

# DAILY PT POINTERS

14 December, 2024



## The Hindu-GS3(Disaster Management)-Page12

### 30 people drowned per hour in 2021, says WHO

Zubeda Hamid  
GENEVA

The World Health Organization (WHO) published its first-ever global status report on drowning prevention on Friday.

The report, released at an event in Geneva, reveals that three lakh people died by drowning in 2021 around the world (an estimated 30 every hour).

Close to 92% of such deaths took place in low- and middle-income countries, disproportionately affecting the poor and mar-



**Lurking danger:** Unmindful of the risk and warning board, people playing in the sea in Visakhapatnam. K.R. DEEPAK

vention, he said. ... accounted for the single largest share of drowning

line Lukaszzyk, technical officer, WHO, as the report does not capture deaths by drowning owing to natural disasters such as flooding, and those that occur on water transport, primarily due to a lack of accurate data. With vulnerability to flooding increasing due to climate change - and 75% of flooding deaths known to be due to drowning - this is a priority on the drowning prevention agenda, she says.

#### Training crucial

The report also states that

tion also remains a challenge.

More than 7.2 million people, mainly children, could die due to this "silent killer" by the year 2050 if current trends continue. Yet almost all drowning deaths are preventable, the report states, highlighting that political will and investment in drowning prevention are critical to save lives. Providing day care for pre-school children and teaching school students basic swimming skills could help protect millions of lives, it says.

## WHO's Global Status Report on Drowning Prevention

- **Report Released**  
Reveals 300,000 drowning deaths worldwide in 2021 (30 per hour).
- **Regional Impact:** 92% of deaths in low- and middle-income countries.
  - South-East Asia Region (including India) had 83,000 deaths (28% of global burden).
- **Children at Risk:** Children under five: Largest share of deaths (24%).
  - Children aged five to 14: 19% of deaths.
  - Young people aged 15 to 29: 14% of deaths.
  - Fourth leading cause of death for children aged one to four.
- **Underestimation :** Report does not capture deaths from natural disasters or water transport due to lack of data.
- **Preventive Measures:** WHO's interventions implemented in various countries to varying degrees. Political will and investment needed for drowning prevention.



## The Hindu-IR (GSII)-Page13

### Swiss Shock: EFTA member lobs back India's MFN tax volley

From Jan. 1, Indian entities in Switzerland face higher tax liabilities as country responds to Supreme Court ruling that voided tax treaty benefit

Vikas Dhoot  
NEW DELHI



**I**n a development that could hurt India's investment climate and affect firms' international taxation math, Switzerland has decided to suspend the Most Favoured Nation (MFN) treatment for India under the two countries' 30-years old double-taxation avoidance agreement (DTAA), citing an October 2023 ruling against its validity by the Supreme Court on 11 petitions that were combined with a Nestle plea.

A statement by Swiss authorities dated December 11, said the MFN clause under the DTAA will no longer hold from January 1, 2025, considering that India's apex court had said it does not get automatically triggered until notified under the Income Tax Act.

"On the basis of the Indian Supreme Court ruling, the Swiss competent authority acknowledges that its interpretation of para. 5 of the Protocol to the IN-CH DTA is not shared by the Indian side. In the absence of reciprocity, it therefore waives its unilateral application with effect from 1 January, 2025," a Swiss government communiqué stated.

Terming this as a significant shift in bilateral treaty dynamics, Nangia Andersen's tax partner Sandeep Jhunjhunwala said this would mean increased tax liabilities for Indian entities

operating in Switzerland and increases the complexities of navigating international tax treaties in an evolving landscape.

"Previously, Indian companies benefited from a reduced tax rate of 5% on dividends and other incomes, thanks to Switzerland's earlier application of MFN benefits. With the reversion to a 10% residual rate starting January 1, these firms face higher tax liabilities, reducing their competitiveness compared to businesses from countries still benefiting from MFN provisions," reckoned Ajay Srivastava, director of the Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI).

"Beyond its immediate fiscal impact, this development reflects broader trends in international taxation, with countries like India increasingly asserting stricter interpretations of treaty provisions to protect domestic tax revenues," Mr. Jhunjhunwala noted, adding this underscores the need to align treaty partners on the interpretation and application of tax treaty clauses to

ensure predictability, equity, and stability in international tax framework.

