

## DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS (DCA)

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## WEST BENGAL TEA WORKERS INVOKE ILO ARTICLE 24

### Context

- Tea plantation workers in West Bengal have raised issues of **labour rights violations** with the International Labour Organization (ILO) by invoking Article **24 of the provisions**.

### About

- **Concerns of Workers:** They have alleged systemic labour rights violations despite India's ratified conventions.
  - ♦ They cite starvation deaths, severe malnutrition, non-payment of wages and dues, lack of minimum wage and discrimination against women and Adivasi workers.
- **The Article 24** enables industrial associations of employers or workers to file a representation against any member state **that has failed to secure the effective observance of a ratified ILO convention within its jurisdiction**.
  - ♦ **A three-member tripartite committee of the Governing Body** may be set up to examine the representation and the government's response.
  - ♦ The report that the committee submits to the Governing Body sets out the **legal and practical aspects of the case**, examines the information submitted and concludes with recommendations.

### International Labour Standards

- **Since 1919, the International Labour Organization** has maintained and developed a system of **international labour standards**.
- International labour standards are **legal instruments drawn up by the ILO's constituents (governments, employers and workers)** and setting out basic principles and rights at work. They are either:
  - ♦ **Conventions and Protocols**, which are **legally binding** international treaties that may be ratified by member States, or recommendations, which serve as non-binding guidelines.
- **Once a standard is adopted**, member States are required **under article 19(6)** of the ILO Constitution, to submit it to their competent authority **within a period of twelve months for consideration**.
  - ♦ If it is ratified, a Convention generally comes into force for that country one year after the date of ratification.

- **Ratifying countries undertake to apply the Convention in national law** and practice and to report on its application at regular intervals.
  - ♦ Technical assistance is provided by the ILO, if necessary.
- **Representation and complaint procedures** can be initiated against countries for violations of a Convention that they have ratified.

### International Labour Organisation (ILO)

- It is an United Nations Agency established in **1919** as part of the Treaty of Versailles that ended World War I, and it became the **first specialized agency of the UN in 1946**.
- India became a founding member of the ILO in **1919**, even before gaining independence.
- It has **187 Member states**.
- It **sets labour standards, develops policies** and devises programmes promoting decent work for all women and men.
- It is the **only tripartite U.N. agency** that brings together governments, employers and workers.
- It is headquartered in **Geneva, Switzerland**.

### Labour Laws in India

- The Government of India has announced the implementation of the **four Labour Codes** with effect from 2025 rationalising 29 existing labour laws:
  - ♦ **Code on Wages, 2019:** Regulates wages, bonus payments, and equal remuneration.
  - ♦ **Industrial Relations Code, 2020:** Deals with trade unions, employment conditions, layoffs, and dispute resolution.
  - ♦ **Code on Social Security, 2020:** Merges laws on provident funds, pensions, insurance, maternity benefits, and gratuity.
  - ♦ **Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020:** Consolidates regulations on safety, working hours, health, and welfare.
- Labour laws in India **apply to both organized and unorganized sectors**, although enforcement in the unorganized sector remains a challenge.
- Enforcement agencies include the **Ministry of Labour and Employment, state labour departments, and specific boards (e.g., EPFO, ESIC)**.

Source: DTE

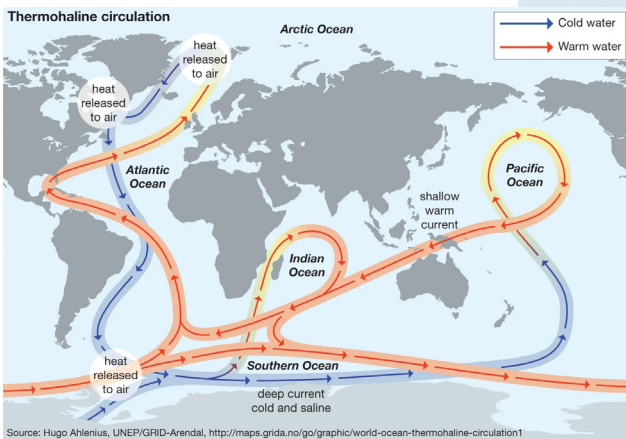
## GEOENGINEERING APPROACH TO STABILISE ATLANTIC MERIDIONAL OVERTURNING CIRCULATION (AMOC)

### Context

- A recent study from Utrecht University examines whether constructing a dam across the Bering Strait could help stabilize the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation.

### Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (AMOC)

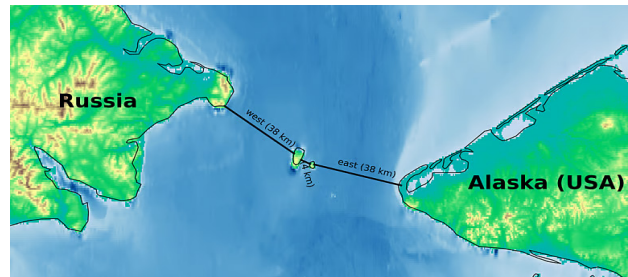
- The AMOC is a vast **ocean current system** in which warm, **salty surface water flows northward**, cools, becomes denser, sinks in the North Atlantic, and then returns southward at deeper levels.
- The AMOC is essential for **regulating the Earth's climate**, as it redistributes heat from the tropics to higher latitudes and helps maintain temperature balance across regions.
- **Variations in temperature and salinity**, particularly due to the influx of freshwater from melting ice sheets, can **reduce water density, weaken the sinking process, and thereby slow down or disrupt** the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation.



### Mechanism of Bering Strait Closure

- The Bering Strait connects the **Pacific Ocean with the Arctic Ocean** and allows freshwater inflow into the Arctic.
- The idea of altering ocean circulation through a dam was proposed in the **1960s** by **Petr Mikhailovich Borisov**.
- **The proposed Bering Strait Dam consists of three separate parts:**
  - ♦ A part between the Russian mainland and the island of **Big Diomede (38 km)**,

- ♦ A part between **Big Diomede and Little Diomede (4 km)**, and
- ♦ An eastern part between Little **Diomede and Alaska (38 km)**.
- **Significance:** Constructing a dam across the Bering Strait could **reduce freshwater inflow** and **maintain higher salinity** in the North Atlantic.
  - ♦ **Higher salinity** could support deep water formation and potentially **stabilise the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation**.



### What are the Challenges?

- **Technical and Geographical Constraints:** The Bering Strait is about **80 kilometres** wide and located in a remote region with limited infrastructure. Construction and maintenance of such a dam would be extremely difficult and costly.
- **Ecological Impacts:** The Bering Strait serves as an important **migration route for marine mammals**. Altering currents and salinity could disrupt Arctic ecosystems and biodiversity.
- **Geopolitical Issues:** The Bering Strait lies between **Russia and the United States**. The project raises concerns regarding decision-making authority and responsibility for consequences.
- **Ethical Concerns:** The proposal represents large-scale geoengineering involving deliberate climate intervention.
  - ♦ There is a risk of unintended consequences and long-term environmental impacts.

### Way Ahead

- Scientific research on the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation should be **strengthened through better climate models**, long-term ocean monitoring, and international data sharing.
- Geoengineering options such as **closing the Bering Strait should be treated only as experimental and last-resort measures**, not as substitutes for mitigation.

- Any large-scale geoengineering intervention must be guided by **global governance frameworks**, transparency, and consent of affected countries.

Source: DTE

## SUPREME COURT ON TRANSGENDER PERSONS (PROTECTION OF RIGHTS) AMENDMENT ACT, 2026

### Context

- Recently, the Supreme Court of India flagged the critical issues like **Self-identification vs State verification and Welfare targeting vs individual dignity** in Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Act, 2026.

### Background: Legal Evolution of Transgender Rights in India

- **NALSA Judgment, 2014:** It recognised **transgender persons as the ‘third gender’**, and affirmed **right to self-identification** without medical intervention. It established **self-determination as a core constitutional value**.
  - ♦ It is linked gender identity to **Article 21 (Right to Life and Dignity)**.
- **Transgender Persons Act, 2019:** It defines transgender persons, **mandates the right to self-perceived identity**, prohibits discrimination in employment and education, and establishes the right to reside in the household.
  - ♦ It introduced **certification by District Magistrate**.
- **Amendment Act, 2026:** It mandates **medical board certification** before legal recognition; removes explicit recognition of **self-perceived identity**; and introduces stricter definitions and penal provisions.

