All crimes under this law will be **cognisable and non-bailable**.
- It defines various offences related to unfair means, such as paper leaks, the use of **fake websites**, and collusion with service providers.
- The Bill includes **provisions for imprisonment terms of three to five years and a fine of Rs. 10 lakh**.
- If a service provider, whether a government entity or a private agency, engages in malpractices, it will face a **fine of Rs. 1 crore and a four-year termination** of its services.

### Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Bill, 2024

- This bill was passed by the **central government** which aimed at addressing the issue of malpractices in government recruitment **examinations. It came into effect on 21st June 2024**.
- **Key Features:**
  - It defines various offences related to unfair means, such as paper leaks, the use of **fake websites, and collusion with service providers**.
  - It prescribes strict penalties, including a **minimum jail term of 3-5 years and a fine up to Rs. 1 crore**.

- It holds **service providers** engaged for exam conduct liable with fines up to Rs 1 crore and a 4-year ban on their involvement in public exams.
- It empowers **police officers** not below the rank of **Deputy Superintendent of Police or Assistant Commissioner of Police** to investigate offences under the Act.
- It will cover a wide range of central government recruitment exams, including those conducted by UPSC, SSC, RRBs, IBPS, and NTA.

## Budget 2024: Rs. 26000 Crore for Bihar Highways

### Why in News?

Recently, In the **Union Budget 2024**, **Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman** announced an investment of **Rs. 26,000 crore** in highway development in Bihar.

### Key Points

- **Highway Development in Bihar:** The government aims to **boost road infrastructure** in Bihar by allocating funds for several projects, including:
  - Patna-Purnea Expressway
  - Buxar-Bhagalpur Expressway
  - Spurs connecting Bodhgaya, Rajgir, Vaishali, and Darbhanga
  - Additional 2-lane bridge over river Ganga at Buxar
- **Power Projects:** The budget also includes the setting up of a new **2400 MW power plant** at Pirpainti, Bihar, at a cost of **Rs. 21,400 crore**.
- **Impact on Companies:** Experts believe this investment will benefit highway construction companies such as, it is expected to boost cement demand, benefiting cement producing industries.

### Budget and Constitutional Provisions

- According to **Article 112** of the **Indian Constitution**, the **Union Budget** of a year is referred to as the **Annual Financial Statement (AFS)**.
- It is a statement of the **estimated receipts and expenditure of the Government** in a financial year (which begins on 01 April of the current year and ends on 31 March of the following year). In addition to it, the Budget contains:

Note:



- Estimates of revenue and capital receipts.
- Ways and means to raise the revenue.
- Estimates of expenditure.
- Details of the actual receipts and expenditure of the closing financial year and the reasons for any deficit or surplus in that year.
- The economic and financial policy of the coming year, i.e., **taxation proposals, prospects of revenue, spending programme** and introduction of new schemes/projects.

## Bihar's 'Special Category' Status Denied

### Why in News?

Recently, The Centre rejected the request for '**special category' status** for Bihar during the all-party meeting.

### Key Points

- No new states are being awarded 'special category' status at present, as **the Indian Constitution** does not accommodate such classification.
- Bihar is requesting both special state status and a distinct financial package. The call for special status for Bihar has persisted since the state was split into Bihar and Jharkhand.
- **The Gadgil formula:**
  - The issue of special category status was first discussed in a National Development Council (NDC) meeting in 1969. During this session, the **DR Gadgil Committee** proposed a **formula for distributing central assistance to state plans** in India.
    - Prior to this, there was no specific formula for fund allocation, and grants were allocated based on individual schemes.
  - The Gadgil Formula, which received NDC approval, prioritized the needs of special category states like Assam, Jammu & Kashmir, and Nagaland in the allocation of Central assistance.
  - In 1969, the **5<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission** acknowledged the historical challenges faced by certain regions and introduced the special category status.

