LEADER IN NEWS
SHIVAJI MAHARAJ, THE FIRST CHHATRAPATI OF THE MARATHA EMPIRE

NEWS: *The Maharashtra government officially celebrates Shiv Jayanti on February 19.*

WHAT'S IN THE NEWS?
Birth:

Shivaji Maharaj, the founder and first **Chhatrapati** of the **Maratha Empire**, was born at the **fortified Shivneri Fort** near Pune on **19th February 1630**. He was the son of **Shahaji Bhosale**, a prominent Maratha general serving the **Deccan Sultanates**, and **Jijabai**, the daughter of **Lakhuji Jadhavrao** of Sindkhed, a noble under the Ahmednagar Sultanate.

Early Life:

From an early age, Shivaji displayed remarkable military acumen and leadership skills. At just **15 years old**, he embarked on his first military expedition, successfully **capturing Torna Fort** in **1645** from the Bijapur Sultanate. Encouraged by this success, he expanded his territorial control by **seizing Kondana Fort** and several other strongholds.

Debate on Birth Date:

There is historical ambiguity regarding Shivaji Maharaj's exact birth date. While **February 19, 1630**, is widely accepted, some historians argue that he may have been born on **April 6, 1627**. However, the former date is officially recognized and celebrated.

Political Situation in Maharashtra at His Birth:

During the time of Shivaji Maharaj's birth, most of Maharashtra was under the rule of two major powers:

1. **The Nizamshah of Ahmednagar**
2. **The Adilshah of Bijapur**

The Marathas, at this point, were primarily serving as **feudal lords, warriors, and administrative officers** under these Deccan Sultanates. However, Shivaji aspired to establish **Swarajya** (self-rule) and free his homeland from the dominance of external rulers.

Conflict with the Mughals and Other Powers
Early Conflicts with the Mughal Empire:

Shivaji Maharaj's growing power led to frequent clashes with the Mughals. Some of the key conflicts include:

1. **Raids on Mughal Territory (1657):**
   - Shivaji launched attacks on **Ahmednagar and Junnar**, targeting the wealth and resources of the Mughal Empire.

- In retaliation, **Nasiri Khan**, a Mughal commander, led an expedition against him.

2. **Victory Over Shaista Khan (1660-1663):**
   - Shaista Khan, a **maternal uncle of Aurangzeb**, was sent by the Mughal emperor to suppress Shivaji.
   - In **1663**, Shivaji conducted a daring night raid on **Shaista Khan's residence in Pune**, wounding him and forcing him to retreat.

3. **Defeat of Afzal Khan (1659):**
   - In **1659**, Adilshah of Bijapur sent **Afzal Khan**, a powerful general, to eliminate Shivaji.
   - Shivaji, using **diplomatic deception**, arranged a meeting with Afzal Khan and, sensing treachery, **killed him with a concealed 'wagh nakh' (tiger claw weapon)**.
   - This victory significantly strengthened Shivaji's position in Maharashtra.

4. **Sacking of Surat (1664):**
   - To weaken Mughal economic power, Shivaji **raided Surat**, one of the richest Mughal trading ports, in **1664**.
   - This attack dealt a severe financial blow to Aurangzeb's empire and demonstrated the Marathas' ability to challenge Mughal authority.

5. **Treaty of Purandar (1665):**
   - Following repeated battles, Shivaji was compelled to sign the **Treaty of Purandar** with Mughal general **Raja Jai Singh I** in **1665**.
   - Under this treaty, Shivaji **surrendered 23 forts** to the Mughals but retained control over a few key ones.
   - He was also required to visit Aurangzeb's court in **Agra**, setting the stage for a crucial chapter in his life.

Important Battles

Shivaji Maharaj fought several key battles that not only strengthened his kingdom but also expanded the Maratha Empire.

- **Battle of Pratapgad (1659)**: A historic battle fought between **Shivaji Maharaj** and the **Adilshahi general Afzal Khan** near the **Pratapgad Fort** in **Satara, Maharashtra**.
- **Battle of Pavan Khind (1660)**: A strategic defense led by **Baji Prabhu Deshpande** at **Pavan Khind** near **Vishalgad** against **Siddi Masud** of the **Adilshahi**.
- **Sacking of Surat (1664)**: Shivaji raided the Mughal-controlled **Surat** in **Gujarat**, leading to a significant victory over **Inayat Khan**, a Mughal captain.
- **Battle of Purandar (1665)**: Fought between the **Mughal Empire** and the **Maratha Empire**; the Treaty of Purandar was signed afterward.
- **Battle of Sinhagad (1670)**: **Tanaji Malusare**, a Maratha commander, successfully recaptured **Sinhagad Fort** near **Pune**, defeating **Udaybhan Rathod** of the Mughal army.