### Key Issues Raised in the Supreme Court

- **Self-Identification vs Medical Gatekeeping:** Violates **bodily autonomy and dignity (Art. 21)**, and creates **‘medical gatekeeping’ by the State**. Clinical validation undermines identity autonomy.
- **Fear of Misuse vs Rights Protection:** Court flagged risk of **‘masquerading’ to access reservations/welfare**.
  - ♦ However, misuse probability is negligible, and concerns of misuse are often **overstated compared to systemic exclusion**.
- **Impact on NALSA Principles:** Amendment in 2026 dilutes **self-identification doctrine**, and reintroduces **biological essentialism**.

- ♦ It acts as a **‘regressive shift from rights-based to regulatory framework’**.
- **Healthcare and Transition Rights:** It alleged that ongoing **gender-affirming treatments will be disrupted**.
  - ♦ Access to healthcare is already **limited and stigmatized** in India.
- **Classification and Stigma:** Inclusion of victims of coercion alongside transgender persons leads to **arbitrary and stigmatizing classification (Art. 14 violation)**.

### Way Forward

- **Balanced Approach Needed:** Ensure **targeted welfare delivery** without violating rights; and adopt **self-identification with safeguards** (affidavit-based models).
- **Institutional Reforms:** Sensitisation of judiciary, medical boards, and administrative authorities.
- **Alignment with NALSA:** Reinstate **self-identification as a fundamental right**; and avoid over-regulation and criminalisation.
- **Inclusive Policy Design:** Need to separate **transgender identity** from **victims of coercion/trafficking**.

Source: TH

## FALL IN RESERVOIR LEVELS IN EIGHT STATES

### Context

- The **Central Water Commission (CWC)**, which monitors 166 reservoirs and 20 river basins across India, has flagged a sharp decline in water levels in its latest data.

### About

- Water levels in India’s major reservoirs have **fallen to below 40% of total capacity**.
  - ♦ **Several reservoirs** have reached **critically low or zero levels**. In Bihar, the Chandan dam has run completely dry.
- **Most of India’s 20 river basins** are now operating between **30% and 60%** of capacity, with only a few above that range.
- **Southern India** has seen the steepest drop, raising concerns ahead of peak summer.
  - ♦ **36 reservoirs in South India** are below 40 percent, the highest in the country.
- Overall, the data suggests a **widespread decline in water levels**, with the risk of a **summer water**

**shortage rising**, particularly in the south and west.

### Water reservoirs

- Water reservoirs are **natural or artificial storage spaces** where water is collected and stored for future use.
  - ♦ They include rivers, lakes, glaciers, groundwater aquifers, dam reservoirs, tanks, and canals.
  - ♦ They play a crucial role in ensuring a **steady supply of water for various purposes**.
- **Reasons for Decline in Capacity:**
  - ♦ **Siltation (Sediment Deposition):** Accumulation of silt and debris reduces storage capacity over time.
  - ♦ **Catchment Area Degradation:** Deforestation, mining, and overgrazing increase soil erosion and sediment inflow.
  - ♦ **Encroachment & Urbanisation:** Illegal occupation of reservoir areas and feeder channels reduces effective storage.
  - ♦ **Eutrophication & Aquatic Weeds:** Nutrient pollution leads to excessive growth of algae and weeds, occupying space.
  - ♦ **Climate Variability:** Erratic rainfall and droughts reduce inflow and accelerate sedimentation.

### Water scarcity in India

- India has **18%** of the world's population but only **4%** of its freshwater.
- The World Bank calls India one of the **most water-stressed countries**.
  - ♦ Many parts of India could face **severe water scarcity by 2040** because of growing demand, poor management, and climate change.
- According to the **Annual Ground Water Quality Report 2024** by the **Central Groundwater Board (CGWB)**, the average stage of groundwater extraction in India stands at **60.4%**.

