

## MOEFCC

- In June, the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC) issued a notification quietly walking back on its move to establish integrated regional offices by merging offices of the Forest Survey of India (FSI), the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB), and the Central Zoo Authority (CZA), and thus bring them under the Ministry.
- The idea for such reorganization was announced during the COVID-19 lockdown and came under criticism from activists that it would render key environmental organizations “toothless.
- The MoEFCC justified the merger for “ease of doing business” whereas the NTCA had opposed it, saying it could lead to “administrative confusion, chaos loss of independence, undue interference in decision making, [and] loss of focus in discharging duties and responsibilities.
- But more than two years later, the MoEFCC dropped the merger plan, likely owing to technical and administrative difficulties in merging

the institutions in question.

- Decentralised infrastructure is essential as it increases accessibility to regulators and can potentially enhance legal enforcement.

## THE HINDU

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### Bihar caste facing legal challenges

- The Supreme Court is set to hear on August 18, petitions challenging the Patna High Court (HC)’s verdict upholding the Bihar government’s ongoing caste survey.
- The State government launched a two- phase caste survey in Bihar, stating that detailed information on socio-economic conditions would help create better government policies for disadvantaged groups.
- Last year on June 6, the Bihar government issued a notification to this effect, following a State Cabinet decision on June 2, 2022

#### Why the need for a caste census?

- The Census conducted at the beginning of every decade does not record any caste data other than for those listed as Scheduled Castes (SCs).
- In the absence of such a census, there is no proper estimate for the

population of OBCs, various groups within the OBCs, and others.

- Despite this ambiguity, the Union government has categorically ruled out conducting a socio-economic caste census, saying it is unfeasible, 'administratively difficult and cumbersome.'

### **Why is it being challenged?**

- The petitions in the Supreme Court contend that the State's June 6, 2022 order notifying the survey is unconstitutional since only the Centre is exclusively authorized to conduct a census under the Constitution.
- They also point out that the State Government does not have any independent power to appoint District Magistrates and local authorities for collating data, without a notification under Section 3 of the Census Act, 1948 by the Centre.
- The HC verdict has also been assailed on the ground that it violates the Puttaswamy judgment as it permits the collection of personal data by the State under an executive order.
- However, the HC had observed that the State is competent to frame a policy for better administration and that the policy is not arbitrary.

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## **Vishwakarma scheme**

### **What Is The Vishwakarma Yojana?**

- The Vishwakarma Yojana will encourage growth among professions such as goldsmiths, ironsmiths, washer-men, hairdressers, and masons among others.
- Artisans and craftsmen from myriad sectors, such as metal, wood, textiles, clay, stone, leather, bamboo, paper, glass, and cane would be covered under this scheme.
- The scheme aims to improve the quality, scale, and reach of products and services available to artisans by exposing them to better and accessible raw materials, tools, training on product development, etc.
- Under the scheme, the beneficiaries will be integrated with international and domestic value chains by providing marketing, packaging, and branding assistance as well as access to markets.
- The beneficiaries of the Vishwakarma Yojana will encompass those engaged in traditional crafts requiring specialized skills.

- The Vishwakarma Scheme was formally announced in the 2023 Budget.

## THE HINDU

### IR in news

- As Iranian seizures threaten oil tankers plying the Gulf, the United States is raising its military presence a move long demanded by Gulf Arab states who accused Washington of retreating from the region.
- Three thousand additional U.S. personnel on troop landing warships have already passed through the Red Sea, and U.S.-led maritime forces are warning ships against approaching Iranian waters.



- The German government approved a draft law on Wednesday legalizing the purchase and possession of cannabis for recreational use, with the Health Minister pushing back against criticism of the controversial plans.
- The legislation would allow adults to possess up to 25 grams of cannabis and grow up to three plants for personal use.

## THE HINDU

### Lake Titicaca

- Lake Titicaca is the highest of the world's large lakes and largest in South America after Venezuela's Lake Maracaibo, which is connected to the Caribbean Sea, and Brazil's Lagoa dos Patos, a coastal lagoon.
- The level of Lake Titicaca "has been progressively decreasing due to many meteorological, hydrological and climatic factors," explains Walper, who emphasizes that "there is less rainfall."
- The rainfall and the inflow to the lake from Peruvian rivers "were not sufficient to generate the normal rises in times of rain," she says. Other stresses impact the lake.
- It is heavily polluted by waste from the city of El Alto, a metropolis of one million people in the landlocked country.
- Additionally, indiscriminate fishing has decimated species. Because the decline in water levels is linked to climate change, the solution "is a global issue,



**THE HINDU**

**Weather phenomena**

- Unexpectedly copious rainfall that these States have received and that these, in turn, are due to a surfeit of Western Disturbances (WD).
- These are tropical storms that originate in the Mediterranean region and normally bring winter rainfall to north India.
- However, right from the beginning of this year, the WD have been erratic.
- While a combination of WD and monsoon can be dismissed as ‘freak’ weather, climate scientists have been warning of the increasing probability of such high-risk events.

- The awry WD is in part due to a warming Arctic that causes the polar jet stream, which carries moisture, to deviate from its regular path and bring the disturbances to north India during the monsoon
- The ongoing Char Dham road-building project has led to the large-scale altering of the mountains with significant chunks carved away, rendering them vulnerable to upheaval.
- As recent fears of land subsidence in Joshimath, Uttarakhand demonstrated, ill-thought construction and haphazard building practices have magnified the risk to residents who live in these regions.

**THE HINDU**

**Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana**

- Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban) Mission launched on 25th June 2015 which intends to provide housing for all in urban areas by the year 2022.
- The Mission provides Central Assistance to the implementing agencies through States/Union Territories (UTs) and Central Nodal Agencies (CNAs) for providing houses to all eligible families/beneficiaries against the validated demand for houses for about 1.12 cr.

- As per PMAY (U) guidelines, the size of a house for the Economically Weaker Section (EWS) could be upto 30 sq. mt carpet area, however, States/UTs have the flexibility to enhance the size of houses in consultation and approval of the Ministry.
- In continuation of this Government's efforts towards empowerment of women from EWS and LIG unlike earlier schemes, PMAY (U) has made a mandatory provision for the female head of the family to be the owner or co-owner of the house under this Mission.
- Verticals of PMAY (Urban) A basket of options is adopted to ensure the inclusion of a greater number of people depending on their income, finance, and availability of land through the following four option.

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