



DAILY PT POINTERS

18 December, 2024



The Hindu-GS2(Governance)-Page3

Mamata launches housing scheme for rural poor in Bengal

CM says her govt. was yet to receive ₹24,000 crore from the Centre for various schemes but that will not stop her from extending benefits

Shiv Sahay Singh
KOLKATA

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee launched the "Banglar Bari" scheme on Tuesday to provide houses for the rural poor in the State.

Ms. Banerjee released the funds to 42 beneficiaries across 21 districts and said over 12 lakh beneficiaries in the State are eligible for the first instalment.

The launch of the scheme assumes significance as Ms. Banerjee had announced it ahead of the Lok Sabha polls and said if the Centre does not release funds for PM Awas Yojana, then her government would go ahead with its own scheme.



Mamata Banerjee hands over the certificate to a beneficiary of the new scheme. ANI

Under the scheme, a sum of ₹1.20 lakh will be given to a family for constructing a house, with ₹60,000 as the first instalment. However, beneficiaries in some areas of Jangalmahal and Darjeeling hills would get ₹1.30 lakh.

Speaking at the launch

Ms. Banerjee said that an additional 18 lakh people will benefit from the scheme in 2025. "We are yet to receive ₹24,000 crore from the Centre. But I had said that we are not asking for any alms. If the Centre does not release the funds then we will launch our own scheme," she added.

Ms. Banerjee also said that the Centre had not released funds for MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employee Act), and the State government has started its own scheme to give employment for 50 days under the scheme. Funds under MGNREGA have been on hold on the grounds of "corruption in the scheme"

- West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee launched the "Banglar Bari" scheme to provide houses for the rural poor.
- Funds released to 42 beneficiaries across 21 districts.
- Over 12 lakh beneficiaries eligible for the first instalment.
- Scheme Details:
 - Each family to receive ₹1.20 lakh for house construction, with ₹60,000 as the first instalment.
 - Beneficiaries in Jangalmahal and Darjeeling hills to receive ₹1.30 lakh.

The Constitution on minority rights

The preservation of diversity is the rationale behind minority rights in the Indian Constitution. On Minority Rights Day, it is essential to remember Franklin Roosevelt's words, 'no democracy can long survive which does not accept as fundamental to its very existence the recognition of the rights of minorities'

LETTER & SPIRIT

Faizan Mustafa

The debate on minority rights should be lifted from its current framework of communalism versus secularism and placed in the theoretical field of democracy and substantive equality. Recognising the importance of minority rights, the UN General Assembly adopted a declaration on the 'Rights of Persons Belonging to National, or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities' on December 18, 1992. This date is celebrated as Minority Rights Day all over the world. Minority rights are essential in a democratic polity because as Franklin Roosevelt reminds us "no democracy can long survive which does not accept as fundamental to its very existence the



THE GIST

Recognising the importance of minority rights, the UN General Assembly adopted a declaration on the 'Rights of Persons Belonging to National, or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities' on December 18, 1992.

Article 29(1) lays down that 'any section of the citizens residing in the territory of India or any part thereof having a distinct language script or culture of its own shall have the right to conserve the same'.

Minorities Rights Day, observed annually on December 18, commemorates the adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious, and Linguistic Minorities in 1992.

Origin of Minority Rights

- Historical Context: Early recognition in Austria (1867), Hungary (1868), and Switzerland (1874).
- Post-WWI Treaties: Minority protections codified in treaties with Poland, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Greece, and Yugoslavia.
- Universal Declaration of Human Rights: Article 27 guarantees the right to culture and community participation.

Constituent Assembly Debate

- Framers of the Indian Constitution, led by leaders like Pandit G.B. Pant and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, ensured minority rights were integral to the Constitution.
- Articles 25 to 30: Address minority rights, recognizing the importance of preserving diversity and ensuring equality.