- This designation granted specific disadvantaged states special benefits, including central assistance and tax relief.
- The National Development Council then allocated Central Plan Assistance to these states based on this status.
- Until the financial year 2014-2015, the 11 states with special category status enjoyed various benefits and incentives.
- However, with the dissolution of **the Planning Commission** and the establishment of the **NITI Aayog in 2015**, the recommendations of the **14<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission** resulted in the cessation of grants based on the Gadgil Formula.
- Consequently, the share of the **divisible pool allocated to all states was increased from 32% to 42%**.

## MSP for Makhana

### Why in News?

Recently, The Bihar government has urged the Centre to declare the **Minimum Support Price (MSP)** for **makhana**, an aquatic crop cultivated across 10 districts in the state.

### Key Points

- The state has raised concerns about the shortage of staff at the Darbhanga-based **Indian Council of Agricultural Research - National Research Centre (ICAR-NRC)** for Makhana.
  - Bihar produces about 85% of the country's makhana, with approximately 10 lakh people directly or indirectly involved in its cultivation and production process.
- According to the Agriculture Ministry, The **ICAR-NRC for Makhana in Darbhanga was approved by the Department of Agricultural Research & Education, Government of India, as a new scheme during the IX Five Year Plan period (1997-2002)** for Conservation, Research & Development of the makhana crop.
  - The **NRC for Makhana started operating in February 2002**, but in 2005 it was merged with the **ICAR-Research Complex for Eastern Region (RCER) in Patna**, resulting in the revocation of its "national" status.

Note:



- In May 2023, the Central government upgraded the Research Centre for Makhana, Darbhanga to "**National Research Centre for Makhana, Darbhanga**" and expanded its mandate to include other aquatic crops such as fish.
- The **NRC for Makhana was transferred under the ICAR's Agricultural Engineering Division** and attached to the Ludhiana-based **ICAR-Central Institute of Post Harvest Engineering & Technology**.

#### Mithila Makhana

- Mithila Makhana or Makhana (botanical name: *Euryale ferox Salisb.*) is a special variety of **aquatic fox nut cultivated in Mithila region of Bihar** and Nepal.
- Makhana is the **one of the three prestigious cultural identities** of Mithila.
  - **Pan, Makhana and Machh (fish)** are the three prestigious cultural identities of Mithila.
- It is also very famous in the **Kojagara festival of Maithil Brahmins** celebrated for newly married couples.
- Makhana contains **protein and fiber**, along with **micronutrients like calcium, magnesium, iron, and phosphorus**.
- It received its **Geographical Indication (GI) Tag in 2022**.

## Encroachment at Karbatal Wetland

### Why in News?

Recently, **The Eastern Zone Circuit Bench** of the **National Green Tribunal (NGT)** has set up a four member committee to look into allegations made in **encroachment of Karbatal wetland** at **Begusarai district in Bihar**.

### Key Points

- The allegations of encroachment and degradation of the **Ramsar Site** were made by an environmental activist who approached the NGT.
- The site of Karbatal wetlands was designated as **Bird Sanctuary by the Government of Bihar in 1989**.
  - It was **designated as a Ramsar site in 2020** and is recognized as **Asia's largest freshwater oxbow lake**.

- The wetland, comprising a cluster of 16-17 waterbodies and serving as a **catchment area for rainwater**, has faced encroachment over time, leading to allegations that the area has been permitted to diminish.
  - According to the 2019 post-monsoon report, approximately **82% of the site was marshland (with 25% of it being cultivated)**, 16% was open water, and the remainder consisted of plantations or borrow land.
- Environmental experts have raised concerns that **encroachment and the drying of the lake have severely impacted birds by depriving them of their habitat**.

#### Oxbow Lake

- An **oxbow lake is a curved lake formed alongside a winding river** as a result of erosion and sediment deposition over time.
- Oxbow lakes are typically **crenate-shaped** and are common features in **floodplains and low-lying areas near rivers**.

