Pariksha Saathi — Bihar GK Notes

1 topics • 11 lessons • updated 28 October 2026

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The Bihar GK topics in the syllabus of: Bihar Police Constable, BPSC Prelims, BSSC Inter Level. Each topic ends with a link to its free practice questions; full mock tests are free in the Pariksha Saathi app and on the website.

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What the exam asks: Bihar General Knowledge is a fixed part of the BPSC Prelims and the Bihar Police Constable paper. Questions are almost always factual: a place, a date, a founder, a river, a sobriquet. The paper rewards students who know the ancient Magadha story thoroughly, can place rivers and sanctuaries on the map, and remember the handful of numbers (243, 75, 40, 16, 1912, 1916, 2000) that keep returning year after year.

Ancient history: Magadha first rose under the Haryanka dynasty of Bimbisara and Ajatashatru with its capital at Rajgriha (Rajgir), ringed by five hills. Tradition credits Udayin with shifting the capital to Pataliputra at the meeting of the Ganga and the Son; NCERT places the shift in the fourth century BCE. The Shishunagas, the Nandas (Mahapadma to Dhana Nanda) and then the Mauryas followed; Chandragupta Maurya founded the Mauryan empire around 321 BCE with Chanakya's help, and Megasthenes described Pataliputra as Palibothra. Ashoka's Third Buddhist Council met at Pataliputra, the First at Rajgir under Ajatashatru and the Second at Vaishali under Kalasoka. The Guptas again ruled from Pataliputra, Kumaragupta I founded Nalanda, and Aryabhata wrote the Aryabhatiya at Kusumpura (Patna) in 499 CE. The Palas added Vikramshila (Dharmapala) and Odantapuri (Gopala). Bihar is the land of the Buddha's enlightenment at Bodh Gaya on the Niranjana and of Mahavira's traditional birthplace near Vaishali (the exact site is disputed) and nirvana at Pawapuri.

Medieval and modern history: Sher Shah Suri defeated Humayun at Chausa (1539) and lies buried at Sasaram in a lake tomb. Guru Gobind Singh was born at Patna in 1666. After the Battle of Buxar (1764), the Mughal emperor granted the Company the Diwani of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa in 1765. Kunwar Singh of Jagdishpur led the 1857 revolt at the age of eighty. Bihar and Orissa became a separate province on 22 March 1912 (Bihar Diwas); Orissa left in 1936 and Jharkhand on 15 November 2000. Gandhi's first Indian satyagraha was at Champaran in 1917 against the tinkathia system, at the invitation of Raj Kumar Shukla. Bihar Vidyapeeth (1921), the Quit India martyrs of the Patna Secretariat (11 August 1942), the first Chief Minister Shri Krishna Singh and Jayaprakash Narayan's Sampoorna Kranti of 1974 complete the modern sequence.

Geography: Bihar is landlocked, bordered by Nepal, West Bengal, Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh. The Ganga enters at Chausa and divides the state into the North Bihar plain of new alluvium and the South Bihar plain. Northern tributaries are the Himalayan rivers Kosi, Gandak, Burhi Gandak, Bagmati, Kamla and Mahananda; southern tributaries are the Son, Punpun, Falgu and Kiul. The Kosi, which repeatedly shifts its course, is the Sorrow of Bihar; the 2008 flood followed a breach at Kusaha in Nepal. The Kosi barrage at Hanuman Nagar, the Gandak barrage at Valmikinagar and the Son anicut at Dehri-on-Sone are the main irrigation works. The Kaimur plateau in the south-west is a Vindhyan extension; the Someshwar hills of West Champaran hold the highest point. Protected areas include Valmiki Tiger Reserve (so far the only one; Kaimur has in-principle approval as the second), Kaimur (largest

sanctuary), Bhimbandh with its hot springs, the Vikramshila dolphin sanctuary near Bhagalpur and Kanwar Lake (Kabartal) in Begusarai, Bihar's first Ramsar site (2020).

Economy: Bihar is agrarian, with rice, wheat, maize, sugarcane and jute, and leads India in litchi (Shahi litchi of Muzaffarpur) and makhana (Mithila). Bhagalpur weaves Tussar silk, Silao makes khaja, Madhubani paints. Industry is thin: the Barauni refinery and thermal plant in Begusarai, the Jamalpur rail workshop (1862) in Munger, the gun factory at Munger and cement from Kaimur limestone. Pyrite at Amjhore in Rohtas is the best-known mineral. Census 2011 recorded about 10.4 crore people, the third largest, with one of the lowest levels of urbanisation (about 11 per cent; only Himachal Pradesh is lower) and the highest density among states.

Polity: The legislature is bicameral, with a 243-member Vidhan Sabha and a 75-member Vidhan Parishad. Bihar sends 40 members to the Lok Sabha and 16 to the Rajya Sabha. The Patna High Court dates from 1916. The Bihar Panchayat Raj Act 2006 made Bihar the first state to reserve half of all panchayat seats for women. Jairamdas Daulatram was the first Governor after Independence.

Culture: The state bird is the house sparrow and the tree the peepal; sources differ on the state animal (gaur or ox) and the flower (marigold or kachnar). Chhath on Kartik Shukla Shashthi, the Sonepur cattle fair on Kartik Purnima, the Pitrapaksha Mela at Gaya, Sama Chakeva in Mithila and Bihula in Anga are the great festivals. Folk forms include Bhikhari Thakur's Bidesia, Jat-Jatin, Jhijhiya and Domkach; crafts include Madhubani painting, Manjusha art of Bhagalpur, Sujni embroidery of Muzaffarpur and Sikki grass work. Maithili joined the Eighth Schedule in 2003; Bhojpuri, Magahi, Angika and Bajjika remain regional. Vidyapati, Dinkar, Renu, Nagarjun and Rahul Sankrityayan are the literary names to know.

Traps: Do not confuse Chausa (1539) with Kannauj (1540), Mahavira's traditional birthplace (Kundagrama near Vaishali; other sites are claimed) with his nirvana (Pawapuri), Nalanda's founder (Kumaragupta I) with Vikramshila's (Dharmapala), the Kosi barrage (Hanuman Nagar) with the Gandak barrage (Valmikinagar), or the two UNESCO dates (Mahabodhi 2002, Nalanda 2016). Remember that Orwell, not Kipling, was born at Motihari, and that Sitabdiara is JP's village while Zeradei is Rajendra Prasad's.

Examples

- Capitals of Magadha in order: Rajgriha (Girivraja) under Bimbisara, then Pataliputra (traditionally from Udayin onwards); Champa was the capital of Anga, not Magadha.
- Buddhist Councils mnemonic R-V-P: First at Rajgir (Ajatashatru), Second at Vaishali (Kalasoka), Third at Pataliputra (Ashoka).
- Founder pairs: Nalanda = Kumaragupta I (Gupta); Vikramshila = Dharmapala (Pala); Odantapuri = Gopala (Pala; Tibetan traditions differ).
- Sher Shah beat Humayun twice: Chausa 1539 (Bihar, Buxar district) and Kannauj/Bilgram 1540 (UP); his tomb stands in a lake at Sasaram.
- Three dates of statehood: 22 March 1912 Bihar and Orissa province; 1 April 1936 Orissa separated; 15 November 2000 Jharkhand separated.
- Champaran 1917: invited by Raj Kumar Shukla, against the tinkathia system (indigo on 3 of every 20 kathas), ended by the Champaran Agrarian Act 1918.
- Barrages: Kosi at Hanuman Nagar/Bhimnagar (1954 agreement), Gandak at Valmikinagar (1959 agreement), Son at Indrapuri with the old anicut at Dehri-on-Sone (1874).
- Protected-area firsts: Valmiki (West Champaran) is so far the only tiger reserve (Kaimur has in-principle approval as the second), Kaimur is the largest sanctuary, Vikramshila (Bhagalpur) is India's only dolphin sanctuary, Kanwar Lake (Begusarai) is Bihar's first Ramsar site (2020).
- Legislature numbers: Vidhan Sabha 243, Vidhan Parishad 75, Lok Sabha 40, Rajya Sabha 16; Patna High Court 1916.
- Sobriquets: Bihar Kesari = Shri Krishna Singh; Bihar Vibhuti = Anugrah Narayan Sinha; Loknayak = JP; Jan Nayak = Karpoori Thakur; Rashtrakavi = Dinkar; Maithil Kokil = Vidyapati; Mountain Man = Dashrath Manjhi.
- State symbols: bird house sparrow, tree peepal (sources differ on the animal, gaur or ox, and the flower, marigold or kachnar); the emblem shows a Bodhi tree.

- UNESCO in Bihar: Mahabodhi Temple, Bodh Gaya (2002) and Nalanda Mahavihara ruins (2016); Barabar caves (Jehanabad) are India's oldest rock-cut caves.

> **Quick revision:** Magadha capitals Rajgriha then Pataliputra (Udayin); Buddhist Councils Rajgir-Vaishali-Pataliputra; Nalanda by Kumaragupta I, Vikramshila by Dharmapala; Mahavira nirvana Pawapuri; Chausa 1539, Sasaram tomb; Bihar province 22 March 1912, Jharkhand 15 Nov 2000; Champaran 1917, Raj Kumar Shukla; Kosi = Sorrow of Bihar, barrage Hanuman Nagar; Gandak barrage Valmikinagar; Valmiki only tiger reserve; Kanwar Lake Begusarai Ramsar; Vidhan Sabha 243, Parishad 75, LS 40, RS 16; Patna HC 1916; 50% women PRI 2006; Mahabodhi UNESCO 2002, Nalanda 2016; Maithili 8th Schedule 2003.

Ancient Bihar: From Chirand to Magadha, Nalanda and the Palas

Earliest settlements: Bihar's human story begins long before written records. The site exams ask about most is Chirand in Saran district, on the north bank of the Ganga close to where the Ghaghara joins it. Excavations there revealed a Neolithic village known for tools of bone and deer antler, followed by Chalcolithic (copper-stone age) levels with black-and-red pottery. Senuwar in Rohtas district and Taradih near the Mahabodhi Temple at Bodh Gaya are other early farming sites.

Vedic references: The early Vedic people lived far to the west, and their texts treat the east as distant. The Rigveda mentions the Kikatas, later identified with Magadha, and their chief Pramaganda in unfriendly terms, and the Atharvaveda names the Angas and Magadhas among faraway peoples to whom fever should be sent. The Shatapatha Brahmana tells how Videgha Mathava, with his priest Gotama Rahugana, carried the sacred fire east across the Sadanira (usually identified with the Gandak) and settled Videha. Videha, with its capital at Mithila, became famous for King Janaka, at whose court the sage Yajnavalkya debated with scholars including Gargi, as the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad records.