Sameer Gupta, national tax leader at EY India, indicated that all may not be lost in this bilateral economic tangle. "As per the Court's decision, the MFN clause will only take effect once both countries issue notifications... once India provides the required notification, Switzerland can reactivate the treaty provision," he averred.

Mr. Srivastava, however, warned that this suspension not only brings tax challenges for Indian firms in sectors like financial services, pharmaceuticals, and IT, that have operations in Switzerland, but also introduces frictions with other trade and investment partners over the MFN clause interpretations that could hurt inbound and outbound investment flows. If disputes over reading MFN clauses persist, Indian businesses could face similar hurdles in other jurisdictions as well, he said.

"Proactive negotiations to clarify and harmonize interpretations of treaty provisions are essential to safeguard Indian firms' interests abroad. Additionally, India must ensure that its treaty frameworks reflect contemporary business realities, particularly in the digital and service sectors, to reduce tax uncertainties and promote global competitiveness," Mr. Srivastava underscored.

- Switzerland has decided to suspend the Most Favoured Nation (MFN) treatment for India under their double-taxation avoidance agreement (DTAA) starting January 1, 2025.
- This decision follows an October 2023 ruling by the Indian Supreme Court, which stated that the MFN clause does not automatically apply unless notified under the Income Tax Act.
- As a result, Indian companies operating in Switzerland will face higher tax liabilities, increasing from 5% to 10% on dividends and other incomes. Experts believe this suspension could impact Indian firms' competitiveness and complicate international tax treaty navigation. However, there is hope that the issue can be resolved through proactive negotiations and proper notifications by both countries.

# HEADLINES OF THE DAY

Indian Express-IR(GSII) –Page-18

## US releases national strategy to combat Islamophobia with 100 steps to curb hate

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
WASHINGTON, DECEMBER 13

THE WHITE House has announced what it called the first-ever national strategy to counter Islamophobia, detailing more than 100 steps federal officials can take to curb hate, violence, bias and discrimination against Muslims and Arab Americans.

The proposal follows a similar national plan to battle anti-semitism that President Joe Biden unveiled in May 2023, as fears about increasing hatred and discrimination were rising among US Jews.

Officials worked on the anti-Islamophobia plan for months, and its release came on Thursday, five weeks before Biden leaves office — meaning implementation will mostly fall to President-elect Donald Trump, if his administration chooses to do so.

In a statement announcing the strategy, the Biden administration wrote that “Over the past year, this initiative has become even more important as threats



The plan was released five weeks before US president Joe Biden leaves office

### ‘WATCHING BANGLA SITUATION CLOSELY’

Washington: President Joe Biden is closely monitoring the situation in Bangladesh and the US will hold the country’s interim government accountable for ensuring the protection of religious and ethnic minorities, the White House has said. The security situation in Bangladesh has been difficult following the ouster of the former PM Sheikh Hasina, White House National Security Communications Advisor John Kirby said. PTI

- The White House unveiled the first-ever national strategy to counter Islamophobia, detailing over 100 steps to curb hate, violence, bias, and discrimination against Muslims and Arab Americans.

### Priorities:

Awareness: Increase awareness of hatred against Muslims and Arabs and recognize their heritages.

Safety and Security: Improve safety and security for these communities.

Religious Practices: Accommodate Muslim and Arab religious practices and curb discrimination.

Solidarity: Encourage cross-community solidarity to counter hate

### Dispute over Kalyan's Durgadi Fort: why court sided with govt

**ZEESHAN SHAIKH & SADAF MODAK**  
MUMBAI, DECEMBER 13

AFTER NEARLY five decades of legal wrangling, a civil court this week rejected the Muslim community's claim over a disputed site in Durgadi Fort in Kalyan, Maharashtra. Here is a history of the fort, which has long been a site of contention between local Hindu and Muslim communities.

#### A mosque & a temple

The Durgadi Fort was built some time in the 16th century when Kalyan, about 50 km northeast of present-day Mumbai, was a prominent trading port under the Bijapur-based Adil Shahi Sultanate. The fort, spread across 70 acres, stands at the northeastern corner of the city, on a hillock next to the Ulhas river.

According to the Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency, Thana (1892) the fort, which existed in 1570, originally housed a "Musliman tomb, prayer place, and other buildings".

"On the top of the mound... is the Prayer Wall or Idga (later spelt eidgah)... and near the

east crest of the mound a mosque. About thirty yards from the mosque is a round cut stone well of great depth," the Gazetteer stated.