#### Ramsar Site

- **Ramsar Convention on Wetlands** is an **intergovernmental treaty** adopted in **1971** in the Iranian city of Ramsar, on the southern shore of the **Caspian Sea**.
- It **came into force for India on 1st February, 1982**. Those **wetlands which are of international importance** are declared as **Ramsar sites**.
- The **Convention's mission** is "the conservation and wise use of all wetlands through local and national actions and international cooperation, as a contribution towards achieving sustainable development throughout the world".
- The **Montreux Record** is a register of wetland sites on the List of Wetlands of International Importance where changes in ecological character have occurred, are occurring, or are likely to occur as a result of technological developments, pollution or other human interference.

## Bihar Floods

### Why in News?

In the **Muzaffarpur district** of Bihar, the rapid increase in water levels in the **Bagmati River** has led to **flood waters entering thousands of houses in 18 panchayats**.

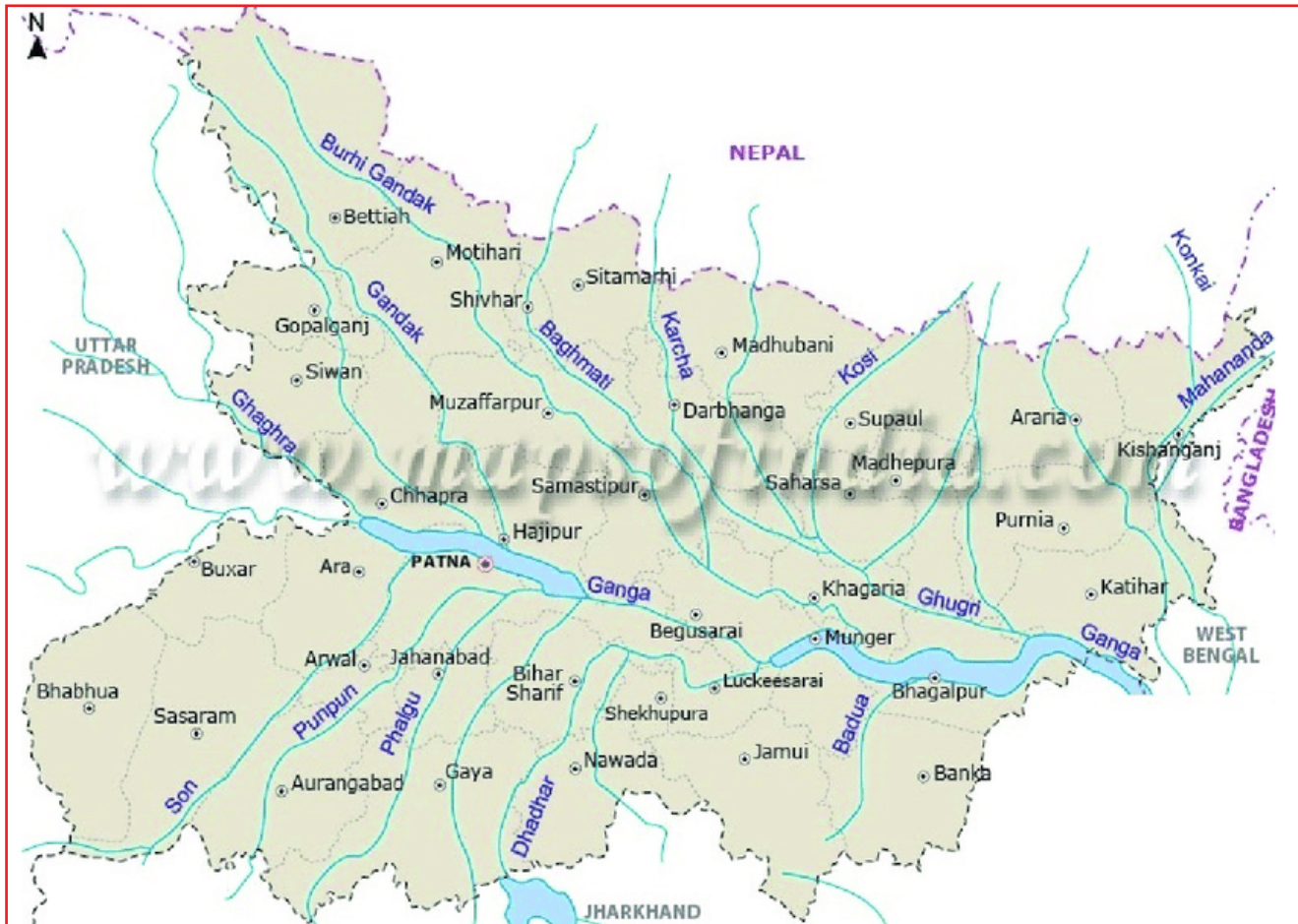
Note:

### Key Points

- The **flooding has led lakhs of people across panchayats to lose contact** with their block headquarters and district headquarters for aid.
- **Several schools in the region have also been filled with floodwater**, disrupting education facilities for hundreds of children.
- Bagmati River is a **transboundary river between Nepal and India**.
  - It **starts its journey from Kathmandu, Nepal** and

it **ends in the Koshi River** near Bornesthan, Bihar, India.

- The total length of the Bagmati is 3 km.
- Hindus see the Bagmati as sacred and possess great spiritual significance for them.
- The **Pashupatinath Temple**, located on the river's edge, is another famous **Hindu pilgrimage site dedicated to Shiva**.
- **Bishnumati River, Dhobikhola River and Manohara River** are **tributaries** of the Bagmati river.



## World's Largest Ramayan Temple in Bihar

### Why in News?

Recently, The second phase of construction of the **“world's largest Ramayan temple”** began in **East Champaran district of Bihar**. The construction of the **three-storey temple**, spread over an area of 3.76 lakh

sq.ft., began in June 2023 and is expected to be complete in 2025.

### Key Points

- The **Viraat Ramayan Mandir** will be **three times larger than the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya**.
  - Constructed at a cost of Rs 500 crore, it will feature a **33-foot-tall Shivling** in the arghya (sanctum sanctorum).

Note:

- There will be **22 sanctum sanctorum** for different deities in the temple complex.
- The **second phase will include the construction up to the plinth level**, which will go up to a height of about 26 feet from the ground level.
- In the **third phase**, the construction of **shikhars (spires) and the final finishing touches** of the entire temple will be completed.
  - The temple will have a total of **12 shikhars, with the main shikhar reaching a height of 270 feet.**
- The temple's architecture draws inspiration from **Cambodia's Angkor Wat**, the **Ramanathaswamy temple in Rameswaram, Tamil Nadu**, and the **Meenakshi Sundareswarar temple in Madurai.**

#### Angkor Wat Temple

- **Angkor Wat is a temple complex in Cambodia** and one of the **largest religious monuments in the world.**
- It was **originally constructed as a Hindu temple** dedicated to the god Vishnu for the Khmer Empire, it was **gradually transformed into a Buddhist temple** towards the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century.
- It was **built by the Khmer King Suryavarman II in the early 12<sup>th</sup> century** in Yaśodharapura (present-day Angkor), the capital of the Khmer Empire, as his state temple and eventual mausoleum.

#### Meenakshi Sundareswarar Temple

- It is a **historic Hindu temple** located on the southern bank of the **Vaigai River, Madurai** in Tamil Nadu.
- The temple is dedicated to **goddess Meenakshi, a form of Shakti/Parvati** and her consort **Shiva in the form of Sundareswarar.**
- It was **built by Pandyan Emperor Sadayavarman Kulasekaran I (1190 CE–1205 CE).**

#### Ramanathaswamy Temple

- It is a **Hindu temple dedicated to the god Shiva** located on **Rameswaram island in the state of Tamil Nadu.**
- It is also **one of the twelve Jyotirlinga temples.**
- It was **built by King Muthuramalinga Sethupathiy.**
- The temple was **expanded during the 12<sup>th</sup> century by the Pandya Dynasty**, and its principal shrine's sanctum was **renovated by Jeyaveera Cinkaiariyan and his successor Gunaveera Cinkaiariyan**, monarch of the Jaffna kingdom.

