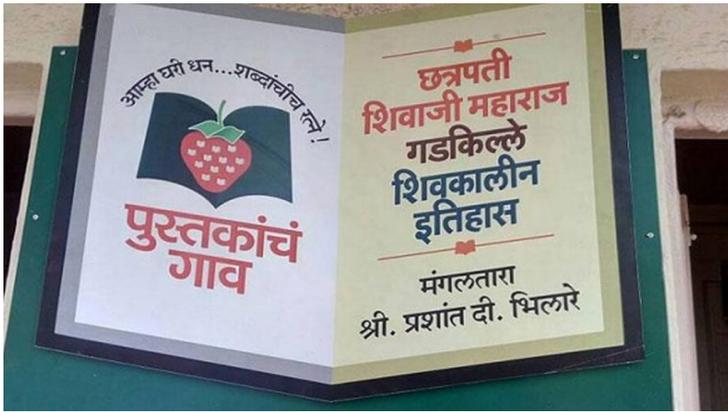


## There's a village filled with books in Maharashtra



There are never enough books or time for a book lover because they will gorge over as many books as they can and whenever they can. To treat these bibliophiles and make sure that they don't run out of books, Maharashtra has come up with India's first Book Village and it is oh-so-bookish!

The sleepy calm village Bhilar, lying in the vicinity of picturesque hill stations of Panchagani and Mahabaleshwar in Satara district, was for long known for its strawberry cultivation with no literary pretensions, but the hamlet has suddenly turned into a very dear spot for all the book lovers. The village popular for its strawberries has embraced the tag of India's first 'village of books', a concept inspired by Britain's Hay-on-Wye, a Welsh town known for its bookstores and literature festivals.

Bhilar was declared as 'Pustakanche Gaon' which means 'Village of books' was been inaugurated by Maharashtra CM Devendra Fadnavis on May 4. This project was led by Maharashtra Education Minister Vinod Tawde and was undertaken by the Marathi Bhasha department wherein 25 artistically decorated locations around the village were turned into reader hot spots. There are more than 2 Crore books ranging from literature, poetry, religion, women and children, history, environment, folk literature, biographies and autobiographies to festival specials were briefly exhibited!

In order to keep this up and running with no difficulties whatsoever, the state government has also provided several facilities like chairs, tables decorated umbrellas and glass cupboards at these spots to enhance the reading experience of literary connoisseurs. This initiative was taken to promote the increasingly decreasing importance of books and book reading habits. The unique idea will nurture the diminishing 'book-reading' community and will inspire the youth to develop book-reading habit. This project will also boost tourism and will help the village economically.

Mr. Fadnavis said, "With this concept, the residents of Bhilar have carved a niche for themselves in the country's social scene. Henceforth, Bhilar will be the definitive destination for bibliophiles and I urge litterateurs and publishers to freely host events here for the promotion and preservation of literature and literary ideas." The Chief Minister said the opening of the 'village of books' was a pivotal moment in the country's socio-cultural milieu. The village is already a strawberry cultivation hub and is now a home to crores of books. Choose your favourite reading spot from 25 options, pick as many books as you want because you are not going to run out of them, enjoy reading amidst the scenic beauty of hills and strawberry farms while devouring on strawberries; can there be anything better!