The Hindu-Economy(GSIII)-Page13

Committee recommends statutory MSP, says it can help end suicides by farmers

The Hindu Bureau

NEW DELHI

Echoing the long-standing demand of farmers' organisations, the Standing Committee of Parliament on Agriculture, headed by Congress leader and former Punjab Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi, has recommended legally guaranteed minimum support price (MSP) for crops.

panel asked the Centre to increase the amount given to farmers under the PM-KISAN scheme to ₹12,000 a year from the ₹6,000 given at present. Such seasonal incentives may be extended to tenant farmers and farm labourers, it said.

The panel noted that the MSP remains a focal point in the dialogue surrounding agricultural reform and farmers' welfare.

The panel asked the Centre to increase the amount given to farmers to ₹12,000 a year from ₹6,000 given at present

promoting rural economic growth and enhancing national food security. The benefits and advantages of implementation of MSP as

economic activity in the farming areas, benefiting local businesses and economies. "With assured income through MSP, farmers are more likely to invest in their agricultural practices, leading to increased productivity and sustainability in farming. This investment can also contribute to long-term food security for the nation," the report said.

their efforts," the panel said, recommending the Centre to declare a road map for implementation of MSP as a legal guarantee at the earliest.

Predicting that such a measure will be a game changer, the panel said a legally binding MSP system could play a crucial role in reducing farmer suicides in India by providing financial stability, protecting

The Standing Committee of Parliament on Agriculture, led by Congress leader Charanjit Singh Channi, recommended a legally guaranteed Minimum Support Price (MSP) for crops.

- It Suggested increasing the annual amount from ₹6,000 to ₹12,000.
- Proposed extending benefits to tenant farmers and farm laborers.

Significance of MSP:

- Essential for safeguarding farmers' livelihoods.
- Promotes rural economic growth and enhances national food security.
- Stimulates economic activity in farming areas, benefiting local businesses.

Indian Express-Environment(GSIII) –Page-4

UNIQUE SIGHTING IN DELHI

Rare species of bat spotted in Yamuna Biodiversity Park

SOPHIYA MATHEW
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 17

IN A unique sighting, the Wroughton's free-tailed bat, a highly rare species of molossid bat, has been spotted at the Delhi Development Authority's Yamuna Biodiversity Park.

This bat species is primarily found in the Western Ghats, where there is only one known breeding colony. Small colonies have also been recorded in the Jaintia Hills of Meghalaya, and a single individual was noted in Cambodia.

"It is a unique sighting for Delhi, which we found during the routine visit to the corridor of the Yamuna Biodiversity

Park," said Faiyaz A Khudsar, biodiversity expert and scientist-in-charge under the Biodiversity Parks Programme.

A statement by the DDA Biodiversity Park states that the species is easily recognisable to bat researchers. It is characterised by its large size, huge ears extending beyond the muzzle, and bi-coloured velvet fur. The statement added that it typically roosts in caves or dark, damp, and slightly warm places in moderate colonies.

Wroughton's free-tailed bat is ecologically important for regulating insect populations and is also known to assist in pollination. Until 2000, the species was considered critically endangered because of a single known roosting site in the Western Ghats. Later, with discoveries in three different localities, the bat



Wroughton's free-tailed bat is primarily found in Western Ghats. Credit: Mohan Singh, officer at DDA Yamuna Biodiversity Park



Red List as data deficient.

According to Khudsar, despite its discovery a century ago, very little is known about the bat's feeding ecology. The bat species has powerful flying capabilities, allowing it to forage long distances.

The sighting is significant for Delhi because it is known to be

home to around 14 species, four of which have been considered locally extinct: the Indian false vampire, the black-bearded tomb bat, the Egyptian free-tailed bat, and the Indian pipistrelle.

According to the statement, "two decades of ecological restoration" have contributed to the establishment of "very specialised niches". It also noted that the restored forest of the Aravali Biodiversity Park, managed by the DDA, has become the only known roosting site for the Blyth's horseshoe bat in Delhi.

"... This is a testimony of how long scientific interventions facilitate rewilding of many species, reclaiming their historical geographical ranges," the statement added.