## Bihar's First Transgender Sub-Inspectors

### Why in News?

Recently, three **transgenders** qualified the **Bihar Police Subordinate Services Commission (BPSSC) exam** to become police sub-inspectors.

### Key Points

- Following a **Patna High Court** judgment in 2021, the **State government had asked BPSSC to recruit third genders into police services.**
- According to the **2022 caste survey conducted in Bihar**, the **transgender population** is reported to be **825 (0.0006%).**
  - This figure **contrasts sharply with the 2011 census**, which recorded **40,827 transgenders in the state.**

#### Transgender

- According to the **Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill 2019**, transgender means a person **whose gender does not match with the gender assigned to that person at birth.**
- It includes trans-person with intersex variations, gender-queer and people having such socio-cultural identities as **kinnar, hijra, aaravani and jogta.**
- India's **2011 Census** was the **first census in its history to incorporate the number of 'trans' population of the country.** The report estimated that **4.8 million Indians identified as transgender.**

#### Census

- **Origin of Census:**
  - The origin of the Census in India **goes back to the colonial exercise of 1881.**
  - Census has evolved and been used by the government, policymakers, academics, and others to capture the Indian population, access resources, map social change, **delimitation exercise**, etc.
- **First Caste Census as SECC (Socio-Economic and Caste Census):**
  - **SECC** was **conducted for the first time in 1931.**
  - SECC is meant to canvass every Indian family, both in rural and urban India, and ask about their:

Note:



- **Economic status**, so as to allow Central and State authorities to come up with a range of indicators of deprivation, permutations, and combinations of which could be used by each authority to define a poor or deprived person.
- It is also meant to ask every person their **specific caste name** to allow the government to **re-evaluate which caste groups** were economically worse off and which were better off.

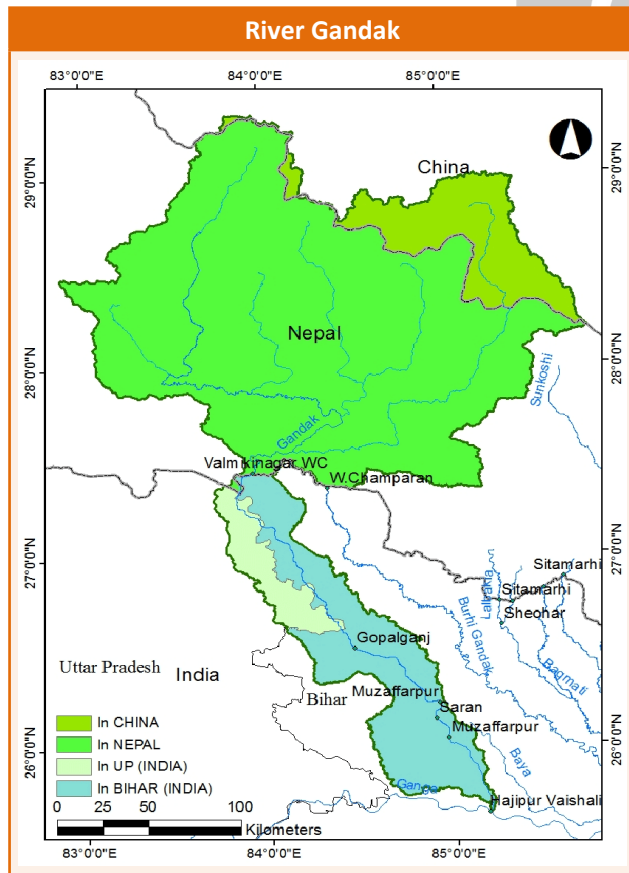
## Bihar Bridge Collapse Over Gandaki River

### Why in News?

Recently, a 15-year-old bridge over the **Gandaki River** collapsed in **Bihar's Saran district** marking the third bridge collapse incident in the district within 24 hours.

### Key Points

- According to the sources, at least **12 bridges have collapsed across Bihar** in the past 17 days. No casualties have been reported yet.