- **Battle of Kalyan (1682-83)**: **Bahadur Khan** of the **Mughal Empire** defeated the Marathas at **Kalyan**.
- **Battle of Sangamner (1679)**: The final battle in which **Shivaji Maharaj** himself participated, marking the end of a significant phase in his military campaigns.

One of the gratest maratha leader who has capability to destroy the roots of Mughal Empire

Happy Shivaji Maharaj Jayanti

Expansion of the Maratha Navy
- Recognizing the strategic importance of **maritime power**, Shivaji Maharaj established a **strong naval force** to protect the Konkan coastline.
- He commissioned the construction of **warships**, including:
    - **Gurab** (Light warships for quick movement)
    - **Galbat** (Fast attack ships)
    - **Pal** (Heavily armed naval vessels)
- His navy played a crucial role in safeguarding **trade routes, defending the coastline**, and countering the growing influence of European and Mughal maritime forces.
- Shivaji also **captured several forts** along the Konkan coast, including **Mahuli, Songad, Karnala, Lohagad, Tunga, Tikona, Visapur, Tala, and Ghosala**.

Arrest and Escape from Agra (1666)
- In **1666**, Shivaji visited Aurangzeb's court in **Agra** after the Treaty of Purandar.
- However, he was **insulted and placed under house arrest** by the Mughals.
- Shivaji **devised a brilliant escape plan**:

- o He pretended to be ill and started **sending baskets of sweets** as gifts for the Brahmins and saints in the city.
  - o Inside these baskets, he and his **son Sambhaji** were **smuggled out**, successfully evading the Mughal guards.
- After escaping, Shivaji launched **a fresh military campaign**, regaining territories that the Mughals had seized.

Coronation and Reign as Chhatrapati

- On **6th June 1674**, Shivaji was **formally crowned** as **Chhatrapati at Raigad Fort**, marking the establishment of the **Maratha Empire**.
- He assumed several **titles**, including:
  - **Chhatrapati** (Sovereign ruler)
  - **Shakakarta** (Founder of a new era)
  - **Kshatriya Kulavantas** (Protector of the Kshatriya clan)
  - **Haindava Dharmodhhaarak** (Guardian of Hindu Dharma)

Administrative Reforms under Shivaji Maharaj

1. Central Administration:

- Shivaji established an **efficient governance system**, inspired by the **administrative reforms of the Deccan Sultanates**.
- He was assisted by the **Ashtapradhan (Council of Eight Ministers)**, which included:
  - **Peshwa (Chief Minister)** – Advisory and administrative head
  - **Amatya (Finance Minister)** – Managed state revenue
  - **Sachiv (Secretary)** – Handled correspondence and documentation
  - **Mantri (Minister of Intelligence)** – Oversaw internal affairs
  - **Senapati (Commander-in-Chief)** – Managed the military
  - **Nyayadhish (Chief Justice)** – Handled judicial matters
  - **Panditrao (Head of Religious Affairs)** – Managed religious policies
  - **Sumant (Foreign Minister)** – Handled diplomatic relations

2. Revenue Administration:

- Shivaji abolished the **Jagirdari system** and introduced the **Ryotwari system**, ensuring direct revenue collection from farmers.
- Additional revenue sources:
  - **Chauth** – 25% tax on income collected from neighboring territories
  - **Sardeshmukhi** – 10% additional revenue charge

3. Military Administration:

- Shivaji maintained a **standing army**, with soldiers paid in **cash rather than land grants**, reducing dependence on feudal lords.
- His **cavalry and infantry** were highly trained, disciplined, and organized into **units led by commanders**.

Death and Legacy

- Shivaji Maharaj **passed away on 3rd April 1680**, leaving behind a powerful and well-established empire.
- His military strategies, naval advancements, and administrative policies laid the foundation for the **rise of the Maratha Empire**, which would dominate the Indian subcontinent in the 18th century.
- He is **revered as a national hero** for his **vision of Swarajya (self-rule)** and his efforts in **preserving indigenous governance and Hindu cultural identity**.

First Public Celebration of Shivaji Jayanti:

- **Mahatma Jyotirao Phule** was the first to **initiate the celebration** of **Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Jayanti in 1870**, after discovering his **tomb at Raigad Fort**.

Source: https://www.business-standard.com/india-news/chhatrapati-shivaji-maharaj-jayanti-2025-history-significance-and-quotes-nc-125021900214_1.html