### Major Causes of Water Scarcity

- **Rapid urbanisation and industrialisation** have led to increased pollution of water bodies, making them unfit for consumption.
- **Inefficient agricultural practices and excessive groundwater extraction** have depleted crucial water sources.

- **Climate change** further aggravates the situation, causing irregular rainfall patterns and affecting the recharge of rivers and aquifers.
- **Poor water management** and lack of proper infrastructure also play a significant role in exacerbating the crisis.

### Water Governance in India

- **Constitutional Provisions**
  - ♦ **State Subject:** Water is primarily under **Entry 17 of State List (Seventh Schedule)**.
  - ♦ **Union Role:** Regulation of inter-state rivers under **Entry 56 of Union List**.
  - ♦ **Article 262:** Parliament can adjudicate inter-state water disputes.

### Key Issues in Water Governance in India

- **Fragmented Institutional Framework:** Water governance in India is highly fragmented due to its placement in the State List, which leads to jurisdictional conflicts between states.
- **Predominance of Engineering-Centric Approach:** Water management policies in India have historically focused on large-scale infrastructure such as dams, canals, and irrigation systems.
  - ♦ This approach prioritises supply augmentation while neglecting ecological sustainability and demand management.
- **Agricultural Policies:** Agricultural policies promoting water-intensive crops such as rice and wheat have led to excessive groundwater extraction.
- **Lack of Ecosystem-Based Approach:** Water governance does not adequately incorporate the interlinkages between land, water, and ecosystems.
  - ♦ Environmental flows (e-flows) are often ignored, leading to degradation of rivers and wetlands.
- **Weak Data Systems:** There is a lack of reliable, comprehensive, and accessible water data across the country.
  - ♦ This leads to poor planning, inefficient allocation, and unregulated extraction of water resources.
- **Neglect of Demand-Side Management:** Water policies largely focus on increasing supply rather than managing demand.
  - ♦ Limited attention is given to water-use efficiency, conservation practices, and rational pricing.

### Government Initiatives

- **Jal Shakti Abhiyan (2019):** Focuses on water conservation and groundwater recharge in water-stressed districts.
- **AMRUT 2.0 scheme** was launched in the 2021 in all Urban Local Bodies (ULBs)/ cities, enabling the cities to become 'self-reliant' and 'water secure'.
  - ♦ Rejuvenation of water bodies and development of green spaces and parks are other components of the mission.
- **Amrit Sarovar Mission:** Aims to develop and rejuvenate 75 water bodies per district.
- **National Aquifer Mapping Program (NAQUIM):** Helps delineate and understand aquifers for sustainable management.
- **Atal Bhujal Yojana**, was launched to improve groundwater management in priority areas with critical and overexploited blocks.
- **Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM):** To enable every rural household in the country to have assured potable water; since 2019, Government in partnership with states, is implementing Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM).
  - ♦ This initiative facilitates adequate quantities of prescribed quality water on a regular and long-term basis, through tap water connection.

### Conclusion

- There is a need to move from a **fragmented and engineering-dominated approach** to a comprehensive governance framework.
- Water must be treated as a shared and finite resource, requiring coordinated management across sectors.
- The focus should shift from **supply augmentation to sustainability, efficiency, and equity.**

Source: DTE

## IMF PAPER: DIGITALISATION REFORMS IMPROVED MSME PRODUCTIVITY IN INDIA

### Context

- A recent working paper from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has highlighted how **India's public administration digitalization reforms** have improved productivity in micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs).

### Major Highlights

- The **business environment reforms** undertaken in India **between 2010-11 and 2014-15** were mainly through **digitalisation of business-related public administration.**
- **The paper lists reforms into six areas:** tax systems, construction permits, environment and labour compliance, inspections, commercial disputes and single-window clearances.
  - ♦ **States that implemented more of these reforms** recorded higher total factor productivity.
  - ♦ **Digital tools** reduced administrative burdens, especially for small firms.

### MSMEs in India

- MSMEs are businesses that are defined by their **investment and turnover levels.**
- They are considered an important sector of the economy as they create jobs, generate income, and promote entrepreneurship.

