

Mission to map rural India's cultural assets

April 10, 2023

In news— In order to harness the unique cultural heritage of rural India, the government has identified and documented distinctive features of more than one lakh villages across the country under the *Mera Gaon Meri Dharohar* programme.

About the programme-

- In this cultural asset mapping, **villages have been broadly divided into seven-eight categories** based on-
 - Whether they are important ecologically, developmentally and scholastically,
 - If they produce a famous textile or product, and
 - If they are connected to some historical or mythological events such as the Independence struggle or epics like the *Mahabharata*.
- **The ecological category, for example, includes the Bishnoi village near Jodhpur in Rajasthan, which is a case study for living in harmony with nature, and Uttarakhand's Raini village, which is famous for the Chipko movement.**
- There are also villages which have developmental importance like **Modhera in Gujarat, which is the first solar-powered village in India.**
- The villages under the **historical category include Kandel in Madhya Pradesh, the site of the famous 'Jal Satyagraha', and the villages of Hanol in Uttarakhand and Vidurashwathar of Karnataka, which are linked to the Mahabharata.**
- **Suketi in Himachal Pradesh, Asia's oldest fossil park, and Pandrethan in Kashmir, the village of Shaivite mystic Lal Ded, are also classified for their historical importance.**

- The entire exercise has been **carried out under the ' Mera Gaon Meri Dharohar' (My Village My Heritage) programme of the National Mission for Cultural Mapping (NMCM).**
- The **NMCM aims to develop a comprehensive database of art forms, artists and other resources across the country.**
- Though **launched by the Culture Ministry in 2017,** the programme got off to a slow start and was **handed over to the Indira Gandhi National Centre for Arts (IGNCA) in 2021.**
- The Culture Ministry had approved a budget ₹469 crore for the mission in 2017 for a period of three years, according to the administrative approval for the project.
- The IGNCA said it has undertaken the cultural asset mapping of these villages through field surveys.
- **Detailed field surveys were carried out by joint teams of the Culture Ministry and the Common Services Centres (CSC), under the Ministry of Electronics and IT (MEITY) to create the dossiers.**
- The survey documents the cultural identity of the villages by involving citizens to share what makes their village, Block or district unique.
- **The survey process involves a CSC Village Level Entrepreneur (VLE) conducting meetings** with locals.
- **The IGNCA plans to cover all the 6.5 lakh villages in the country.** Plans are also afoot to create special films on 6,500 village clusters showcasing their unique heritage.
- The detailed dossiers on these villages as well as the films which have been shot will be made available in May 2023 on a **web portal called 'The National Cultural Work Place'.**
- The web portal would contain a virtual living museum of all villages documented.
- There would also be a facility for uploading a village through crowd-sourcing and allowing villagers to edit

and upload village data themselves.