

## Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) notified Environment Relief Fund (Amendment) Scheme, 2024

Notification, amending the **Environment Relief Fund (ERF) Scheme 2008**, has been issued in exercise of powers conferred under **Section 7A of Public Liability Insurance Act (PLIA), 1991**.

- Section 7A of PLIA provides for **establishment of Environment Relief Fund (ERF)**, which is utilized for providing immediate relief to victims of accidents involving hazardous substances.

### Key Amendments

- **Administration:** It vests the Environment Relief Fund (ERF) in the **Central Government**.
- **Fund Manager:** **Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB)** replaces **United India Insurance Company Limited** as the fund manager for **five years with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> January, 2025**.
- **Disbursement:** **Fund Manager**, in consultation with Central Government, shall develop and maintain an **online portal** and shall **disburse amount** as per the **order of District Collector or Central Government**.
- **Investment:** ERF amount shall be invested appropriately in **public financial institutions** and in **saving accounts** to ensure timely availability of funds.
- **Restoration of Environmental Damage:** Fund Manager shall earmark the ERF funds for restoration of damage caused due to manufacture, processing, treatment, package, storage, transportation, use, collection, destruction, conversion, transfer etc., of **hazardous substances**.
- The accounts of the Relief Fund shall be audited by an **independent auditor appointed by the Central Government** from the panel approved by the **Comptroller and Auditor-General**.

### Related News

#### Public Liability Insurance (Amendment) Rules, 2024

MoEF&CC notified Public Liability Insurance (Amendment) Rules, 2024, in exercise of powers conferred by PLIA 1991.

#### Key Amendments

- Persons with **direct and substantial connection** and interest in affected public property can also **claim for restoration** of property.
- It provides for **utilization of ERF** towards **environmental damage restoration**.
- **Increases insurance policy coverage limit** to ₹250 crore for single accident and ₹500 crore for multiple accidents.

## Prime Minister highlighted Pivotal Role of ONDC in Revolutionizing Digital Commerce

Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC), a **public online network for merchants and customers**, allows e-commerce platforms to interconnect and interoperate.

### About ONDC

- **Nodal Ministry:** Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce.
- **Launch:** Established in 2022 as a **non-profit Section-8 company** under the Companies Act, 2013.
- **Aim:** To democratise the Indian e-commerce space.
- **Founding Members:** Quality Council of India and Protean eGov Technologies Limited.
- **Working:** ONDC uses **open-source methods and protocols**, independent of specific platforms, to create a level playing field for sellers, buyers, and MSMEs across India.
- **Significance:** It **enhances price discovery** and gives **consumers access to a broader range of service providers**.
- **Need:** Over 12 million sellers in India rely on selling or reselling, but only 0.125% used e-commerce.
- **Key investors:** SBI, ICICI Bank, NSE, etc.

### Key components of ONDC

- **Decentralized Architecture:** ONDC **does not own or operate e-commerce services**, unlike traditional platforms. It acts as an **enabler for interconnectivity**.
- **Open Protocols:** Based on open standards, ONDC **ensures that any seller or buyer platform adhering to these protocols can participate**.
- **Role Segregation:** Defines roles such as **Buyer Applications, Seller Applications, and Logistics Providers** for clarity.

## REVOLUTIONISING E-COMMERCE

**3 YEARS OF**



  
150 million+ transactions

  
7 lakh+ sellers & service providers

  
200+ network participants

  
Sellers from 600+ cities & towns



Consumers from 1,100+ cities & towns transacted through network

MSME TEAM scheme launched to empower 5 lakh SMEs, 50% of beneficiaries are women-owned enterprises

7,000+ Farmer Producer Organisations onboard representing 35 lakh farmers

First ONDC Fair Price Shop launched in Una and Hamirpur districts of Himachal Pradesh

## Union Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA) writes to Government of Madhya Pradesh on implementation of Forest Rights Act 2006

State Government has been directed to examine the **alleged violation of forest rights of communities as stipulated under Forest Rights Act (FRA) 2006** in and around **Veerangana Durgavati Tiger Reserve**.

### About Forest Rights Act (FRA) 2006

- It was passed in the Parliament as **Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006**.
- **Objective:** To recognize and vest the forest rights and occupation in forest land in forest dwelling STs and other traditional forest dwellers.
- **Types of rights under FRA**
  - ⊖ **Individual Rights:** Rights of Self-Cultivation and Habitation.
  - ⊖ **Community Rights:**
    - ◆ Grazing, Fishing and access to Water bodies in forests. Habitat Rights for Particular Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs).
    - ◆ Community right to intellectual property and traditional knowledge.
    - ◆ Right to protect, regenerate or conserve or manage any community forest resource for sustainable use.
- **Role of Gram Sabha:** Gram Sabha has authority to initiate process for determining nature and extent of forest rights.
- **Role of State Governments:** Entrusted with task of implementing FRA, they constitute **State Level Monitoring Committee, District Level Committees and Sub-Divisional Level Committees**.