Rs. in Crore	Investment		Turnover	
	Current	Revised	Current	Revised
<b>Micro Enterprises</b>	1	2.5	5	10
<b>Small Enterprises</b>	10	25	50	100
<b>Medium Enterprises</b>	50	125	250	500

- Globally, MSMEs represent the **most dominant segment of the business ecosystem**, accounting for nearly **90% of enterprises and over 50% of total employment.**
- **In India**, MSMEs account for ~35.4% of manufacturing, ~48.58% of exports, and 31.1% of GDP in India; with 7.47 crore+ enterprises employing 32.82 crore+ persons.
  - ♦ MSMEs are the **second-largest employer in India after agriculture.**

### Challenges Faced by the MSMEs in India

- **Access to Finance:** MSMEs struggle to secure capital due to a lack of collateral, limited credit history, or inadequate access to formal financial institutions.
- **Increased Competition:** MSMEs face stiff competition from larger, more established companies that have greater resources and market influence.
- **Lack of Technological knowledge:** Many MSMEs lack the technical expertise needed to modernize their operations, adopt new technologies, and stay competitive in the market.

- **Marketing and Networking Opportunities:** Limited resources and networks prevent MSMEs from effectively marketing their products and services.
- **Regulatory Burden:** Complex compliance with tax laws, labour regulations, and licenses increases operational difficulty.
- **Skilled Labour Shortage:** There is a lack of access to skilled and trained manpower in the sector.
- **Vulnerability to External Shocks:** MSMEs are highly susceptible to disruptions like COVID-19, inflation, and global slowdown.

### Key Initiatives to Support MSMEs

- **The Union Budget 2026-27** proposed a **three-pronged approach** to help MSMEs grow as Champions by providing equity, liquidity and professional support.

#### Equity Support

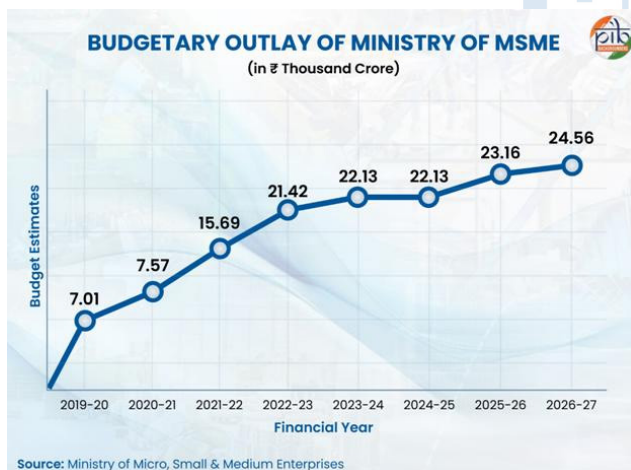
- > Dedicated ₹10,000 crore **SME Growth Fund** to be introduced
- > **Self-Reliant India Fund** to be top up with ₹2,000 crore

#### Liquidity Support

- > More than ₹7 lakh crore made available to MSMEs with TREDS

#### Professional Support

- > Develop cadre of '**Corporate Mitras**' in Tier-II & Tier-III towns, to help MSMEs meet compliance requirements at affordable costs



- **PM Vishwakarma:** Launched in 2023, it is a central sector scheme for 2023-24 to 2027-28.
  - ♦ It aims to uplift traditional artisans and craftspeople by enhancing product quality and connecting them to wider markets.
- **Credit Guarantee Scheme for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGSMSE):** A Credit Accessibility Breakthrough, the CGSMSE provides credit guarantees for credit facilities extended by

Member Lending Institutions to MSEs without collateral security or third-party guarantees.

- **Udyam Registration Portal:** It was launched in 2020, offers a free, paperless, and self-declared registration process for MSMEs.
- **Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP):** PMEGP is a credit-linked subsidy scheme that supports self-employment by helping set up micro-enterprises in the non-farm sector.
- **MSME Hackathon 4.0 (2024):** Supports 500 young entrepreneurs with funding up to Rs. 15 lakh each for innovation and incubation.
- **MSME-TEAM Scheme (2024):** A trade enablement initiative with an outlay of Rs. 277.35 crore, supporting 5 lakh MSEs (including 2.5 lakh women-led) in digital onboarding, cataloguing, logistics and packaging.
- **Khadi and Village Industries:** The Government is promoting the Khadi and Village Industries (KVI) sector through the Khadi and Gramodyog Vikas Yojana (KGVY), a Central Sector Scheme with no state component.
- **International Cooperation Scheme** supports MSMEs in entering global markets by facilitating participation in international fairs, exhibitions and knowledge-sharing events on a reimbursement basis.