Mahajanapadas and the Vajji republic: For the 6th century BCE the Buddhist text Anguttara Nikaya lists 16 Mahajanapadas, three of which lay in present Bihar: Anga with its capital at Champa near Bhagalpur, Magadha with its capital at Girivraja or Rajagriha, and the Vajji confederacy with its capital at Vaishali. The Vajji was a gana-sangha, a union of 8 clans led by the Licchavis, in which an assembly of clan heads took decisions; this is why Vaishali is often called one of the world's earliest republics. The Buddha praised the Vajjis for seven conditions of welfare, such as meeting often in assembly and respecting elders and women. Vaishali was also the home of the courtesan Amrapali, who gifted a mango grove to the Buddha, and the place where the first order of Buddhist nuns was founded.

Rise of Magadha: Magadha became India's first great empire because of its geography: fertile alluvial soil, the Ganga and the Son for trade and defence, iron ore in the southern hills, elephants from the forests, and capitals protected by hills and rivers. The Haryanka king Bimbisara grew strong through marriage alliances with Kosala, the Licchavis and Madra, and annexed Anga. His son Ajatashatru conquered the Vajjis after a long war, having divided them through his minister Vassakara, and built a fort at Pataligrama on the Ganga. Tradition credits Udayin with founding Pataliputra (Kusumapura) and moving the capital there. Shishunaga destroyed the power of Avanti, and his son Kalashoka (Kakavarna) patronised the Second Buddhist Council at Vaishali. The Nandas then built the first empire under a non-Kshatriya line: Mahapadma Nanda took the titles Ekarat and Sarvakshatrantaka, and the fame of Dhana Nanda's army is said to have discouraged Alexander's soldiers at the Beas in 326 BCE.

Mauryas and Guptas at Pataliputra: Chandragupta Maurya, guided by Chanakya (Kautilya), overthrew Dhana Nanda around 321 BCE. Megasthenes, the ambassador of Seleucus Nicator, described Palibothra in his Indica as a city enclosed by a wooden wall with 570 towers and 64 gates, run by a committee of 30 members. Ashoka (about 268-232 BCE) held the Third Buddhist Council at Pataliputra under Moggaliputta Tissa, gave the Barabar caves to the Ajivikas, and raised pillars at Lauriya Nandangarh, Lauriya Araraj, Rampurva and Vaishali (Kolhua). Later the Guptas rose in the same region: Chandragupta I married the Licchavi princess Kumaradevi, and his son Samudragupta proudly called himself Lichchhavi-dauhitra, the daughter's son of the Licchavis. The Chinese pilgrim Faxian (Fa-Hien) admired Ashoka's palace at Pataliputra in the reign of Chandragupta II, and Aryabhata wrote the Aryabhatiya at Kusumapura in 499 CE.

Land of the Buddha and Mahavira: Siddhartha Gautama attained enlightenment under a peepal tree at Uruvela, now Bodh Gaya, on the bank of the Niranjana. At Rajgir, Bimbisara gifted him the Venuvana bamboo grove, and he often preached on the Griddhakuta (Vulture's Peak); after his death the First Buddhist Council met in the Saptaparni cave at Rajgir under Mahakassapa, with Ajatashatru as patron. Mahavira, the 24th Tirthankara, was born according to tradition at Kundagrama near Vaishali to Siddhartha of the Jnatrika clan and Trishala, a Licchavi princess, and attained nirvana at Pawapuri in Nalanda district, where the Jal Mandir stands in a lotus tank. The First Jain Council met at Pataliputra under Sthulabhadra around the time of Chandragupta Maurya.

Universities and the Palas: Nalanda, founded by Kumaragupta I in the 5th century CE, grew into a residential university that drew students from China, Korea, Tibet and South-East Asia; Xuanzang (Hiuen Tsang) studied there under the abbot Shilabhadra in the 7th century, and Yijing (I-tsing) came soon after. The Pala dynasty was founded by Gopala around 750 CE when, according to tradition, the people chose him to end a period of anarchy (matsyanyaya). Dharmapala founded Vikramashila at Antichak in Bhagalpur district, and Odantapuri at Bihar Sharif is traditionally credited to Gopala. Atisha Dipankara of Vikramashila carried Buddhist teaching to Tibet. These monasteries were ruined in the Turkish raids at the end of the 12th century.

Examples

- Chirand (Saran district, near the meeting of the Ghaghara and the Ganga): Neolithic site famous for bone and antler tools, with later Chalcolithic levels.
- Bihar's three Mahajanapadas: Anga (capital Champa, near Bhagalpur), Magadha (Girivraja or Rajagriha) and Vajji (Vaishali), out of the 16 listed in the Anguttara Nikaya.
- Vajji: a confederacy of 8 clans led by the Licchavis with its capital at Vaishali, often called one of the world's earliest republics.
- Magadha's dynasties in order: Haryanka (Bimbisara, Ajatashatru, Udayin), Shishunaga (Shishunaga, Kalashoka), Nanda (Mahapadma, Dhana Nanda), then Maurya.
- Shatapatha Brahmana: Videgha Mathava carried the sacred fire east across the Sadanira (Gandak) to settle Videha, whose capital Mithila was ruled by King Janaka.
- Megasthenes' Indica: Pataliputra (Palibothra) had a wooden wall with 570 towers and 64 gates and was run by a 30-member city committee.
- Gupta-Licchavi link: Chandragupta I married the Licchavi princess Kumaradevi; Samudragupta called himself Lichchhavi-dauhitra.
- Mahavira: born at Kundagrama near Vaishali (tradition), mother Trishala a Licchavi princess, nirvana at Pawapuri (Jal Mandir); First Jain Council at Pataliputra under Sthulabhadra.
- Pala foundations: Vikramashila (Antichak, Bhagalpur) by Dharmapala; Odantapuri (Bihar Sharif) traditionally by Gopala; Atisha Dipankara of Vikramashila went to Tibet.

> **Quick revision:** Chirand (Saran) Neolithic bone tools; Kikatas in Rigveda; Videgha Mathava crossed the Sadanira; Janaka of Mithila; Mahajanapadas Anga (Champa), Magadha (Rajagriha), Vajji (Vaishali, 8 clans, Licchavis); Haryanka-Shishunaga-Nanda-Maurya; Pataliputra by Udayin; Megasthenes 570 towers, 64 gates; Third Council under Ashoka; Kumaradevi; Mahavira nirvana Pawapuri; Nalanda by Kumaragupta I; Vikramashila by Dharmapala.

Medieval Bihar: Bakhtiyar Khilji, Sher Shah Suri and the Battle of Buxar

Bakhtiyar Khilji and the name Bihar: Around 1200, Ikhtiyar-ud-din Muhammad bin Bakhtiyar Khilji, a Turkish commander of the Ghurid conquest, raided south Bihar. Minhaj-us-Siraj's Tabaqat-i-Nasiri describes how his men stormed what they took to be a fort, killed its shaven-headed inhabitants, and only then learnt that it was a vihara, a Buddhist monastery, usually identified as Odantapuri. Because the area was full of viharas the Turks called it Bihar, and the town now known as Bihar Sharif became their headquarters; the name later spread to the whole province. In the traditional account Nalanda and Vikramashila were sacked in the same raids. Bakhtiyar went on to seize Nadia from Lakshmana Sena of Bengal and made Lakhnauti his base, but died in 1206 after a disastrous expedition towards Tibet.

Between Delhi and Bengal: For the next three centuries south Bihar was a frontier contested by the Delhi Sultans and the rulers of Bengal, while Mithila (Tirhut) in the north kept its own Hindu dynasties. The Karnat dynasty, founded by Nanyadeva in 1097, ruled Mithila until Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq's invasion of 1324-25 drove Harisimhadeva into Nepal; the Oiniwar dynasty that followed patronised the poet Vidyapati. In the 15th century the Sharqi sultans of Jaunpur held parts of Bihar until the Lodis took it. Sufism also took root: Makhdum Sharafuddin Ahmad Yahya Maneri of the Firdausi order, whose letters (Maktubat) are classics of Sufi literature, lived at Bihar Sharif and died there in 1381, and Maner near Patna remains a major Sufi centre.

Sher Shah Suri, the Afghan from Sasaram: Farid, son of Hasan Khan Sur, grew up on his father's jagir of Sasaram and Khawaspur. He served Bahar Khan Lohani, the Afghan ruler of Bihar, who gave him the title Sher Khan for killing a tiger, and he rose to control Bihar as guardian of Bahar Khan's young son. Exploiting Humayun's troubles, he seized the strong hill fort of Rohtasgarh, defeated Humayun at Chausa on the Ganga near Buxar in 1539, crowned himself Sher Shah, and drove Humayun out of India after the battle of Kannauj (Bilgram) in 1540. He died in 1545 from a gunpowder explosion while besieging the fort of Kalinjar.

Sher Shah's administration: In five years Sher Shah left a system that the Mughals copied. The empire was divided into sarkars and parganas; a pargana had a shiqdar for law and order, an amin for land revenue, a qanungo for land records and a fotedar as treasurer. Land was measured and the state's share fixed at one-third of the produce, recorded in a patta given to the peasant and a qabuliyat signed by him. He issued the silver rupiya and the copper dam, ancestors of the rupee, rebuilt the great road from Sonargaon in Bengal to the north-west (later the Grand Trunk Road) with sarais at regular stages, and used the sarais as posts for a horse mail. In 1541 he built a fort at Patna and made it the provincial headquarters in place of Bihar Sharif. His tomb at Sasaram, an octagonal red sandstone building rising from an artificial lake, is a masterpiece of Indo-Afghan architecture; his father Hasan Khan's tomb also stands at Sasaram.

Bihar under the Mughals: Akbar captured Patna from the Afghan ruler Daud Khan Karrani in 1574, and in Akbar's division of the empire in 1580 Bihar became one of the original twelve subahs, with Patna as its capital; Raja Man Singh was among its governors. In 1704 the governor Azim-us-Shan, a grandson of Aurangzeb, renamed Patna Azimabad. As Mughal power declined in the 18th century, Bihar was ruled as part of the Nawabi of Bengal through a deputy governor (naib nazim) at Patna; Alivardi Khan held this post before becoming Nawab of Bengal in 1740. This is the origin of the familiar phrase Bengal, Bihar and Orissa.