### About Veerangana Durgavati Tiger reserve

- Located in Sagar, Damoh and Narsinghpur districts of **Madhya Pradesh**.
- It covers the areas of **Nauradehi Wildlife Sanctuary and Veerangana Durgavati Sanctuary**.
  - ⊖ Nauradehi is a unique protected area wherein two major river basins of India are encompassed, namely the **Ganges and the Narmada**.
- **Vegetation and Flora:** Tropical dry deciduous type, with **Teak** as predominant species.
- **Fauna:** Nilgai, Chital, Sambhar, Rhesus Macaque, Panthers, Indian Wolf.

## Global Water Monitor Consortium releases Global Water Monitor 2024 Summary Report

Global Water Monitor summarises the **state of global water cycle**, identify key trends and analyses major hydrological events.

### Water Cycle

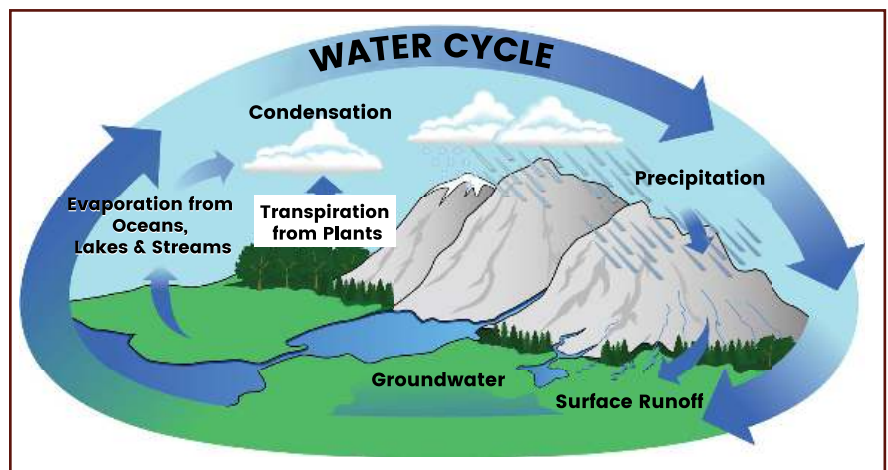
- Water cycle is the **movement of water in all its phases** — solid, liquid and gas — within the Earth and atmosphere.
- Liquid water **evaporates** into **water vapor**, **condenses** to form **clouds**, and **precipitates** back to earth in the form of **rain and snow**.

### Key Findings (State of Water Cycle)

- In 2024, **Water-related Disasters** caused over 8,700 deaths, **displaced 40 million people**, and inflicted more than **US\$550 billion in damages**.
- **Soil water** showed strong **regional contrasts**, with extreme dryness in South America and Southern Africa and wet conditions in West Africa.
- **Lake and reservoir water storage** worldwide **declined** for the fifth year in a row.

### Impact of climate change on water cycle

- **Intensification:** Climate change had **intensified water cycle by up to 7.4%**.
- **Severe Storms:** Warmer air can hold more water vapour (7% more moisture for every 1 degree Celsius temperature rise), **increasing precipitation intensity, duration and frequency**.
- **Droughts:** Temperature rise **causes more evaporation**, drying out soils, increasing drought risks.
  - ⊖ **Extremely dry months have become increasingly common** in recent decades.
- **Sea-level rise:** Thermal expansion and melting ice is contributing to sea level rise, resulting in **oceanic acidification and affecting marine life**.



## Army Launches Mission to Rescue Miners Trapped in Coal Mine in Assam

Nine workers were trapped in a flooded rat-hole coal mine in Umrangso, Dima Hasao district, Assam that borders Meghalaya

### About Rat Hole Mining

- **Mining Mechanism:** Rat-hole mining involves **digging narrow tunnels**, usually 3-4 feet high, where workers (often children) enter and extract coal.
  - ⊕ The horizontal tunnels are often termed "rat-holes", as each just about fits one person.
  - ⊕ It is mostly **practised in Meghalaya**.
- **Reasons for prevalence:**
  - ⊕ **Natural Factors:** Thin coal seams make rat-hole mining more economical than open-cast methods.
    - ◆ Difficult terrain and high costs discourage advanced drilling methods.
  - ⊕ **Governance issues:** Sixth Schedule protects tribal rights over land under the Constitution.
    - ◆ Landowners are considered owners of minerals beneath, and it is believed that Coal Mines Nationalisation Act of 1973 does not apply to these mines.
- **Legal Status:** In 2014, **National Green Tribunal (NGT) banned rat hole mining** in Meghalaya stating it is unscientific and unsafe for workers. The Ban was upheld by Supreme Court.