### Conclusion

- MSMEs are revolutionising India's growth story by **driving innovation, generating employment, and empowering local communities.**
- **With strong policy support, digital tools, and access to new markets,** these enterprises are becoming engines of sustainable and inclusive development.

Source: IMF

## FOREST RIGHTS ACT (FRA), 2006

### In News

- Recently, the Lucknow Bench of the Allahabad High Court reiterated an important legal principle while reviewing a case under the **Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006** in Lakhimpur, Uttar Pradesh.

### Key Highlights of recent case

- The Lucknow Bench of the Allahabad High Court criticised the **District Level Committee (DLC)** for rejecting forest rights claims in 2021 based on a 2000 Supreme Court interim order, despite the FRA clearly overriding such earlier legal restrictions.

- It noted that the DLC violated **statutory provisions but did not invoke the FRA's formal punishment mechanism**, instead directing it to reconsider its decision.
- The case **highlights ongoing tensions between the FRA and older forest laws or court interpretations**, where implementation gaps, judicial inconsistencies, and reliance on outdated legal provisions often undermine forest dwellers' rights, including issues related to eviction protection and grazing rights.

### Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006

- The Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006 was enacted to correct historical injustices faced by forest-dwelling tribal communities and other traditional forest dwellers by legally recognizing their long-standing dependence on forests for livelihood, habitation, culture, and survival.

### Features

- **Individual and Community Rights** : It grants both individual and community rights, including the right to cultivate and live on forest land, and community rights such as grazing, fishing, access to water bodies, and use of minor forest produce.
- **PVTGs rights** : It also recognizes special rights for Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs), nomadic and pastoral communities, and traditional knowledge systems, including biodiversity protection and intellectual property rights.
- **Allocation of forest land** : It allows allocation of forest land for essential development needs like health, education, and infrastructure.
- **Role of the Gram Sabha** : It also strengthens the role of the Gram Sabha, empowering it to decide on local forest governance and ensuring that forest dwellers actively participate in conservation and management of forests and biodiversity.
- It protects them from eviction without proper rehabilitation and requires coordination with other laws on land acquisition and resettlement.

### Importance

- **Correcting Historical Injustice**: FRA Recognizes rights of Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers over forest land and resources.

- **Livelihood Security**: FRA Provides legal ownership and access to forest produce, crucial for food, fuel, fodder, and income.
- **Decentralized Governance**: FRA Empowers Gram Sabhas to manage, conserve, and protect forests, fostering participatory democracy.
- **Conservation Synergy**: FRA Promotes sustainable forest management by involving local communities who have traditional ecological knowledge.
- **Social Justice**: FRA Prevents displacement and marginalization of vulnerable groups, aligning with constitutional guarantees of equality and dignity

### Challenges and Issues

- **Arbitrary Claim Rejections**: Large-scale rejection of claims without proper review; often branding genuine claimants as "encroachers."
- **Judicial Conflicts**: In 2019, the Supreme Court initially ordered eviction of people whose FRA claims were rejected, potentially affecting around 1.8 million people. After protests and intervention by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, this order was stayed and states were asked to review rejected claims.
- **Weak Institutional Capacity**: District Level Committees and state authorities often lack resources and training to process claims fairly.
- **Conservation vs. Rights**: Tensions between wildlife protection laws and FRA rights, especially in tiger reserves and national parks.
- **Data Gaps**: Lack of reliable data on rejected claims and reasons for dismissal hampers accountability.

### Conclusion and Way Forward

- The Forest Rights Act (2006) empowers forest communities but faces implementation challenges like weak institutions and legal conflicts.
- To improve it, Gram Sabhas should be strengthened, claim processes made transparent with proper grievance redress, and legal clarity ensured by aligning conservation laws with FRA.
- Capacity building of officials, use of digital tools, and community-based conservation linked with schemes like MGNREGS are needed.
- Awareness campaigns are also essential so forest dwellers can effectively claim and protect their rights.