The Sikh connection: Guru Nanak and Guru Tegh Bahadur both visited the region, and Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Sikh Guru, was born at Patna in 1666. The Takht Sri Harmandir Ji Patna Sahib stands at his birthplace and is one of the five Takhts, the seats of religious authority, of Sikhism; the present building was raised after the earthquake of 1934 damaged the older shrine.

The British and the Battle of Buxar: European traders came to Patna in the 17th century for saltpetre (used in gunpowder), opium, sugar and cloth; the English soon set up a factory there. After Plassey (1757), Mir Qasim, made Nawab of Bengal in 1760, moved his capital from Murshidabad to Munger, set up an arms workshop there and quarrelled with the Company over duty-free private trade. Defeated in 1763, he had English prisoners killed at Patna and fled to Awadh. On 22 October 1764 at Buxar, Major Hector Munro defeated the combined armies of Mir Qasim, Shuja-ud-daula of Awadh and the Mughal emperor Shah Alam II. By the Treaty of Allahabad (1765) Shah Alam granted the Company the Diwani, the right to collect revenue, of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. Under Clive's dual government Raja Shitab Rai served as naib diwan for Bihar, and in 1793 Bihar came under Cornwallis's Permanent Settlement.

Examples

- Bakhtiyar Khilji raided south Bihar around 1200; Minhaj-us-Siraj's Tabaqat-i-Nasiri records his attack on a vihara mistaken for a fort, usually identified as Odantapuri.
- The name Bihar comes from vihara (Buddhist monastery); Bihar Sharif was the first Turkish headquarters in the province.
- Mithila dynasties: Karnat (founded by Nanyadeva in 1097, ended by Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq's invasion of 1324-25) and Oiniwar (patrons of Vidyapati).

- Sufi saint of Bihar: Makhdum Sharafuddin Ahmad Yahya Maneri of the Firdausi order, author of the Maktubat, died at Bihar Sharif in 1381.
- Sher Shah's career: title Sher Khan from Bahar Khan Lohani; seized Rohtasgarh; Chausa 1539; Kannauj (Bilgram) 1540; died at Kalinjar 1545; tomb in a lake at Sasaram.
- Sher Shah's reforms: sarkars and parganas; shiqdar, amin, qanungo, fotedar; patta and qabuliyat; silver rupiya and copper dam; the Sonargaon road (later Grand Trunk Road) with sarais.
- Patna: fort built by Sher Shah in 1541; capital of the Mughal subah of Bihar from 1580; renamed Azimabad in 1704 by Azim-us-Shan, grandson of Aurangzeb.
- Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Sikh Guru, was born at Patna in 1666; Takht Sri Harmandir Ji Patna Sahib is one of the five Takhts.
- Mir Qasim moved his capital from Murshidabad to Munger and set up an arms workshop there.
- Battle of Buxar, 22 October 1764: Hector Munro defeated Mir Qasim, Shuja-ud-daula and Shah Alam II; the Treaty of Allahabad (1765) gave the Company the Diwani of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa.

> **Quick revision:** Bakhtiyar Khilji c. 1200, Odantapuri, Tabaqat-i-Nasiri; Bihar from vihara; Karnat dynasty (Nanyadeva 1097) and Oiniwar in Mithila; Sharafuddin Maneri (Firdausi) died 1381; Sher Shah: Rohtasgarh, Chausa 1539, Kannauj 1540, Kalinjar 1545, Sasaram tomb, rupiya, patta-qabuliyat, Patna fort 1541; Bihar subah 1580; Azimabad 1704; Guru Gobind Singh born Patna 1666; Mir Qasim at Munger; Buxar 22 Oct 1764; Diwani 1765.

Modern Bihar and the Freedom Struggle: From 1857 to the JP Movement

The revolt of 1857 in Bihar: Unrest broke out in Patna in July 1857, when the bookseller Peer Ali rose in revolt; Commissioner William Tayler had Peer Ali hanged on 7 July. On 25 July sepoys of three regiments mutinied at the Danapur cantonment and marched to Arrah, where Babu Kunwar Singh, the zamindar of Jagdishpur, then about 80 years old, took command. They besieged a small fortified house at Arrah held by a handful of Britons and Sikh soldiers. Kunwar Singh then fought across central India, Awadh and eastern Uttar Pradesh, capturing Azamgarh in 1858. Crossing the Ganga on his way home, he was hit in the arm and is said to have cut it off and offered it to the river. He defeated a British force near Jagdishpur on 23 April 1858 and died on 26 April 1858; his brother Amar Singh carried on the fight.

The Wahabi movement: Inspired by Syed Ahmad of Rae Bareli, the Wahabi movement aimed at religious reform and armed struggle. Patna was its main centre in India, run by Vilayat Ali and Inayat Ali of the Sadiqpur family, who sent men and money to the north-western frontier, first against the Sikhs and later against the British. The government crushed it through a series of conspiracy trials, notably the Ambala trial of 1864 and the Patna trial of 1865, and its leaders were transported to the Andamans.

A separate province: For more than a century Bihar was governed as part of the Bengal Presidency. From the 1890s educated Biharis such as Sachchidananda Sinha and Mahesh Narayan, through papers like the Bihar Times, demanded a separate province. After the partition of Bengal was annulled at the Delhi Durbar of December 1911, the province of Bihar and Orissa was created on 22 March 1912 with Patna as capital and Sir Charles Stuart Bayley as the first Lieutenant-Governor. The Patna High Court followed in 1916 and Patna University in 1917. In 1920 Lord Satyendra Prasanna Sinha became the province's Governor, the first Indian to head a province. Orissa became a separate province on 1 April 1936. Bihar also had revolutionaries: on 30 April 1908 Khudiram Bose and Prafulla Chaki threw a bomb at Muzaffarpur meant for the judge Kingsford, and Khudiram was hanged at Muzaffarpur.

Champaran and the Gandhian movements: Raj Kumar Shukla met Gandhi at the Lucknow Congress of December 1916 and persuaded him to see the plight of indigo cultivators bound by the tinkathia system, under which they had to grow indigo on 3 kathas of every 20. In April 1917 Gandhi reached Motihari, defied an order to leave, and the case against him was withdrawn. With Rajendra Prasad, Brajkishore Prasad, Anugrah Narayan Sinha, Mazharul Haque, J.B. Kripalani and Mahadev Desai he recorded thousands of peasants' statements, and the Champaran Agrarian Act 1918 ended the system. During Non-Cooperation, Gandhi inaugurated the Bihar Vidyapeeth at Patna on 6 February 1921, and Mazharul Haque founded the Sadaqat Ashram, later the headquarters of the Bihar Congress. In the

peasant movement, Swami Sahajanand Saraswati founded the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha in 1929 and became the first president of the All India Kisan Sabha in 1936.

Quit India and the Patna Secretariat martyrs: After the arrest of the national leaders on 9 August 1942, Bihar saw one of the fiercest risings in India; railway and telegraph lines were cut and police stations attacked. On 11 August 1942 students marching to hoist the national flag on the Patna Secretariat were fired upon and seven of them were killed; the Shaheed Smarak (Martyrs' Memorial) opposite the Secretariat honours them. Jayaprakash Narayan escaped from Hazaribagh Central Jail on Diwali night in November 1942 with companions such as Ramnandan Mishra and Yogendra Shukla and organised underground resistance, including the Azad Dastas trained in the Nepal terai.

Rajendra Prasad and other leaders: Dr Rajendra Prasad, born at Zeradei (Siwan) on 3 December 1884, joined Gandhi at Champaran, presided over the Congress more than once, was elected President of the Constituent Assembly on 11 December 1946, and served as the first President of India from 1950 to 1962, receiving the Bharat Ratna in 1962. Sachchidananda Sinha presided over the Assembly's first sitting on 9 December 1946 as its interim president. Shri Krishna Sinha (Bihar Kesari) and Anugrah Narayan Sinha (Bihar Vibhuti) led the Congress ministry formed in 1937, and Jagjivan Ram of Bhojpur became a national leader of the depressed classes.

Jayaprakash Narayan and the JP movement: JP, born at Sitabdiara on 11 October 1902, helped found the Congress Socialist Party in 1934 and later joined Vinoba Bhave's Bhoodan movement. In 1974 a student agitation in Bihar against corruption, unemployment and rising prices, led by the Bihar Chhatra Sangharsh Samiti, asked him to lead it. At a huge rally at Gandhi Maidan, Patna, on 5 June 1974 he called for Sampoorna Kranti (Total Revolution). The movement spread across India, the Emergency was declared on 25 June 1975, and the Janata Party won the 1977 election. JP, honoured as Loknayak, died in 1979 and received the Bharat Ratna posthumously in 1999.

Examples

- Peer Ali, a Patna bookseller, led the July 1857 rising in Patna and was hanged on 7 July 1857 on the orders of Commissioner William Tayler.
- Danapur mutiny: 25 July 1857; Kunwar Singh of Jagdishpur (about 80 years old) led the rebels, won his last fight near Jagdishpur on 23 April 1858 and died on 26 April 1858.
- Wahabi movement: inspired by Syed Ahmad of Rae Bareli; Patna (Sadiqpur family, Vilayat Ali and Inayat Ali) was its Indian centre; Ambala trial 1864, Patna trial 1865.
- Bihar and Orissa province: 22 March 1912, first Lieutenant-Governor Charles Stuart Bayley; Lord S.P. Sinha became its Governor in 1920; Orissa separated on 1 April 1936.
- Muzaffarpur bomb, 30 April 1908: Khudiram Bose and Prafulla Chaki targeted Kingsford; Khudiram was hanged at Muzaffarpur.
- Champaran Satyagraha 1917: invited by Raj Kumar Shukla; tinkathia meant indigo on 3 kathas of every 20; ended by the Champaran Agrarian Act 1918.
- Bihar Vidyapeeth was inaugurated by Gandhi on 6 February 1921; Sadaqat Ashram, founded by Mazharul Haque, became the Bihar Congress headquarters.
- Swami Sahajanand Saraswati founded the Bihar Provincial Kisan Sabha (1929) and was the first president of the All India Kisan Sabha (1936).
- 11 August 1942: seven students were shot while trying to hoist the tricolour on the Patna Secretariat; the Shaheed Smarak honours them.
- JP: born at Sitabdiara on 11 October 1902; Sampoorna Kranti call at Gandhi Maidan on 5 June 1974; Bharat Ratna 1999 (posthumous).