### Consequences of Rat Hole Mining

  
 Water Contamination  
soil degradation

  
 Child Trafficking

  
 Constant risk of caving in or flooding

  
 Health Hazards due to emission of methane, sulfur dioxide, etc.

## US Working to Remove Indian Entities From its Entity List to Strengthen Nuclear Partnership

The **US Entity List** prevent unauthorized trade in items that could support terrorism, weapons of mass destruction (WMD) programs.

- Removal of Indian entities from the lists could potentially revitalizing the **Indo-US Nuclear Cooperation Agreement** of 2008.

### Indo-US Nuclear Cooperation Agreement

- **Background:**
  - ⊕ The **123 Agreement**, named after **Section 123 of the US Atomic Energy Act 1954**, was introduced in July 2005.
  - ⊕ It ended a **30-year US ban on nuclear trade with India**, imposed after nuclear weapons tests and subsequent sanctions.
- **Cooperation for India's programme:** Enables US businesses to sell nuclear fuel, technology, and reactors to India.
- **India's commitment:** India agreed to expand international safeguards, adhere to international nuclear and missile export guidelines, continue its voluntary moratorium on nuclear testing, etc.

### Significance of the deal

- **Acknowledges India's strong non-proliferation record** and its history of implementing **voluntary safeguards** on its nuclear program.
- Encourages India to **accept international safeguards** on previously uninspected facilities.
- Recognizes India's **commitment to following Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) export standards**, despite not being a formal member.
  - ⊕ India is a member of other multilateral weapon and technology export control regimes which include **Missile Technology Control Regime, Australia Group, and Wassenaar Arrangement**.

### Key Implementation Challenges

- **India's nuclear liability:** India's 2010 **Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act (CLNDA)** that ensures compensation for nuclear disaster victims created tensions with US suppliers.
- **Non-NPT Membership:** Concerns over India not signing the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) hinder progress.

## Also in News



### Saint Narahari Tirtha

**Idol of Saint Narahari Tirtha** has been discovered in **Simhachalam Temple**, Vishakhapatnam.

#### About Saint Narahari Tirtha

- Narahari Tirtha was a prominent **Dvaita Vedanta philosopher, scholar, and saint** of the 13<sup>th</sup> century.
- Believed to be born in **Chikakolu town (present Srikakulam, Andhra Pradesh)**.
- He was a **disciple of Madhvacharya**, the proponent of **Dvaita Vedanta philosophy**.
- He introduced **Yaksha Gana and Bayalu Aata** (open theatre drama) as a part of Vaishnava Bhakti Movement.
- He was consecrated near the rock adjacent to Chakratirtha at **Hampi on the banks of river Tungabhadra**.



### Tidal Tail

A Nascent galaxy was discovered in formation at the end of the **tidal tail of the NGC 3785 galaxy**.

- NGC 3785 galaxy is known to **possess the longest tidal tail discovered so far**.

#### About Tidal Tail

- It is formed due to **gravitational forces ("tidal forces")** when **two galaxies interact closely**, essentially **pulling material away from each other** during a close encounter or merger process.
  - ⊕ A seemingly longer-than-average tidal tail consists of a **stream of stars and gas**.
- Tidal tail offers a glimpse into **how galaxies like ultra-diffuse ones, with very low surface brightness, come into being**.





## BRICS

Indonesia has been admitted as a full member of the BRICS bloc of developing economies, announced by the group's presiding country Brazil.

➤ Indonesia has the **largest population and economy in Southeast Asia**.

### About BRICS

- **Genesis:** British economist **Jim O' Neill** in 2001 coined acronym 'BRICS' representing the emerging economies of **Brazil, Russia, India, and China**.
  - ⊕ BRICS was formed in 2009 by **Brazil, Russia, India, and China**, with **South Africa** joining in 2010.
  - ⊕ **Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, United Arab Emirate and Saudi Arabia** have also joined BRICS.
- **Aim:** Reforming **global governance institutions** and contributes positively to **deepening South-South cooperation**.