After capturing Kalyan in 1760, the Marathas made major modifications to the fort, notably building a temple dedicated to the goddess Durgadevi on the premises. "In the citadel the Marathas built a small wooden temple of Durgadevi behind the mosque, and called the fort Durgadi Killa in honour of the goddess, a name which it still bears. They also changed the Jama mosque into Ramji's temple," according to the 1892 Gazetteer.

The British took control of Kalyan in 1818, and by the latter half of the 19th century, the Durgadevi temple had ceased to be a place of worship after the image of the goddess was stolen in 1876.

#### Communal tension in 1960s

The modern-day controversy over the fort began in the mid-1960s, when local Koini Muslims said that they had been offering Eid prayers at the fort for centuries, and claimed to be in possession of the land.

Tensions escalated after local Hindus ques-



The Durgadi temple at the Durgadi Fort in Kalyan, with the mosque in the background. Wikimedia Commons

Tensions further escalated after Hindus decided to celebrate Navaratri within the fort premises, and asserted that the structure previously identified as a mosque was in fact a temple dedicated to Goddess Durga.

On September 20, 1968, Bal Thackeray, leader of the then nascent Shiv Sena, went to the fort and vowed to install an idol of the goddess in its premises – in what marked the Sena's first prominent foray into Hindu revivalism.

#### Long legal battle

In February 1974, Maharashtra once again passed an order handing the land at the Durgadi Fort over to the Kalyan Municipal Corporation. This was challenged by the Muslim side in 1976.

As the case dragged on for decades, the Durgadi fort became a rallying point for various local leaders, including Shiv Sena's Anand Dighe, who made annual pilgrimages to the fort to assert Hindu control over the structure.

Meanwhile, Muslims continued to offer Eid prayers at the fort twice a year after receiving clearance from the District Collector. Hindus too held rituals at the fort during Navaratri.

The decision of the Kalyan civil court, announced on Tuesday, affirms Maharashtra government's ownership of the disputed land. It was made on the basis of the statute of limitations. The court noted that the Muslim community's possession of the land was interrupted in 1968. Since the petition was filed only in 1976 – nine years after the interruption – the suit was deemed to be invalid under the Limitation Act.

The Muslim side has vowed to challenge the decision in a higher court. "... [The court] does not seem to have gone into the merits and

the evidence that we had presented to show our claim on the said property..." Sharfuddin Karter of the Majlis-e-Mushawarat Kalyan told *The Indian Express*.

Local BJP leader Sachin Kulkarni has, however, emphasised that the court had confirmed the state's ownership of the land, and its right to use it as it deemed fit.

Notably, the court did not comment on the historicity of the religious structures inside the fort, and did not pass any order denying any side the right to pray there.

**EXPLAINED HISTORY**

### Durgadi Fort Dispute

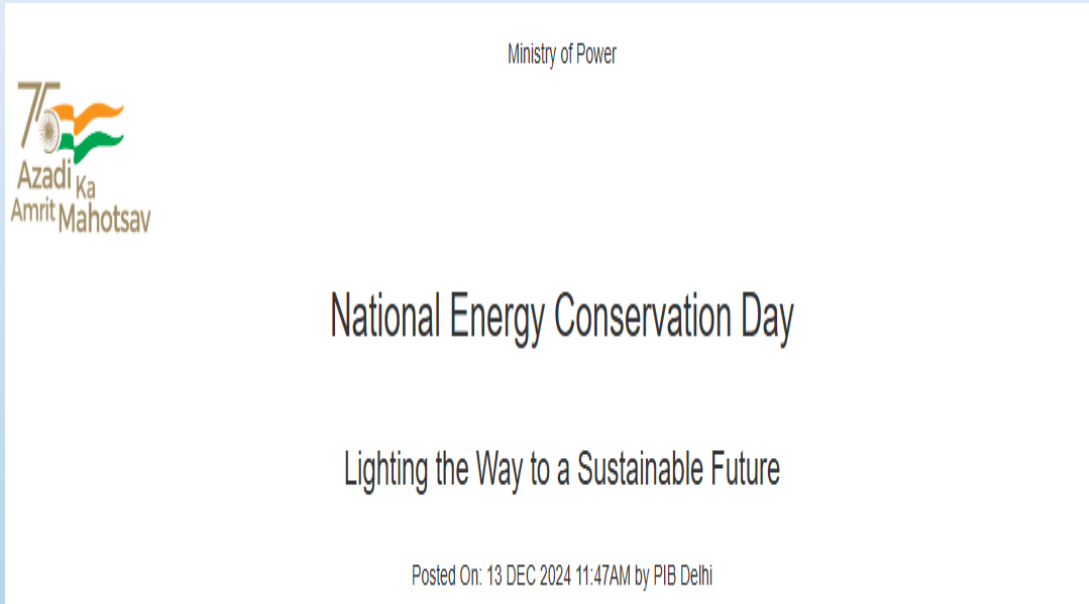
- **Historical Background:** 16th Century Fort: Built during the Adil Shahi Sultanate in Kalyan, near Mumbai. Structures: Initially had a mosque, prayer place, and a Muslim tomb.
- **Maratha Modifications:** Captured in 1760, they built a Durgadevi temple and renamed it Durgadi Killa.
- **British Era:** Control passed to the British in 1818; the temple ceased to be a place of worship by the late 19th century.
- **Modern Controversy:** 1960s Tensions: The Muslim community claimed they had been offering Eid prayers for centuries and possessed the land.
- **Government Intervention:** Maharashtra government asserted ownership in 1966, leading to resistance from Muslims and public protests.