- Wroughton's free-tailed bat, a rare molossid bat species, spotted at the Delhi Development Authority's Yamuna Biodiversity Park.
- Species Details:
Primarily found in the Western Ghats with one known breeding colony.
Small colonies recorded in Jaintia Hills, Meghalaya, and a single sighting in Cambodia.
Recognizable by its large size, huge ears, and bicolored velvet fur.
- Ecological Importance:
Regulates insect populations and assists in pollination.
Classified as "data deficient" by IUCN due to limited knowledge about its feeding ecology and powerful flying capabilities.

Indian Express-Environment(GSIII) –Page-17

Arctic tundra emitting more carbon than it absorbs, confirms study

ALIND CHAUHAN

NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 17

all parts of the globe.

How does the tundra store carbon?

ARCTIC TUNDRA, a frozen treeless biome which has stored carbon for thousands of years, has now become a source of heat-trapping greenhouse gases (GHGs) which are the primary drivers of global warming, according to a new report by the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Increased wildfires and unusually high temperatures are the main reasons behind the dramatic transformation of this Arctic ecosystem.

The analysis, Arctic Report Card, is a yearly report on the polar region, and was published last week.

Arctic tundra emitting more carbon than it absorbs will have global consequences as it will exacerbate climate change, whose adverse impacts are already unfolding across

In a typical ecosystem, plants absorb carbon dioxide (CO₂) from the atmosphere through photosynthesis. These plants grow, die, or are eaten by animals which also grow and die. When they die, the carbon in the corpses feeds microorganisms such as bacteria or fungi, which break down larger molecules and return CO₂ to the atmosphere, thereby completing the carbon cycle.

However, in the case of the Arctic tundra, the decomposition of organic matter is dramatically slowed due to the extreme cold climate. Plant and animal remains can stay trapped for thousands of years in a layer of permafrost – any ground that stays frozen for at least two years straight – thwarting CO₂ from getting released back into the atmosphere. Scientists estimate that Arctic soils store more than 1.6 trillion metric



The Holtedahlfonna icefield in Svalbard, Norway, in 2023. Reuters

tonnes of carbon, which is about double the amount present in the atmosphere, according to a report by Vox.

Why is the Arctic tundra emitting more carbon than it is absorbing?

In recent years, the Arctic tundra's ability to emit less and absorb more carbon has taken a hit. The new analysis, which incorporated more data and better methods of examination, confirmed that the tundra ecosystem has now become a source of CO₂ and methane (CH₄) – a more potent GHG – emissions.

This has happened for two main reasons. One is rising temperatures. The report said the Arctic is warming at four times the global rate, and that annual surface air temperatures in the Arctic in 2024 were the second-warmest on record since 1900.

As a result, the permafrost is thawing, meaning microbes in the soil are becoming active and breaking the organic matter down, releasing CO₂ and CH₄ into the atmosphere.

Speaking to NPR, Twila Moon, lead editor of the Arctic Report Card and a scientist at the US National Snow and Ice Data Center, compared the permafrost to chicken in the freezer – as long as it stays frozen, microbes stay away.

"Once you have that chicken out of your freezer, it is thawing and all those microbes are getting to work, breaking down the chicken, making it rot," she said. "The permafrost is really doing the same thing."

Another reason is that in recent years, the Arctic has witnessed an increase in the frequency and intensity of wildfires. Last year was the worst wildfire season in the Arctic on record, and 2024 was the second-biggest year for wildfire emissions, according to the Vox report. Wildfire smoke adds GHG emissions to the atmosphere while also speeding up the thawing of permafrost.

Wildfires and rising temperatures together, between 2001 and 2020, caused the Arctic tundra to release more carbon than its plants removed from the air, probably for the first time in many millennia, the report said.

So will the Arctic tundra continue to deteriorate?

The analysis said it is still possible for the

Arctic tundra to absorb more carbon than it emits. But the only way to do so is to reduce global GHG emissions.

Brendan Rogers, a scientist at the Woodwell Climate Research Center who contributed to the Arctic Report Card, told NPR, "With lower levels of climate change, you get lower levels of emissions from permafrost... That should motivate us all to work towards more aggressive emissions reductions."