## Unnat Jyoti by Affordable LED for All (UJALA)

Ministry of Power marks the 10 years of UJALA scheme, initially named DELP (Domestic Efficient Lighting Program).

- **Aim:** Promote **energy efficiency** at residential level by providing affordable energy-efficient LED bulbs, tube lights, and fans to households.
- **Implementation:** Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL) and DISCOMs under the Ministry of Power.
- It evolved into **world's largest zero-subsidy domestic lighting programme**.
- **Outcomes:**
  - ⊕ **Cost savings per year:** ₹19,153 crore.
  - ⊕ **Reduction in CO2 emissions per year:** 3.87 crore tonnes.
  - ⊕ **Energy saved per year:** 47,883 million kWh.



## Steel PLI 1.1

Union Ministry of Steel launched the second round of PLI (Production Linked Incentive) Scheme for Specialty Steel, termed as **PLI Scheme 1.1**.

### About PLI scheme 1.1

- **Objective:** Promote manufacturing of value-added steel grades, helping Indian industry mature in technology and move up value chain.
- **Implementation period:** FY 2025-26 to FY 2029-30.
- **Product coverage:** Covers **five product categories** in line with the existing PLI Scheme, namely Coated / Plated Steel Products, High Strength Steel, Specialty Rails, Alloy Steel Products & Steel wires and Electrical Steel.



## Organic Fisheries

Union Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying **launched India's first Organic Fisheries Cluster in Soreng District of Sikkim**.

- It aims at development of **organic fisheries and aquaculture** in Sikkim under **Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY)**.
  - ⊕ PMMSY aims to **bring about Blue Revolution** through sustainable development of fisheries sector in India.
  - ⊕ PMMSY provides for adoption of **cluster-based approach** to enhance competitiveness of fisheries sector, facilitate economies of scale, and generate higher incomes.
- Organic Fisheries focuses on **ecologically healthy fish farming system** avoiding the use of harmful chemicals, antibiotics, and pesticides.



## CROPS Experiment

ISRO achieved a milestone as cowpea seeds aboard PSLV-C60's CROPS experiment sprouted leaves in space within four days.

- It was ISRO's **first biological experiment in space** and part of **CROPS (Compact Research Module for Orbital Plant Studies)**.

### About CROPS Experiment

- It is an **automated platform** designed to **cultivate and sustain plant life in microgravity** environment of space.
- Developed by the **Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre**.
- Current accomplishment not only **demonstrates ISRO's capability to grow plants in space** but also provides **valuable insights for future long-duration missions**.



## Selective Silencing

Researchers at Columbia University have revealed impact of **selective silencing on disease outcomes**.

### About study

- Every cell in the body (except sperm and eggs) **contains two copies of each gene** (one inherited from each parent).
- However, **certain cells can exhibit a bias**, selectively inactivating one parent's copy of a gene, i.e., **Selective Silencing**.
  - ⊕ 'Silencing' means **blocking a specific gene's message**.
- This **selective silencing could be the reason** why some individuals carrying genes linked to diseases remain symptom-free.



## Restrictions on Foreigners' Movement

Supreme Court said a foreigner should **not be allowed to leave India if he/she is required to answer a criminal charge**.

- **Foreigners Act, 1946** empowers the Central Government to **regulate the entry, departure, and presence of foreigners** in India, including issuing orders for their arrest, detention, or confinement.
- **Foreigners Order, 1948**, outlines provisions such as appointing Civil Authorities and **regulating the departure of foreigners** from India.
  - ⊕ It mandates that no foreigner may leave India **without permission** and that **departure must be denied** if a foreigner's presence is required to answer a criminal charge.



## Banihal Bypass

The Banihal Bypass has been completed.

### About Banihal Bypass

- The Bypass is **2.35 km road section of NH-44 in Jammu and Kashmir**,
  - ⊕ NH44, also known as the Old NH 7, is the **longest national highway in India**.
  - ⊕ It stretches 3,745 kilometers, connecting **Srinagar** in the northern tip of Jammu and Kashmir to **Kanyakumari** at the southernmost point of India.
- The bypass is **particularly important for security forces**, enabling rapid movement, and will also **reduce the travel time between Kharpora, Banihal, and the Navyuga Tunnel** to just seven minutes.



AHMEDABAD



BENGALURU



BHOPAL



CHANDIGARH



DELHI



GUWAHATI



HYDERABAD



JAIPUR



JODHPUR



LUCKNOW



PRAYAGRAJ



PUNE



RANCHI