### About:

- The river Gandak, is also known as the **Gandaki and Narayani River in Nepal**. It is a significant river that flows through the **northern part of India and Nepal**.
- **Valmiki National Park and Tiger Reserve** in Bihar is located on the banks of this river.

### Source:

- The river Gandak originates at an altitude of 7620 m above main sea level in the **north of Dhaulagiri in Tibet near Nepal border**. Originating from the Himalayas, the river stretches over a length of 630 kilometers, with 445 kilometers running through India and 185 kilometers in Nepal.

### Drainage Basin:

- The Gandak River has a total drainage basin area of 29,705 square kilometers.
- The river **flows through the Indian states of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh**, and joins the **Ganges** near Patna just downstream of Hajipur.

### Tributaries:

- The major tributaries of the Gandak River include the Mayangadi, Bari, Trisuli, Panchand, Sarhad, Budhi Gandak.

## Workers Trapped in Floodwaters in Bihar

### Why in News?

According to the sources, around **150 workers are trapped in floodwaters** in Bagaha, Bihar due to **heavy rainfall**.

### Key Points

- The **State Disaster Response Force (SDRF)** has rescued about 40 of the 150 stranded workers, including elderly, women, and children.
- According to the Water Resources Department, major rivers, including **Kosi, Mahananda, Bagmati, Gandak, Kamla Balan, and Kamla**, are above the danger mark.

Note:

### Mahananda River

- Mahananda river is a **tributary of the Ganga**.
- It **originates from the Himalayas in Darjeeling, West Bengal**.
- The river **flows through Bihar, West Bengal**, and then continues southeastward to join the Ganga at Godagari in Bangladesh.

## Bihar Appeals Supreme Court

### Why in News?

Recently, The Bihar government appealed to **the Supreme Court** against the **Patna High Court's** decision to **strike down the new reservation law** in the state.

### Key Points

- The quota was raised by the Bihar government after it carried out a **caste survey** in the state.
- The Patna High Court struck down the Bihar government's decision to increase the reservation quota from 50% to 65% for **Backward Classes (BC), Extremely Backward Classes (EBC), Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST)** in educational institutions and government jobs.

### Reservation

- **Reservation** is a **form of positive discrimination**, created to **promote equality among marginalised sections** and to protect them from social and historical injustice.
- It gives **preferential treatment to marginalised sections** of society in **employment and access to education**.
- It was also originally developed to correct years of discrimination and to give a boost to disadvantaged groups.

## Scheme for Mango Cultivation

### Why in News?

Recently, the state government has introduced a scheme designed specifically for **mango cultivation** to

provide **targeted assistance and support to farmers** engaged in mango production.

- Bihar produces 15.84 lakh Metric Tons (MT) of mango and **ranks third in the country** in mango production.

### Key Points

- **Mango Development Scheme** is introduced for **enhancing mango's area expansion with a 50% subsidy** at the unit cost of Rs 60,000 per hectare.
  - The state is facilitating a **micro irrigation scheme** extending **80% support on Drip, Mini, and Micro sprinkler** to **small and marginal farmers (70% for other farmers)** and **80% support on community borewells**.
- Bihar is home to many unique flavours of mango, including **Dudhia Malda, Jardalu, and Amrapali**.
  - Proper **marketing and branding** can make a significant difference in how fruits from the state are perceived and valued in the market.
- With support from the **Agriculture and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA)**, Bihar exports around more than 1200 MT of fresh mango to the UK, Middle East, and New Zealand.

### Zardalu Mango

- Zardalu is a **unique mango variety** from **Bhagalpur**.
- It is known for its **light yellow skin and distinct special aroma**.
- It was accorded the **Geographical Indication (GI) tag in 2018**.

### Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA)

- It was established by the Government of India under the **Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority Act, 1985**.
- It functions under the **Ministry of Commerce and Industry**. The Authority has its **headquarters in New Delhi**.
- In 2020, the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) has signed an Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with **Small Farmers Agribusiness Consortium (SFAC)** to bring in better synergy in agricultural activities.



Note:

**Key Points**

**Details**

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**Summary**

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