Source :TH

## NEWS IN SHORT

### RU-SOAM BRIDGES

#### Context

- UNESCO has partnered with the **Government of Sikkim** to document indigenous **Ru-Soam (cane bridge)** engineering practices.
  - ♦ The project is being implemented in the **Khangchendzonga Biosphere Reserve** with support from Airbnb.

#### About Ru-Soam Bridges

- **Ru-Soam** are traditional cane bridges built by the **Lepcha community**.



- These bridges are **constructed using locally available natural materials** such as bamboo, cane, and wood.
- They demonstrate a **high level of ecological understanding and structural resilience** suited to mountainous terrain.
  - ♦ The bridges proved their resilience during the **Sikkim Glacial Lake Outburst Flood 2023**.

Source: IE

### TANZANIA

#### In News

- Recently, the 5th session of the India–Tanzania Joint Trade Committee (JTC), held in Dar es Salaam in Tanzania.

#### Tanzania



- It is an East African country located just south of the Equator.
- The capital is Dodoma, and Dar es Salaam is the largest city and main port.
- It is bordered by Uganda, Kenya, and Lake Victoria to the north; the Indian Ocean to the east; Mozambique, Malawi, Zambia, and Lake Nyasa to the south; and Rwanda, Burundi, and Lake Tanganyika to the west.
- **Geographical features:** Mount Kilimanjaro Located in Tanzania,
  - ♦ Mount Kilimanjaro is the African continent's highest peak



- ♦ Tanzania also includes a portion of Lake Victoria, the largest lake in Africa and a source of the Nile River.
- ♦ Several rivers course through Tanzania, including the Great Ruaha, Rufiji, and Kagera rivers
- ♦ Lake Tanganyika, forms the boundary between Tanzania and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

#### Cooperation with India

- India and Tanzania have **strengthened their economic partnership**, with bilateral trade reaching \$9.02 billion in 2025–26, up from \$8.64 billion the previous year.
- Both countries agreed to deepen cooperation by improving trade mechanisms, exploring local currency settlements, easing visa processes for businesspersons, and addressing tariff and regulatory barriers

- Key sectors of collaboration include pharmaceuticals, healthcare, mining, agriculture, education, and digital technology.

Source : TH

## MODEL CODE OF CONDUCT (MCC)

### Context

- The recent broadcast by PM Modi has revived debate on whether the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) adequately regulates the use of public resources and government platforms during elections.

### What is the Model Code of Conduct (MCC)?

- It is a set of guidelines issued by the Election Commission to **regulate the campaigning of political parties and candidates during elections.**
- The MCC aims to **ensure free and fair elections**, maintain a level playing field, and promote ethical political behaviour.

### Evolution of the MCC

- The MCC was first drafted by the **Kerala government in 1960** to regulate election campaigns. The Election Commission formalised the **MCC in 1968** to ensure uniform application across the country.
- The MCC was **revised in 1974** to expand its scope and applicability.
- The MCC was strictly enforced from **1991** under **T. N. Seshan**, which enhanced its credibility.

### Constitutional and Legal Basis

- The MCC is **not a statutory law** but derives its authority from **Article 324** of the Constitution, which **empowers the Election Commission** to conduct elections.
  - ♦ Certain provisions of the MCC may be enforced through invoking corresponding provisions in other statutes such as the **Indian Penal Code, 1860, Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973, and Representation of the People Act, 1951.**
- The Supreme Court in **Mohinder Singh Gill v. Chief Election Commissioner (1978)** held that **Article 324** provides wide powers to the Election Commission to ensure free and fair elections.
- The Punjab and Haryana High Court in **Harbans Singh Jalal v. Union of India (1997)** held

that the MCC came into force from the date of announcement of the election schedule.