> **Quick revision:** Peer Ali hanged 7 July 1857; Danapur mutiny 25 July 1857; Kunwar Singh of Jagdishpur died 26 April 1858; Wahabis at Sadiqpur, Patna trial 1865; Bihar and Orissa 22 March 1912; Khudiram at Muzaffarpur 1908; Champaran 1917, Raj Kumar Shukla, Act 1918; Bihar Vidyapeeth 6 Feb 1921; Sahajanand, Kisan Sabha 1929/1936; Secretariat martyrs 11 Aug 1942; Rajendra Prasad (Zeradei) President 1950-62; JP, Sampoorna Kranti 5 June 1974.

Formation of Bihar, Its Legislature and Administration

How the state took shape: Bihar's present boundaries are the result of three separations and one transfer. The province of Bihar and Orissa was carved out of the Bengal Presidency on 22 March 1912, which is why 22 March is celebrated as Bihar Diwas (Bihar Day). Orissa became a separate province on 1 April 1936. After Independence Bihar became a Part A state under the Constitution, and in the reorganisation of 1956 the Purulia area of Manbhum district and a part of Purnea district were transferred to West Bengal under the Bihar and West Bengal (Transfer of Territories) Act 1956. Finally, the Bihar Reorganisation Act 2000 created Jharkhand out of the Chota Nagpur and Santhal Pargana regions on 15 November 2000, the birth anniversary of Birsa Munda.

What the separation of Jharkhand changed: Jharkhand took most of Bihar's minerals, forests, heavy industry and plateau land, leaving Bihar an almost entirely plain, agrarian and densely populated state. The Legislative Assembly shrank from 324 to 243 seats, Bihar's Lok Sabha seats from 54 to 40 and its Rajya Sabha seats from 22 to 16. Exams often test these before-and-after numbers, and the fact that Ranchi, once the summer capital of the province, went to Jharkhand.

The bicameral legislature: Bihar is one of the few states with two Houses, and Article 168 names it among them. The Vidhan Sabha (Legislative Assembly) has 243 elected members, with 38 seats reserved for Scheduled Castes and 2 for Scheduled Tribes under the Delimitation Order of 2008, and a normal term of 5 years. The Vidhan Parishad (Legislative Council) has 75 members. Under Article 171 a Council may not be larger than one-third of the Assembly or smaller than 40 members; about one-third of its members are elected by the MLAs, about one-third by local bodies, one-twelfth by graduates and one-twelfth by teachers, and the rest are nominated by the Governor from people with special knowledge of literature, science, art, the co-operative movement and social service. The Council is a permanent House: one-third of its members retire every second year. Bihar had a bicameral legislature even under the Government of India Act 1935.

Representation in Parliament: Bihar elects 40 members to the Lok Sabha, of whom 6 seats are reserved for Scheduled Castes and none for Scheduled Tribes; only Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra and West Bengal have more seats. It sends 16 members to the Rajya Sabha, elected by the members of the Vidhan Sabha by proportional representation through the single transferable vote.

The executive and the High Court: As in every state, executive power rests formally with the Governor (Article 154) and in practice with the Council of Ministers headed by the Chief Minister (Articles 163 and 164). Since the 91st Amendment (2003) the Council of Ministers may not exceed 15 per cent of the Assembly's strength, which for Bihar means at most 36 ministers including the Chief Minister. The Patna High Court was established in 1916; it also served Orissa until that state got its own High Court in 1948. Shri Krishna Sinha, the Bihar Kesari, headed the government from 1946 until his death in 1961 and is remembered as the first Chief Minister, while Jairamdas Daulatram was the first Governor after Independence.

Local government: Bihar's districts are grouped into divisions and divided into subdivisions and blocks, run by the district magistrate (collector), the sub-divisional officer and the block development officer. Rural self-government follows the three-tier pattern of the 73rd Amendment (1992): gram panchayat, panchayat samiti and zila parishad. The Bihar Panchayat Raj Act 2006 made Bihar the first state to reserve 50 per cent of panchayat seats and posts for women, and it also set up the Gram Kachahari, an elected village court headed by a sarpanch that settles petty civil and criminal disputes. Towns are governed by municipal corporations, nagar parishads and nagar panchayats under the Bihar Municipal Act 2007.

State symbols and language: The state emblem shows the Bodhi tree, a reminder of Bodh Gaya. The state bird is the house sparrow (gauraiya) and the state tree the peepal. Hindi is the official language of the state and Urdu its second official language.

Examples

- Bihar Diwas: 22 March, marking the creation of the province of Bihar and Orissa in 1912.
- Jharkhand was created on 15 November 2000, Birsa Munda's birth anniversary, by the Bihar Reorganisation Act 2000.
- Before and after 2000: Assembly 324 to 243 seats, Lok Sabha 54 to 40, Rajya Sabha 22 to 16.

- Bihar Vidhan Sabha: 243 seats, 38 reserved for SCs and 2 for STs (Delimitation Order 2008); Vidhan Parishad: 75 members.
- Article 171: a Legislative Council may have at most one-third of the Assembly's strength and at least 40 members; one-third of its members retire every second year.
- Lok Sabha: 40 seats from Bihar (6 SC, no ST), fourth after UP, Maharashtra and West Bengal; Rajya Sabha: 16 seats.
- Patna High Court: 1916; it also covered Orissa until the Orissa High Court was set up in 1948.
- 91st Amendment (2003): ministers capped at 15 per cent of the Assembly, so at most 36 in Bihar.
- Bihar Panchayat Raj Act 2006: 50 per cent reservation for women in panchayats (first state) and the Gram Kachahari village court.
- 1956: Purulia and part of Purnea went from Bihar to West Bengal under the Bihar and West Bengal (Transfer of Territories) Act.

> **Quick revision:** Bihar Diwas 22 March (1912); Orissa out 1 April 1936; Purulia to West Bengal 1956; Jharkhand 15 Nov 2000; Assembly 324 to 243 (38 SC, 2 ST), Lok Sabha 54 to 40 (6 SC), Rajya Sabha 22 to 16; Vidhan Parishad 75 (Article 171 limits); Patna High Court 1916; max 36 ministers (15 per cent, 91st Amendment); first CM Shri Krishna Sinha; Panchayat Raj Act 2006, 50 per cent women, Gram Kachahari; state bird house sparrow, tree peepal.

Geography of Bihar: Location, Borders and Physical Divisions

Location and extent: Bihar lies in eastern India in the middle Ganga plain, between latitudes 24°20'10" N and 27°31'15" N and longitudes 83°19'50" E and 88°17'40" E. Its area of 94,163 sq km is about 2.86 per cent of India's area. It is landlocked, roughly rectangular in shape and wider from west to east than from north to south. The Tropic of Cancer does not pass through Bihar; it runs to the south, through Jharkhand.

Neighbours: Bihar shares an international border with Nepal to the north and state borders with West Bengal to the east, Jharkhand to the south and Uttar Pradesh to the west. The Nepal border runs from West Champaran in the west to Kishanganj in the east and is open: under the India-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship of 1950, people cross without passports. The main crossings are Raxaul, facing Birgunj, and Jogbani, facing Biratnagar. Bangladesh does not touch Bihar, though Kishanganj lies close to the narrow Siliguri corridor of West Bengal.

Three physical regions: Geographers divide Bihar into three broad regions: the Shivalik or sub-Himalayan strip in the far north-west, the vast Ganga plain in the middle, and the southern plateau fringe. The Ganga, flowing from west to east, splits the plain into the North Bihar plain and the South Bihar plain, which differ in soil, rivers and flood behaviour.

Shivalik foothills: A narrow hilly belt along the Nepal border in the north of West Champaran forms the only Himalayan part of the state. It includes the Ramnagar Dun and the Someshwar range, which holds the highest point of Bihar. These hills are covered by the forests of Valmiki and receive heavy rain. South of them lies the terai, a damp belt of tall grass and marsh where many streams emerge from under the gravel.

North Bihar plain: Built up by Himalayan rivers such as the Gandak, Burhi Gandak, Bagmati, Kamla, Kosi and Mahananda, this plain is flat, fertile and very flood-prone. It has new alluvium (khadar) near the rivers and older alluvium (bhangar) farther away. It is dotted with chaurs, saucer-shaped depressions that hold water after the rains, and mauns, abandoned river loops or oxbow lakes, of which Kanwar Lake in Begusarai is the best known. The Kosi has built a vast alluvial fan and has shifted westward over the last two centuries. The diara lands are the islands and sandy banks along the big rivers.

South Bihar plain and the plateau fringe: Narrower than the northern plain, the South Bihar plain slopes north towards the Ganga and is crossed by the Son, Punpun, Falgu and Kiul. Along the Ganga between Mokama and Barh lies the tal area, a low basin that floods in the monsoon and grows lentil and gram in winter. The southern edge rises into hills that are outliers of the Vindhyan ranges and the Chota Nagpur plateau: the Kaimur plateau in the south-west, a Vindhyan extension with the Rohtasgarh fort; the Rajgir hills; the Barabar hills; the Kharagpur hills of Munger; and the hills of Jamui, Nawada and Banka. Hot springs at Rajgir (Brahmakund) and at Sita Kund and Bhimbandh in Munger point to deep faults in the rocks.

Earthquakes and people: North Bihar lies close to the zone where the Indian plate pushes under the Himalaya, and areas along the Nepal border are among the most earthquake-prone in India. The Bihar-Nepal earthquake of 15 January 1934 devastated Munger, Darbhanga and Motihari, and another struck north Bihar on 21 August 1988. Census 2011 counted 10,40,99,452 people in Bihar, the third largest after Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra, with a density of 1,106 per sq km, the highest among states, a sex ratio of 918 and a literacy rate of 61.8 per cent, the lowest among states.

Examples

- Latitude 24°20'10" N to 27°31'15" N; longitude 83°19'50" E to 88°17'40" E.
- Area 94,163 sq km, about 2.86 per cent of India; landlocked, and wider from west to east than from north to south.
- Neighbours: Nepal (north), West Bengal (east), Jharkhand (south), Uttar Pradesh (west); the Tropic of Cancer does not pass through Bihar.
- Border crossings with Nepal: Raxaul faces Birgunj and Jogbani faces Biratnagar; the border is open under the 1950 India-Nepal treaty.
- Three physical regions: Shivalik foothills (north of West Champaran), the Ganga plain (north and south of the river) and the southern plateau fringe (Kaimur, Rajgir, Kharagpur hills).
- Highest point: the Someshwar range in West Champaran on the Nepal border; the Ramnagar Dun lies in the same Shivalik strip.
- Chaur: saucer-shaped depression; maun: oxbow lake; diara: riverine islands and sandy banks; tal: low basin between Mokama and Barh flooded in the monsoon.
- Kaimur plateau: a Vindhyan extension in the south-west of Bihar, crowned by the Rohtasgarh fort.
- Hot springs: Brahmakund at Rajgir; Sita Kund and Bhimbandh in Munger.
- Census 2011: population 10,40,99,452 (3rd), density 1,106 per sq km (highest among states), sex ratio 918, literacy 61.8 per cent (lowest among states).

