

NEWS TODAY

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 1st 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



Open Network for Digital Commerce





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

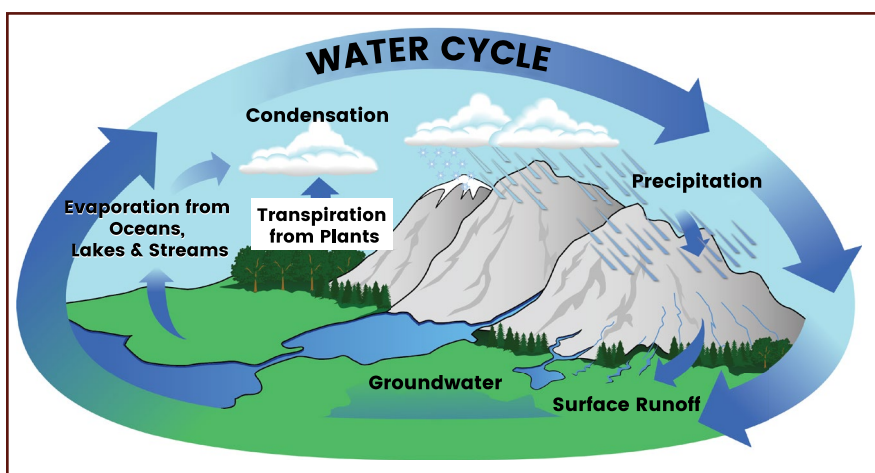
- Water cycle is the **movement of water in all its phases** – solid, liquid and gas – within the Earth and atmosphere.
- Liquid water **evaporates** into water vapor, **condenses** to form clouds, and **precipitates** back to earth in the form of rain and snow.

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**.

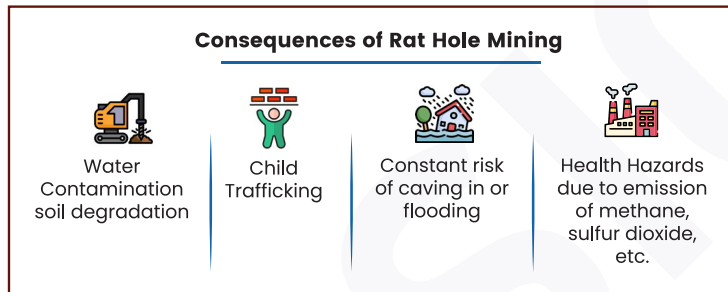


Army Launches Mission to Rescue Miners Trapped in Coal Mine in Assam

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.



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 13th 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.