Source: TH

## SUPREME COURT BRINGS SURVIVORS OF FORCIBLE ACID INGESTION UNDER RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES ACT

### Context

- The Supreme Court included **persons who were forcibly administered acid** within the definition of **'acid attack victims'** under the **Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016.**

### About

- The 2016 law recognised only **victims of acid-throwing**, and **not forcible acid ingestion.**
  - ♦ The survivors of forcible administration of acid in the category of 'acid attack victims' would be deemed to be operative **retrospectively from the inception of the Act in 2016.**
  - ♦ It directed that **'acid attack victims'** shall also include those administered acid, and further, include those **who have suffered internal injury even if there is no visible disfigurement.**
- The deemed recognition would aid victims of forcible acid ingestion **to claim disability benefits due under the 2016 Act.**
- The court had suggested framing a **comprehensive policy framework** to protect the survivors, who, even if they survived, require extensive and continuous medical treatment.

Source: TH

## RASHTRIYA BAL SWASTHYA KARYAKRAM (RBSK) 2.0 GUIDELINES

### In News

- The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare released the **Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram (RBSK) 2.0 Guidelines** at the recently concluded National Summit on Good Practices and Innovations in Public Healthcare Service Delivery.

### Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram (RBSK)

- It is a program to improve the **overall quality of life of children and provide comprehensive care to all the children** in the community.

- It involves screening of children from birth to 18 years of age for **four Ds- Defects at birth, Diseases, Deficiencies and Development delays**, spanning 32 common health conditions for early detection and free treatment and management, including surgeries at tertiary level.
  - ♦ Children diagnosed with identified health conditions are provided early intervention services and follow-up care at the district level.

### Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram (RBSK) 2.0 Guidelines

- **4Ds approach strengthened:** It broadens the established 4Ds approach – Defects at Birth, Diseases, Deficiencies and Developmental Delays, while incorporating new-age health challenges including non-communicable diseases, mental health conditions, and behavioural concerns.
- **Comprehensive care approach :** It adopts a comprehensive care approach—covering prevention, promotion, and treatment—for children from birth to 18 years, with a stronger focus on digitalization, aiming to support holistic growth beyond mere survival.
- **Screening and Detection:** It expands screening to include developmental disorders, mental health issues, and risk factors for non-communicable diseases, with services delivered through Mobile Health Teams at Anganwadi Centres and schools to ensure early detection and universal coverage.
- **Digital health :** It strengthens digital health by introducing digital health cards, real-time data systems, and integrated platforms, improving efficiency, accountability, and evidence-based decision-making.
- **Coordination :** It promotes coordination between health, education, and women and child development sectors, using schools, Anganwadi Centres, and community platforms for integrated screening, awareness, and follow-up care.

Source : PIB

## HANTAVIRUS OUTBREAK

### Context

- Three passengers on a cruise ship in the Atlantic Ocean have died after a suspected hantavirus outbreak, according to the World Health Organization (WHO).

### About

- Hantavirus is a rare but severe **zoonotic disease**, meaning it spreads from animals to humans. It belongs to the **Hantaviridae family** and is an **RNA virus**.
- The virus is primarily spread by **rodents such as mice and rats**. It spreads through inhalation of airborne particles from infected rodent urine or droppings, or by touching contaminated surfaces.
  - ♦ Human-to-human transmission is generally rare.
- The disease usually begins with **flu-like symptoms** such as fever and fatigue within one to eight weeks after exposure.
- In severe cases, it can lead to **Hantavirus Pulmonary Syndrome**, which may cause respiratory distress and can be fatal.
- There are **no specific drugs to treat the disease**, so treatment focuses on supportive care, including putting patients on ventilators in severe cases.

Source: DTE

## GIRMITIYA COMMUNITIES

### Context

- The External Affairs Minister will embark on an official **visit to Jamaica, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago**.
  - ♦ These countries share a special connection with India owing to the presence of **Girmitiya communities**.

### About

- **Girmitiya Community:** “Girmitiyas” were Indian labourers who left India in the mid to late 19th century to work in British colonies, where many eventually settled.
  - ♦ The term “Girmit” is a mispronunciation of “Agreement,” referring to the contract under which they migrated.
  - ♦ The labourers were taken to colonies like **Mauritius, Fiji, Trinidad and Tobago, South Africa, etc.**
  - ♦ They have strong links with **Bihar and Eastern UP and have a bhojpuri-speaking heritage**.

Source: AIR