> **Quick revision:** 24°20'10" N-27°31'15" N, 83°19'50" E-88°17'40" E; area 94,163 sq km (2.86 per cent); Nepal north, West Bengal east, Jharkhand south, UP west; no Tropic of Cancer; Raxaul-Birgunj, Jogbani-Biratnagar; Shivalik strip with Someshwar (highest point) and Ramnagar Dun; North Bihar plain: chaurs, mauns, Kosi fan, diara; South plain: Mokama-Barh tal; Kaimur plateau; hot springs Rajgir, Sita Kund; earthquake 15 Jan 1934; Census 2011 density 1,106, literacy 61.8.

Rivers of Bihar, Floods and River Projects

The Ganga, Bihar's spine: Almost all of Bihar drains into the Ganga. The river enters the state at Chausa in Buxar district, where the Karmanasa meets it on the Uttar Pradesh border, flows east past Buxar, Patna, Mokama, Munger and Bhagalpur, and leaves for Jharkhand's Sahibganj on its way to West Bengal. Its northern tributaries come from the Himalaya, are fed by snow and monsoon rain, carry huge loads of silt and often change course; its southern tributaries come from the Vindhyan and Chota Nagpur uplands, are rain-fed and shrink in summer. The stretch through Patna is part of National Waterway 1 (Haldia to Prayagraj, formerly Allahabad), declared in 1986.

Northern tributaries: From west to east, the Ghaghara (Saryu) joins the Ganga near Chhapra, close to Chirand. The Gandak, called the Narayani or Shaligrami in Nepal and the Sadanira in ancient texts, enters Bihar at Valmikinagar and meets the Ganga at Sonepur-Hajipur opposite Patna. The Burhi Gandak rises in West Champaran near the Someshwar hills, flows east of the Gandak through Muzaffarpur and Samastipur, and joins the Ganga near Khagaria. The Bagmati comes from the Kathmandu valley and flows through Sitamarhi, Muzaffarpur and Darbhanga; the Kamla-Balan drains Madhubani and Darbhanga; the Kosi enters near Bhimnagar in Supaul and joins the Ganga near Kursela in Katihar; and the Mahananda drains the far north-east (Kishanganj, Purnia, Katihar) before meeting the Ganga beyond Bihar.

The Kosi, the Sorrow of Bihar: The Kosi, or Saptakoshi, is formed in Nepal by seven Himalayan streams, chiefly the Sun Kosi, the Arun and the Tamur. Carrying one of the heaviest silt loads of any river, it has shifted westward by more than 100 km over about two centuries, burying farmland under sand and leaving old channels behind. Under the Kosi Agreement of 1954 between India and Nepal, a barrage was built near Hanuman Nagar on the Nepal side of

Bhimnagar, with embankments on both banks and the Eastern and Western Kosi canals. On 18 August 2008 the eastern embankment breached at Kusaha in Nepal and the river swung into an old course, flooding Supaul, Madhepura, Araria, Saharsa and Purnia.

Gandak and Son projects: The Gandak Agreement of 1959 with Nepal led to a barrage at Valmikinagar whose canals irrigate Champaran, Saran and Tirhut in Bihar, parts of Uttar Pradesh and part of Nepal. Of the tributaries that join the Ganga in Bihar from the south, the Son is the largest: it rises near Amarkantak in Madhya Pradesh and joins the Ganga near Maner, west of Patna. Its waters feed one of India's oldest modern canal systems: the anicut (weir) at Dehri-on-Sone was built in the 1870s, and the Indrapuri barrage upstream later replaced it. The Son canals made the old Shahabad region, especially Rohtas and Kaimur, the rice bowl of Bihar.

Other southern rivers: The Punpun rises in the Chota Nagpur plateau and joins the Ganga at Fatuha, east of Patna; its banks are also used for pind-daan. The Falgu (Phalgu) is formed near Bodh Gaya by the union of the Niranjana (Lilajan) and the Mohana; Gaya and its Vishnupad temple stand on its bank, and because water flows under its sandy bed for most of the year it is called antahsalila. The Karmanasa, regarded in tradition as an unholy river, forms part of the boundary with Uttar Pradesh. The Kiul drains Jamui and Lakhisarai, and the Ajay rises near Jamui and flows into West Bengal.

Floods and embankments: North Bihar is among the most flood-prone regions of India, because heavy monsoon rain over Nepal, steep Himalayan slopes, heavy silt and a flat plain combine. After the floods of 1954 the government relied mainly on embankments, and their length has grown many times since, yet flood damage has not fallen: embankments trap silt and raise riverbeds, cause waterlogging behind them, and fail disastrously when breached. A long-discussed answer is a high dam on the Kosi at Barahkshetra in Nepal, which would also store water and generate power, so Bihar's floods are partly an India-Nepal question.

Bridges and wetlands: The Ganga in Bihar is crossed by the Rajendra Setu at Mokama (1959), the state's first rail-cum-road bridge over the river; the Mahatma Gandhi Setu between Patna and Hajipur (1982), more than 5.5 km long and long counted among India's longest river bridges; and the Vikramshila Setu at Bhagalpur. The plains hold many wetlands: Kanwar Lake (Kabar Taal) in Begusarai, Bihar's first Ramsar site (2020) and often described as Asia's largest freshwater oxbow lake; the Kusheshwar Asthan wetland in Darbhanga; and Baraila Lake in Vaishali, all three also bird sanctuaries.

Examples

- The Ganga enters Bihar at Chausa (Buxar), where the Karmanasa joins it, and flows west to east past Patna, Munger and Bhagalpur.
- Northern tributaries from west to east: Ghaghara, Gandak, Burhi Gandak, Bagmati, Kamla-Balan, Kosi, Mahananda.
- Southern rivers: Karmanasa, Son, Punpun, Falgu, Kiul and Ajay; they are rain-fed and shrink in summer.
- Confluences: Ghaghara near Chhapra, Gandak at Sonepur-Hajipur, Son near Maner, Punpun at Fatuha, Burhi Gandak near Khagaria, Kosi near Kursela.
- Kosi: Saptakoshi of Nepal (Sun Kosi, Arun, Tamur); Sorrow of Bihar; Kosi Agreement 1954; barrage near Hanuman Nagar; Kusaha breach on 18 August 2008.
- Gandak Agreement 1959; the Valmikinagar barrage irrigates Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Nepal.
- Son: rises near Amarkantak; anicut at Dehri-on-Sone (1870s), later the Indrapuri barrage; the Son canals make Rohtas-Kaimur the rice bowl of Bihar.
- Falgu: formed by the Niranjana (Lilajan) and the Mohana near Bodh Gaya; Gaya's Vishnupad temple is on its bank; called antahsalila.
- Ganga bridges: Rajendra Setu, Mokama (1959); Mahatma Gandhi Setu, Patna-Hajipur (1982); Vikramshila Setu, Bhagalpur.
- Kanwar Lake (Kabar Taal), Begusarai: Bihar's first Ramsar site (2020), often described as Asia's largest freshwater oxbow lake.

Quick revision: Ganga enters at Chausa (Karmanasa), NW-1 1986; north: Ghaghara, Gandak (Valmikinagar to Sonepur), Burhi Gandak, Bagmati, Kamla, Kosi (Kursela), Mahananda; south: Son (Amarkantak, joins near Maner), Punpun (Fatuha), Falgu (Niranjana + Mohana), Karmanasa, Kiul; Kosi = Sorrow of Bihar, Agreement 1954, Kusaha breach 2008; Gandak Agreement 1959; Dehri anicut 1870s, Indrapuri barrage; Rajendra Setu 1959, Gandhi Setu 1982; Kanwar Lake Ramsar 2020.

Climate, Soils, Forests and Wildlife of Bihar

Climate type: Bihar has a humid subtropical monsoon climate, with hot summers, a wet monsoon and cool, dry winters. Lying wholly north of the Tropic of Cancer and far from the sea, it has a continental quality: summer temperatures in the south-west, around Gaya, often cross 40 °C, dry hot winds called loo blow in May, and winter nights in the north are cold and foggy, with occasional cold waves.

Seasons and rainfall: In April and May, pre-monsoon thunderstorms called nor'westers (kalbaisakhi) bring some relief, mainly in the east. The Bay of Bengal branch of the south-west monsoon arrives around mid-June and gives most of the year's rain by September. Rainfall is heaviest in the north-east, around Kishanganj near the Himalayan foothills, and decreases towards the west and south-west. The late-monsoon Hathiya (Hasta nakshatra) rain at the end of September is vital for the paddy crop, while light winter rain from western disturbances helps wheat. Because rainfall is so uneven, some districts can face floods and others drought in the same year.

Soils: Almost the whole state is covered with alluvium. In the far north-west are piedmont swamp soils at the foot of the hills, followed by terai soils along the Nepal border. In the north-western and central parts of the North Bihar plain, drained by the Gandak and the Burhi Gandak, the new alluvium is calcareous, rich in lime, and suits maize, sugarcane and tobacco. South of the Ganga the alluvium is older: the low tal areas have heavy clay soils that lie under water in the monsoon, hold moisture and suit winter pulses, and other parts of the South Bihar plain have the heavy, sticky clay known locally as karail-kewal. The southern hills and the Kaimur plateau have red and yellow soils, thinner and less fertile.

Forests: Bihar has one of the smallest shares of forest cover among the states, less than a tenth of its area, against the one-third target of the National Forest Policy 1988; most of the old forests went to Jharkhand in 2000. Forests survive in two belts. In the north-west, the Valmiki forests of West Champaran are tropical moist deciduous, with sal as the main tree. In the south, the hills of Kaimur, Rohtas, Gaya, Nawada, Jamui, Munger and Banka carry tropical dry deciduous forest with trees such as sal, khair, kendu, mahua, palash and bamboo.

Valmiki National Park and Tiger Reserve: In the far north-west of West Champaran, between the Gandak and the Nepal border, Valmiki is both a national park and a tiger reserve; it came under Project Tiger in 1989-90. It adjoins Chitwan National Park in Nepal and the Sohagibarwa sanctuary of Uttar Pradesh, so tigers move across a shared landscape. Its name recalls the sage Valmiki, whose ashram is believed to have stood in this area. Besides tigers it shelters leopards, sloth bears, gaur, sambar, chital and hog deer, and one-horned rhinoceroses sometimes wander in from Chitwan.