# HEADLINES OF THE DAY



## PIB-Environment(GSIII)



- Energy efficiency stands as a cornerstone of sustainable development, weaving together the threads of progress and environmental stewardship. In India, this deep dedication to sustainability is passionately commemorated on **December 14 as National Energy Conservation Day**.
- National Energy Conservation Day serves as a reminder of the vital role energy plays in our lives and the urgency of conserving it. Introduced in **1991**, this day is championed by the **Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE)** under the Ministry of Power, symbolizing the nation's commitment to energy efficiency and conservation. Energy conservation, at its core, is about reducing unnecessary energy usage by promoting efficient practices and technologies.

## Air-Health(GSII)

### India Will Achieve The Target Of Elimination Of TB 5 Years Ahead Of UNs SDG Target Of 2030: Union Minister Anupriya Patel



- The Centre said that it has set the target to eliminate Tuberculosis (TB) by 2025 and with the implementation of a National Strategic Plan cases of TB have shown sharp decline.
- the incidence of TB in India has shown a 17.7 percent decline from 237 per lakh population in 2015 to 195 per lakh population in 2023
- India will be able to achieve the target of elimination of TB five years ahead of UNOs Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target of 2030
- the TB deaths have reduced by 21.4 percent from 28 per lakh population in 2015 to 22 per lakh population in 2023.
- targeted interventions have been made in high TB burden areas through state and district specific strategic plans and provisions of free drugs and diagnostics have been made to TB patients

## Air-Governance(GSII)

### Rs 18,854 Crore Disbursed Among 3.64 Crore Beneficiaries Of PM Matru Vandana Yojana: Union Minister Annapurna Devi



- The Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY) scheme was launched formally by the Union Minister of Women and Child Development, Smt. Maneka Gandhi on September 1, 2017.
- The scheme, which is a centrally sponsored scheme, is implemented in all the districts of the country.
- Under PMMVY, a cash incentive of Rs 5000 in three instalments is provided directly to the Bank / Post Office Account of Pregnant Women and Lactating Mothers (PW&LM) for first living child of the family subject to fulfilling specific conditions relating to Maternal and Child Health.
- The eligible beneficiaries also receive cash incentive as per approved norms towards maternity benefit under the Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY) administered by the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare. PW&LM are also entitled for Supplementary Nutrition under Anganwadi Services, which is another Centrally Sponsored Scheme.



# HEADLINES OF THE DAY

## Air-IR(GSII)

### India-Philippines Hold Inaugural Maritime Dialogue, Strengthen Cooperation On Maritime Challenges & Global Well-Being



- The inaugural India-Philippines Maritime Dialogue was held in Manila, Philippines, today. During the dialogue, the two sides exchanged perspectives on prevailing maritime challenges and discussed ways to enhance maritime cooperation in furthering a conducive environment for mutual growth and global well-being. They emphasized adherence to a rules-based order, especially the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, and explored cooperation initiatives in the maritime domain to uphold the same.
- While endeavouring to increase bilateral engagement, the two sides also deliberated on avenues to collaborate at various international and regional forums for shared objectives. They agreed to share best practices and partner in maritime capacity-building initiatives in areas such as Maritime Industry, Marine Scientific Research, Ocean Economy, Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR), Navy and Coast Guard cooperation and maritime law enforcement.