However, this is unlikely to happen as the world continues to emit GHGs into the atmosphere at unprecedented levels. New research published by the Global Carbon Project science team in November found that emissions from burning fossil fuels are likely to increase slightly in 2024 compared to last year.

"With projected emissions from land-use change (such as deforestation) of 4.2 billion tonnes, total CO₂ emissions are projected to be 41.6 billion tonnes in 2024, up from 40.6 billion tonnes last year," the study said.

- The Arctic tundra has traditionally stored carbon for thousands of years in permafrost, which prevents the release of CO₂ and methane (GHGs) into the atmosphere.
- Arctic soils store over 1.6 trillion metric tonnes of carbon, double the amount found in the atmosphere.
- Recent Shift in Emissions:
- Due to rising temperatures and increased wildfires, the Arctic tundra has become a source of carbon emissions, releasing CO₂ and methane.
- The Arctic is warming at four times the global rate, leading to thawing permafrost, which activates microbes that decompose organic matter, releasing GHGs.
- Impact of Wildfires:
- The Arctic has experienced an increase in wildfires, with 2023 being the worst wildfire season on record.
- Wildfires contribute additional GHGs and accelerate permafrost thawing, further enhancing emissions.
- This shift from carbon storage to carbon emissions exacerbates climate change, potentially speeding up global warming.

HEADLINES OF THE DAY

Air-Economy(GSIII)

India Becomes 3rd Largest Exporter Of Smartphones In World



- India has become the 3rd largest exporter of smartphones in the world, which was on the 23rd rank in 2019. The country's smartphone exports have also breached the 20 thousand crore rupees mark in a single month, in November 2024. Sharing a news article on a social media platform, Union Minister of Electronics and Information Technology Ashwini Vaishnaw lauded this achievement and termed it as 'Making Bharat Story'.
- This achievement outshines production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme commitment to export 70-75 per cent of production value in the financial year 2024-25.

HEADLINES OF THE DAY

Air-Economy(GSIII)

Govt Prepares 6-Point Strategy To Increase Income Of Farmers

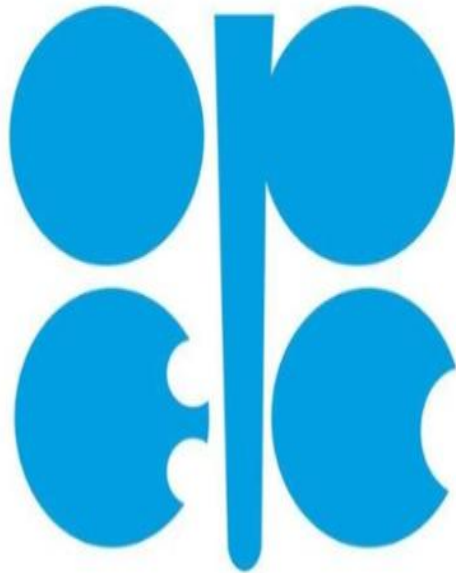


- Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Minister Shivraj Singh Chauhan outlined a six-point strategy to boost farmers' income in India.
- The strategy includes increasing production, reducing costs, ensuring fair prices, compensating for natural disaster losses, promoting agricultural diversification, and encouraging natural and organic farming. Farmers also receive loans at low interest rates and subsidies for fertilizers and mechanized farming. In the previous year, farmers received subsidies worth ₹2.14 lakh crore.

HEADLINES OF THE DAY

Air-IR(GSII)Economy(GSIII)

OPEC Fund Approves Nearly 1 Billion Dollars In Development Financing For Final Quarter 2024



- The OPEC Fund for International Development has approved nearly 1 billion dollars in new development financing during the final quarter of 2024. The approvals were made at its 190th Governing Board meeting held in Vienna.
- The financing package will support development initiatives across Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America, focusing on infrastructure development, food security, renewable energy projects, and economic resilience.

Do you know ?

- The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) is a permanent, intergovernmental Organization, created at the Baghdad Conference on September 10–14, 1960, by Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Venezuela.