Vikramshila Gangetic Dolphin Sanctuary: Declared in 1991, it protects the stretch of the Ganga between Sultanganj and Kahalgaon in Bhagalpur district and is regarded as India's first protected area created specially for the Gangetic river dolphin (Platanista gangetica), locally called soons. The dolphin is almost blind and finds its way by echolocation; since it needs clean, deep, flowing water, its presence shows the health of the river. It was declared India's National Aquatic Animal in 2009.

Other sanctuaries and birds: Kaimur Wildlife Sanctuary is the largest in Bihar. Bhimbandh in Munger is known for its hot springs, the Gautam Buddha sanctuary lies in Gaya district, the Rajgir (Pant) sanctuary in Nalanda district and Udaipur in West Champaran. Bird habitats include the Nagi Dam and Nakti Dam bird sanctuaries in Jamui, the Kanwar Lake bird sanctuary in Begusarai, the Kusheshwar Asthan bird sanctuary in Darbhanga and the Salim Ali Jubba Sahni bird sanctuary at Baraila Lake in Vaishali. In winter these wetlands receive migratory ducks and waders from Central Asia and Siberia, and the floodplains near Naugachia in Bhagalpur district are a breeding ground of the greater adjutant stork.

Examples

- Climate: humid subtropical monsoon; loo in May; nor'westers (kalbaisakhi) in April-May; the south-west monsoon arrives around mid-June.
- Rainfall is heaviest in the north-east (Kishanganj) and decreases towards the west and south-west; the Hathiya rain at the monsoon's end is vital for paddy.
- Soils: piedmont swamp and terai soils in the north-west, calcareous new alluvium in the Gandak-Burhi Gandak plain, older alluvium with tal clays and karail-kewal in the south, red and yellow soils in the southern hills.
- Forest cover: less than a tenth of the area, against the one-third target of the National Forest Policy 1988.
- Valmiki (West Champaran): both a national park and a tiger reserve, under Project Tiger since 1989-90, adjoining Chitwan in Nepal.
- Vikramshila Gangetic Dolphin Sanctuary (1991): the Ganga between Sultanganj and Kahalgaon, Bhagalpur district.
- Gangetic dolphin (soons, Platanista gangetica): almost blind, uses echolocation; declared India's National Aquatic Animal in 2009.
- Kaimur is Bihar's largest wildlife sanctuary; Bhimbandh (Munger) is known for hot springs; Nagi Dam and Nakti Dam are bird sanctuaries in Jamui.
- Wetland bird sanctuaries: Kanwar Lake (Begusarai), Kusheshwar Asthan (Darbhanga), Salim Ali Jubba Sahni at Baraila Lake (Vaishali).

> **Quick revision:** Humid subtropical monsoon climate; loo in May; kalbaisakhi April-May; monsoon from mid-June; rain highest in Kishanganj; Hathiya rain for paddy; calcareous alluvium in Gandak-Burhi Gandak plain, tal clays and karail-kewal south of Ganga, red-yellow soils in southern hills; forest under a tenth (target one-third, policy 1988); Valmiki national park and tiger reserve (Project Tiger 1989-90), next to Chitwan; Vikramshila dolphin sanctuary 1991 (Sultanganj-Kahalgaon); dolphin national aquatic animal 2009; Kaimur largest sanctuary.

Agriculture, Industries and GI Products of Bihar

An agrarian state: After 2000 Bihar kept the fertile plains but lost most of its minerals and heavy industry to Jharkhand, so agriculture and allied work such as livestock and fisheries employ most of its workers. Most holdings are small or marginal, and floods in the north and dry spells in the south decide many harvests. The farming year has four seasons: bhadai (autumn crops such as early paddy and maize, harvested in August-September), aghani (the main winter paddy, harvested in the month of Agahan), rabi (wheat, pulses, oilseeds and winter maize) and garma (summer crops such as moong and vegetables). The state is divided into four agro-climatic zones: I (north-west alluvial plain), II (north-east alluvial plain), III-A (south-east alluvial plain) and III-B (south-west alluvial plain).

Food crops: Rice is the main crop by area; the old Shahabad region, especially Rohtas and Kaimur, watered by the Son canals, is called the rice bowl of Bihar. Wheat is the main rabi crop. Bihar stands out for maize, grown in all seasons and especially as a rabi crop in the Kosi and Seemanchal belt around Purnia, Katihar and Khagaria. The tal lands between Mokama and Barh are known for lentil and gram. Sugarcane is concentrated in the north-west (West Champaran, Gopalganj, Siwan), jute in the north-east (Purnia, Katihar, Kishanganj, Araria), and the aromatic Katarni rice of Bhagalpur and Banka has its own GI tag.

Litchi, makhana and paan: Bihar is best known for litchi and makhana, and it grows most of India's makhana. The Shahi litchi of Muzaffarpur carries a GI tag, and a national research centre for litchi works at Muzaffarpur. Makhana (fox nut, from the water plant Euryale ferox) is grown in the ponds and wetlands of Mithila and Seemanchal, especially Darbhanga, Madhubani, Purnia and Katihar, and an ICAR research centre for makhana works at Darbhanga. Magahi paan, the betel leaf of the Magadh region (Nawada, Gaya, Aurangabad, Nalanda), and the Jardalu mango of Bhagalpur are also GI-tagged.

Research and dairy: Pusa in Samastipur housed the Agricultural Research Institute, the forerunner of today's Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI), from 1905 until damage in the earthquake of 1934 led to its move to New Delhi in 1936; Pusa now hosts the Dr Rajendra Prasad Central Agricultural University, and the Bihar Agricultural University is at Sabour near Bhagalpur. In dairying, the state milk co-operative federation, COMFED, sells under the Sudha brand on the Anand pattern of village co-operatives.

Industries: Barauni in Begusarai has the oil refinery built with Soviet help and commissioned in 1964, along with a thermal power station and a fertilizer plant, which is why Begusarai is called the industrial capital of Bihar. Jamalpur in Munger has the railway workshop founded in 1862, the oldest full-fledged railway workshop in India, and Munger is also known for gun-making and a cigarette factory. Dalmianagar in Rohtas was once home to the large Rohtas Industries complex (cement, paper and sugar), now closed. Newer units include the electric locomotive factory at Madhepura and the diesel locomotive factory at Marhowra in Saran, and NTPC runs large thermal plants at Kahalgaon (Bhagalpur) and Barh (Patna). Sugar mills cluster in the north-west cane belt. The minerals left to Bihar are modest: pyrites at Amjhore in Rohtas, limestone in Kaimur and Rohtas, and mica in the Nawada-Jamui area.

Handicrafts and GI products: Madhubani or Mithila painting is the best known. Bhagalpur, the Silk City, weaves tussar silk known as Bhagalpuri silk. Sikki craft uses golden sikki grass from the wetlands of north Bihar to make baskets, boxes and figures, mostly by women of Madhubani, Darbhanga and Sitamarhi. Manjusha art of Bhagalpur, also called Angika art, paints the legend of Bihula and Bishahari on box-shaped temple models (manjusha) in pink, green and yellow. Sujni embroidery comes from Muzaffarpur, applique (khatwa) work from Patna and Vaishali, tikuli art from Patna and stone carving from Pattharkatti in Gaya. Among foods, Silao khaja from Nalanda district is GI-tagged.

Examples

- Four crop seasons in Bihar: bhadai (autumn), aghani (winter paddy, harvested in Agahan), rabi (winter) and garma (summer).
- Agro-climatic zones: I (north-west alluvial plain), II (north-east alluvial plain), III-A (south-east) and III-B (south-west).
- Rice bowl of Bihar: Rohtas and Kaimur (old Shahabad), watered by the Son canals; the Mokama-Barh tal is known for lentil and gram.
- GI-tagged produce: Shahi litchi (Muzaffarpur), Jardalu mango (Bhagalpur), Katarni rice (Bhagalpur-Banka), Magahi paan (Magadh) and Silao khaja (Nalanda).
- Makhana (fox nut, Euryale ferox) grows in the ponds of Mithila and Seemanchal; research centres for makhana (Darbhanga) and litchi (Muzaffarpur).
- Pusa (Samastipur): seat of the Agricultural Research Institute (forerunner of IARI) from 1905 until its move to New Delhi in 1936 after the 1934 earthquake; now Dr Rajendra Prasad Central Agricultural University.
- Barauni refinery (Begusarai): built with Soviet help and commissioned in 1964; Begusarai is called Bihar's industrial capital.
- Jamalpur (Munger): railway workshop of 1862; locomotive factories at Madhepura (electric) and Marhowra (diesel); NTPC plants at Kahalgaon and Barh.
- Manjusha art (Bhagalpur) tells the Bihula-Bishahari story in pink, green and yellow; Sikki craft uses golden grass; Sujni embroidery is from Muzaffarpur.
- Minerals left to Bihar: pyrites at Amjhore (Rohtas), limestone in Kaimur-Rohtas, mica in Nawada-Jamui.

> **Quick revision:** Seasons bhadai, aghani, rabi, garma; zones I, II, III-A, III-B; rice bowl Rohtas-Kaimur; maize in Kosi-Seemanchal; pulses in Mokama tal; GI: Shahi litchi, Jardalu, Katarni, Magahi paan, Silao khaja; makhana in Mithila; Pusa institute 1905; Barauni refinery 1964 (Soviet help); Jamalpur workshop 1862; Madhepura and Marhowra locomotive factories; Kahalgaon and Barh NTPC; Amjhore pyrites; Bhagalpuri silk, Sikki, Manjusha, Sujni.

Festivals, Folk Arts, Languages and Literature of Bihar

Chhath Puja: Bihar's most important festival is devoted to the Sun god (Surya) and Chhathi Maiya. It is celebrated on Kartik Shukla Shashthi, six days after Diwali, and again in Chaitra as Chaiti Chhath. Over four days come Nahay-Khay (a holy bath and a simple meal), Kharna (a day-long fast ended in the evening with jaggery kheer and roti), the Sandhya Arghya to the setting sun while standing in water, and the Usha Arghya to the rising sun next morning; the main fast is nirjala, without even water. Thekua is the typical offering, carried in bamboo baskets. The Sun temple at Deo in Aurangabad district, unusual for facing west, draws huge Chhath crowds.

Great fairs: The Sonepur Mela begins on Kartik Purnima at the meeting of the Gandak and the Ganga at Sonepur in Saran district. Linked to the Harihar Nath temple and the legend of the elephant and the crocodile (Gaj-Graah), it was

long famous as Asia's largest cattle fair. The Shravani Mela is held in the month of Shravan, when kanwariyas carry Ganga water from Sultanganj in Bhagalpur district on foot to Baba Baidyanath at Deoghar, now in Jharkhand. The Pitripaksha Mela at Gaya, in the dark fortnight of Ashwin, brings pilgrims to offer pind-daan to their ancestors at the Vishnupad temple, rebuilt by Ahilyabai Holkar, on the Falgu and at the Akshayavat. Other regional festivals are Sama-Chakeva in Mithila, a Kartik festival of sisters' love for brothers; Jitiya, a mothers' fast for their children; Madhushravani of newly married women in Mithila; Jur Sital, the Maithili new year; and the Bihula festival of the Anga region.

Folk dances and theatre: Jat-Jatin, performed by women of Mithila and the Kosi region, tells the story of a married couple, Jat and Jatin, who live apart. In Jhijhiya, women of Mithila dance during Navratri with perforated earthen pots holding lamps on their heads, praying for protection from witchcraft. Domkach is performed by women at the groom's house on the wedding night, when the men have gone with the baraat. Bidesia, the Bhojpuri folk theatre made famous by Bhikhari Thakur, often called the Shakespeare of Bhojpuri, shows the pain of a wife whose husband has left to work in a distant city. The song tradition includes Sohar at a child's birth, Chaita in the month of Chaitra, Kajari in the rains, Samdaun at a bride's farewell and Nachari, songs to Shiva, many of them composed by Vidyapati.

Madhubani painting: Mithila painting was traditionally done by women on the walls of the kohbar (bridal chamber) and as aripan on floors, using natural colours and twigs or reeds, with gods, nature and wedding symbols as themes. Its styles include Bharni (filled colour), Kachni (fine line work), Tantrik, Godna (tattoo motifs) and Kohbar. The British officer W.G. Archer noticed and recorded the wall paintings after the 1934 earthquake, and during the drought of 1966-68 the All India Handicrafts Board encouraged women to paint on paper for income. Jitwarpur and Ranti are famous painting villages, and Jagdamba Devi was the first Madhubani artist to receive the Padma Shri, in 1975.

Languages: Hindi is the official language of Bihar and Urdu the second official language. The main regional languages of the state belong to the Bihari group of Indo-Aryan languages. Maithili, spoken in Mithila and traditionally written in the Tirhuta (Mithilakshar) script, was added to the Eighth Schedule by the 92nd Amendment (2003), along with Bodo, Dogri and Santhali. Bhojpuri is spoken in the west (Bhojpur, Buxar, Rohtas, Saran, Siwan, Gopalganj, Champaran); Magahi, descended from Magadhi Prakrit, around Patna, Gaya, Nalanda and Nawada; Angika around Bhagalpur, Munger and Banka; and Bajjika around Vaishali, Muzaffarpur and Sitamarhi. The Kaithi script was once widely used in Bihar for these languages and for court records.

Literature: Vidyapati (14th-15th century), called Maithil Kokil, was the court poet of Raja Shivasimha of the Oiniwar dynasty; his Padavali songs of Radha and Krishna made Maithili famous, and he also wrote Kirtilata in Avahatta. Ramdhari Singh Dinkar (1908-1974), born at Simariya in Begusarai, was hailed as Rashtrakavi; he wrote Rashmirathi and Kurukshetra, won the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1959 for Sanskriti ke Char Adhyay and the Jnanpith Award in 1972 for Urvashi. Phanishwar Nath Renu (1921-1977) of Purnia (now Araria) pioneered the regional (anchalik) novel with Maila Anchal (1954), and his story Mare Gaye Gulfam became the film Teesri Kasam (1966). Nagarjun (Vaidyanath Mishra, 1911-1998), the people's poet, wrote in Maithili as Yatri and won the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1969 for his Maithili collection Patrahin Nagna Gachh.

Examples

- Chhath: Kartik Shukla Shashthi, and again as Chaiti Chhath; four days of Nahay-Khay, Kharna, Sandhya Arghya and Usha Arghya; thekua is the offering.
- The Sun temple at Deo (Aurangabad) faces west; the Chhath fast is nirjala, without water.
- Sonepur Mela: Kartik Purnima, at the Gandak-Ganga confluence, Harihar Nath temple, legend of Gaj-Graah; long famed as Asia's largest cattle fair.
- Shravani Mela: kanwariyas carry Ganga water from Sultanganj (Bhagalpur) to Baba Baidyanath at Deoghar (Jharkhand).
- Pitripaksha Mela: Gaya; pind-daan at the Vishnupad temple (rebuilt by Ahilyabai Holkar), on the Falgu and at the Akshayavat.
- Dances: Jat-Jatin (story of a separated couple, Mithila-Kosi), Jhijhiya (lamp-pots on heads, Navratri), Domkach (women, wedding night); Bidesia is Bhikhari Thakur's Bhojpuri folk theatre.
- Songs: Sohar (childbirth), Chaita (Chaitra), Kajari (rains), Samdaun (bride's farewell), Nachari (songs to Shiva, many by Vidyapati).

- Maithili: Tirhuta (Mithilakshar) script; added to the Eighth Schedule by the 92nd Amendment (2003) with Bodo, Dogri and Santhali.
- Language map: Bhojpuri (west), Magahi (Patna-Gaya), Maithili (Mithila), Angika (Bhagalpur-Munger), Bajjika (Vaishali-Muzaffarpur).
- Writers: Vidyapati (Maithil Kokil, Padavali); Dinkar (Urvashi, Jnanpith 1972); Renu (Maila Anchal, 1954); Nagarjun (Yatri in Maithili).

> **Quick revision:** Chhath on Kartik Shukla Shashthi, 4 days, nirjala fast, Deo west-facing Sun temple; Sonepur Mela on Kartik Purnima (Gandak-Ganga); Shravani Mela Sultanganj to Deoghar; Pitripaksha at Gaya (Vishnupad); Sama-Chakeva, Jitiya, Madhushravani; Jat-Jatin, Jhijhiya, Domkach, Bidesia (Bhikhari Thakur); Madhubani styles Bharni, Kachni, Godna, Jagdamba Devi Padma Shri 1975; Maithili in 8th Schedule 2003 (Tirhuta); Dinkar Urvashi 1972; Renu Maila Anchal 1954; Nagarjun = Yatri.

Monuments, Tourist Circuits and Famous Personalities of Bihar

Bodh Gaya and the Mahabodhi Temple: The Mahabodhi Temple Complex at Bodh Gaya in Gaya district became a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2002. Ashoka built the first shrine here in the 3rd century BCE; the present brick temple, about 50 m tall, dates from the 5th-6th century CE and is one of the earliest brick temples surviving in India. The complex holds the Vajrasana (diamond throne), a descendant of the original Bodhi tree, the Animeshlochana shrine and the Lotus pond. The temple was restored in the 1880s under Alexander Cunningham, and the Bodh Gaya Temple Act 1949 places it under a committee of Hindu and Buddhist members.

Nalanda, Rajgir and Vaishali: The Archaeological Site of Nalanda Mahavihara became a World Heritage Site in 2016, and the Nalanda University Act 2010 revived a university of that name at Rajgir. Rajgir has the Vishwa Shanti Stupa (1969) on Ratnagiri hill, built by the Japanese Nipponzan Myohoji order and reached by an aerial ropeway, as well as the Griddhakuta, the Saptaparni cave, the Venuvana, the ancient Cyclopean Wall and the Brahmakund hot springs. Vaishali has the Ashokan pillar at Kolhua with a single lion capital, the Abhishek Pushkarini (coronation tank of the Licchavis) and the Relic Stupa. Kesaria in East Champaran has a huge excavated Buddhist stupa, Lauriya Nandangarh an Ashokan pillar with its lion capital intact, and Antichak in Bhagalpur the ruins of Vikramashila.

Caves and Mauryan Patna: The Barabar caves in Jehanabad district, among them the Lomas Rishi cave with its gateway carved to imitate wooden architecture and the Sudama cave dedicated by Ashoka to the Ajivikas, are the oldest surviving rock-cut caves in India; the nearby Nagarjuni caves were given by Ashoka's grandson Dasharatha. Their polished interiors inspired the Marabar caves of E.M. Forster's novel A Passage to India. In Patna, Kumhrar preserves the remains of a Mauryan pillared hall with 80 columns, and Agam Kuan is an ancient well linked by legend to Ashoka. The Didarganj Yakshi, a chauri-bearer with a mirror-like Mauryan polish, was found at Patna in 1917.

Medieval and colonial monuments: Sher Shah Suri's tomb at Sasaram rises in the middle of an artificial lake, an octagonal red sandstone building of the 1540s. The Rohtasgarh fort stands on the Kaimur plateau, the Maner Sharif dargahs near Patna include the Chhoti Dargah built in Jahangir's reign, and the Takht Sri Harmandir Sahib marks Guru Gobind Singh's birthplace at Patna. The Golghar of Patna, a beehive-shaped granary with stairs winding round the outside, was built in 1786 by Captain John Garstin after the famine of 1770. The Patna Museum, popularly called Jadu Ghar, was founded in 1917. The Mundeshwari temple in Kaimur district, octagonal in plan, is regarded as one of the oldest functioning temples in India.

Tourist circuits: Bihar's sites are grouped into circuits. The Buddhist circuit links Bodh Gaya, Rajgir, Nalanda, Vaishali and Kesaria with Kushinagar and Lumbini beyond the state. The Jain circuit covers Pawapuri, Rajgir and Kundagrama near Vaishali; the Sikh pilgrimage centres on Patna Sahib; the Sufi circuit on Maner and Bihar Sharif. The Ramayana circuit includes Sitamarhi, believed to be Sita's birthplace, and Valmikinagar, while the Gandhi circuit in Champaran includes the Bhitiharwa ashram that Gandhi set up in 1917.

Famous personalities: Aryabhata (born 476 CE) wrote the Aryabhatiya at Kusumapura (Patna) in 499 CE, used the place-value system, gave pi as 3.1416 and taught that the earth rotates on its axis; India's first satellite (1975) was named after him. Chanakya (Kautilya), author of the Arthashastra, was the guide and minister of Chandragupta Maurya at Pataliputra. Dr Rajendra Prasad of Zeradei was India's first President. Ustad Bismillah Khan, the shehnai

maestro, was born at Dumraon in Buxar district in 1916 and received the Bharat Ratna in 2001. Bhikhari Thakur of Saran made Bidesia theatre famous, Jagjivan Ram of Bhojpur became Deputy Prime Minister, and Dashrath Manjhi of Gehlaur in Gaya, the Mountain Man, cut a road through a rocky hill alone over 22 years. Writers such as Vidyapati, Dinkar, Renu and Nagarjun complete the list.

Examples

- Bihar's UNESCO World Heritage Sites include the Mahabodhi Temple Complex, Bodh Gaya (2002) and the Archaeological Site of Nalanda Mahavihara (2016).
- Mahabodhi: first shrine by Ashoka; present brick temple of the 5th-6th century CE; Vajrasana and Bodhi tree; Bodh Gaya Temple Act 1949.
- Barabar caves (Jehanabad): Sudama cave dedicated by Ashoka to the Ajivikas, Lomas Rishi cave with a gateway copying wooden architecture; Nagarjuni caves by Dasharatha; models for the Marabar caves of A Passage to India.
- Golghar, Patna: beehive-shaped granary built in 1786 by Captain John Garstin after the famine of 1770.
- Patna Museum (Jadu Ghar) was founded in 1917; Kumhrar has the remains of a Mauryan hall with 80 pillars; the Didarganj Yakshi was found at Patna in 1917.
- Rajgir: Vishwa Shanti Stupa (1969) with ropeway, Saptaparni cave, Griddhakuta, Cyclopean Wall, Brahmakund hot springs.
- Vaishali: Ashokan pillar at Kolhua with a single lion capital, Abhishek Pushkarini, Relic Stupa; Kesaria (East Champaran) has a giant excavated stupa.
- Aryabhata: Aryabhatiya (499 CE) at Kusumapura; pi as 3.1416; India's first satellite (1975) bears his name.
- Bismillah Khan: born at Dumraon (Buxar) in 1916, shehnai maestro, Bharat Ratna 2001.
- Dashrath Manjhi, the Mountain Man of Gehlaur (Gaya), cut a road through a hill alone over 22 years.

> **Quick revision:** UNESCO: Mahabodhi 2002, Nalanda 2016; Mahabodhi first shrine by Ashoka, brick temple 5th-6th century, Act 1949; Vishwa Shanti Stupa Rajgir 1969; Kolhua lion pillar, Abhishek Pushkarini; Kesaria stupa; Barabar caves (Sudama for Ajivikas, Lomas Rishi gateway); Kumhrar 80 pillars; Golghar 1786 (Garstin); Patna Museum 1917; Sasaram tomb; Mundeshwari temple; Aryabhata 499 CE, pi 3.1416; Bismillah Khan Dumraon 1916, Bharat Ratna 2001; Dashrath Manjhi 22 years.

Free practice questions: parikshasaathi.com/q/bihar-state-gk/

Revision sheet

Every lesson's quick-revision box in one place, for the last read before the exam.

Bihar General Knowledge	Magadha capitals Rajgriha then Pataliputra (Udayin); Buddhist Councils Rajgir-Vaishali-Pataliputra; Nalanda by Kumaragupta I, Vikramshila by Dharmapala; Mahavira nirvana Pawapuri; Chausa 1539, Sasaram tomb; Bihar province 22 March 1912, Jharkhand 15 Nov 2000; Champaran 1917, Raj Kumar Shukla; Kosi = Sorrow of Bihar, barrage Hanuman Nagar; Gandak barrage Valmikinagar; Valmiki only tiger reserve; Kanwar Lake Begusarai Ramsar; Vidhan Sabha 243, Parishad 75, LS 40, RS 16; Patna HC 1916; 50% women PRI 2006; Mahabodhi UNESCO 2002, Nalanda 2016; Maithili 8th Schedule 2003.
Ancient Bihar: From Chirand to Magadha, Nalanda and the Palas	Chirand (Saran) Neolithic bone tools; Kikatas in Rigveda; Videgha Mathava crossed the Sadanira; Janaka of Mithila; Mahajanapadas Anga (Champa), Magadha (Rajagriha), Vajji (Vaishali, 8 clans, Licchavis); Haryanka-Shishunaga-Nanda-Maurya; Pataliputra by Udayin; Megasthenes 570 towers, 64 gates; Third Council under Ashoka; Kumaradevi; Mahavira nirvana Pawapuri; Nalanda by Kumaragupta I; Vikramashila by Dharmapala.
Medieval Bihar: Bakhtiyar Khilji, Sher Shah Suri and the Battle of Buxar	Bakhtiyar Khilji c. 1200, Odantapuri, Tabaqat-i-Nasiri; Bihar from vihara; Karnat dynasty (Nanyadeva 1097) and Oiniwar in Mithila; Sharafuddin Maneri (Firdausi) died 1381; Sher Shah: Rohtasgarh, Chausa 1539, Kannauj 1540, Kalinjar 1545, Sasaram tomb, rupiya, patta-qabuliyat, Patna fort 1541; Bihar subah 1580; Azimabad 1704; Guru Gobind Singh born Patna 1666; Mir Qasim at Munger; Buxar 22 Oct 1764; Diwani 1765.
Modern Bihar and the Freedom Struggle: From 1857 to the JP Movement	Peer Ali hanged 7 July 1857; Danapur mutiny 25 July 1857; Kunwar Singh of Jagdishpur died 26 April 1858; Wahabis at Sadiqpur, Patna trial 1865; Bihar and Orissa 22 March 1912; Khudiram at Muzaffarpur 1908; Champaran 1917, Raj Kumar Shukla, Act 1918; Bihar Vidyapeeth 6 Feb 1921; Sahajanand, Kisan Sabha 1929/1936; Secretariat martyrs 11 Aug 1942; Rajendra Prasad (Zeradei) President 1950-62; JP, Sampoorna Kranti 5 June 1974.
Formation of Bihar, Its Legislature and Administration	Bihar Diwas 22 March (1912); Orissa out 1 April 1936; Purulia to West Bengal 1956; Jharkhand 15 Nov 2000; Assembly 324 to 243 (38 SC, 2 ST), Lok Sabha 54 to 40 (6 SC), Rajya Sabha 22 to 16; Vidhan Parishad 75 (Article 171 limits); Patna High Court 1916; max 36 ministers (15 per cent, 91st Amendment); first CM Shri Krishna Sinha; Panchayat Raj Act 2006, 50 per cent women, Gram Kachahari; state bird house sparrow, tree peepal.
Geography of Bihar: Location, Borders and Physical Divisions	24°20'10" N-27°31'15" N, 83°19'50" E-88°17'40" E; area 94,163 sq km (2.86 per cent); Nepal north, West Bengal east, Jharkhand south, UP west; no Tropic of Cancer; Raxaul-Birgunj, Jogbani-Biratnagar; Shivalik strip with Someshwar (highest point) and Ramnagar Dun; North Bihar plain: chaurs, mauns, Kosi fan, diara; South plain: Mokama-Barh tal; Kaimur plateau; hot springs Rajgir, Sita Kund; earthquake 15 Jan 1934; Census 2011 density 1,106, literacy 61.8.
Rivers of Bihar, Floods and River Projects	Ganga enters at Chausa (Karmanasa), NW-1 1986; north: Ghaghara, Gandak (Valmikinagar to Sonepur), Burhi Gandak, Bagmati, Kamla, Kosi (Kursela), Mahananda; south: Son (Amarkantak, joins near Maner), Punpun (Fatuha), Falgu (Niranjana + Mohana), Karmanasa, Kiul; Kosi = Sorrow of Bihar, Agreement 1954, Kusaha breach 2008; Gandak Agreement 1959; Dehri anicut 1870s, Indrapuri barrage; Rajendra Setu 1959, Gandhi Setu 1982; Kanwar Lake Ramsar 2020.
Climate, Soils, Forests and Wildlife of Bihar	Humid subtropical monsoon climate; loo in May; kalbaisakhi April-May; monsoon from mid-June; rain highest in Kishanganj; Hathiya rain for paddy; calcareous alluvium in Gandak-Burhi Gandak plain, tal clays and karail-kewal south of Ganga, red-yellow soils in southern hills; forest under a tenth (target one-third, policy 1988); Valmiki national park and tiger reserve (Project Tiger 1989-90), next to Chitwan; Vikramshila dolphin sanctuary 1991 (Sultanganj-Kahalgaon); dolphin national aquatic animal 2009; Kaimur largest sanctuary.

Agriculture, Industries and GI Products of Bihar	Seasons bhadai, aghani, rabi, garma; zones I, II, III-A, III-B; rice bowl Rohtas-Kaimur; maize in Kosi-Seemanchal; pulses in Mokama tal; GI: Shahi litchi, Jardalu, Katarni, Magahi paan, Silao khaja; makhana in Mithila; Pusa institute 1905; Barauni refinery 1964 (Soviet help); Jamalpur workshop 1862; Madhepura and Marhowra locomotive factories; Kahalgaon and Barh NTPC; Amjhore pyrites; Bhagalpuri silk, Sikki, Manjusha, Sujni.
Festivals, Folk Arts, Languages and Literature of Bihar	Chhath on Kartik Shukla Shashthi, 4 days, nirjala fast, Deo west-facing Sun temple; Sonepur Mela on Kartik Purnima (Gandak-Ganga); Shravani Mela Sultanganj to Deoghar; Pitripaksha at Gaya (Vishnupad); Sama-Chakeva, Jitiya, Madhushravani; Jat-Jatin, Jhijhiya, Domkach, Bidesia (Bhikhari Thakur); Madhubani styles Bharni, Kachni, Godna, Jagdamba Devi Padma Shri 1975; Maithili in 8th Schedule 2003 (Tirhuta); Dinkar Urvashi 1972; Renu Maila Anchal 1954; Nagarjun = Yatri.
Monuments, Tourist Circuits and Famous Personalities of Bihar	UNESCO: Mahabodhi 2002, Nalanda 2016; Mahabodhi first shrine by Ashoka, brick temple 5th-6th century, Act 1949; Vishwa Shanti Stupa Rajgir 1969; Kolhua lion pillar, Abhishek Pushkarini; Kesaria stupa; Barabar caves (Sudama for Ajivikas, Lomas Rishi gateway); Kumhrar 80 pillars; Golghar 1786 (Garstin); Patna Museum 1917; Sasaram tomb; Mundeshwari temple; Aryabhata 499 CE, pi 3.1416; Bismillah Khan Dumraon 1916, Bharat Ratna 2001; Dashrath Manjhi 22 years.

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