



## **DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 16-07-2025**

### **GS-2**

1. Pradhan Mantri Divyasha Kendra (PMDK)
2. Contesting The Future of Forest Governance

### **GS-3**

3. Sigandur Bridge
4. RhoDIS India Programme
5. Sierra Leone World Heritage

## **Pradhan Mantri Divyasha Kendra (PMDK)**

**Syllabus: GS-2; Governance, Welfare Schemes, Disability Sector**

### **Context**

- The Union Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Government of India, is set to inaugurate the 75th Pradhan Mantri Divyasha Kendra (PMDK) at Government Medical College, Badaun, Uttar Pradesh, marking a significant milestone in the nationwide initiative **to empower Divyangjan (persons with disabilities) and senior citizens.**

### **Objectives**

- To offer comprehensive disability-related services such as **diagnosis, therapy, and aids distribution at a single point**
- Ensure early identification and intervention of disabilities
- **Promote inclusive and accessible support** systems closer to the community

### **Key Services Provided**

- Early Identification and Screening
- Therapeutic Services like speech therapy, occupational therapy, physiotherapy
- Assistive Devices Distribution such as wheelchairs and hearing aids
- Skill Training and Capacity Building
- Counselling and Parental Guidance
- Referral Services to hospitals or educational institutions
- Awareness Campaigns on rights and entitlements of PwDs

### **Implementation**

- Implemented through **ALIMCO (Artificial Limbs Manufacturing Corporation of India) and National Institutes under DEPwD**
- **District Disability Rehabilitation Centres (DDRCs)** and composite regional centres are being upgraded into PMDKs

### **Coverage**

- Initially set up in districts with high disability prevalence
- The long-term goal is to establish PMDKs in all districts to ensure last-mile delivery

### **Significance**

- Provides decentralised and accessible rehabilitation services
- Reduces rural-urban disability care gap

- Supports India's commitments under the **UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)**
- Aligns with schemes like Accessible India Campaign and **Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 3 and SDG 10)**
- Encourages empowerment and self-reliance of Divyangjan under Atmanirbhar Bharat

## **Contesting The Future of Forest Governance**

**Syllabus: GS-2: Governance – Rights issues.**

### **Context:**

Recently, the Chhattisgarh Forest department issued a letter designating itself as the nodal agency for implementing community forest resource rights (CFRR) under the Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006.

### **Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006 – Background**

- Enacted to address historical injustices faced by forest-dwelling communities.
- Recognises both **individual** and **community rights** over forest land and resources.

### **Key Rights**

- **Individual Forest Rights (IFR):**
  - Right to reside and cultivate forest land occupied before 13 Dec 2005.
  - Conversion of forest villages into revenue villages.
- **Community Forest Rights (CFR):**
  - Right to use, manage, and protect community forest resources.
  - Right to collect, use and sell minor forest produce.
  - Gram Sabha empowered to manage forest and biodiversity.
  - Includes rights even within wildlife sanctuaries and national parks.
- **Conservation Safeguards:**
  - Gram Sabha's consent mandatory for diversion of forest land.
  - Democratic and transparent process for any curtailment of rights.

### Implementation Challenges

- Resistance from forest departments and bureaucratic delays.
- Use of flawed digital platforms leading to wrongful claim rejections.
- Misinterpretation of IFR as encroachment regularisation.
- Very low recognition of CFRs despite large potential forest areas eligible.

### Positive Examples from States

- **Maharashtra, Odisha, Chhattisgarh** have shown proactive CFR recognition.
- Empowerment of forest villages through control over minor forest produce.
- Yet, recognition is inconsistent and faces pushback in resource-rich zones.

### Threats to Forest Governance Reform

- Pushback from environmental and industrial lobbies favouring centralised control.
- Policy amendments (like Forest Conservation Rules and FCA 2023) seen as diluting FRA safeguards.
- Legal challenges and Supreme Court scrutiny on attempts to bypass democratic safeguards.

### Importance of CFR

- Promotes **decentralised and democratic forest governance**.
- Enhances livelihood security through access to non-timber forest produce.
- CFRs linked with better forest health, biodiversity, and climate resilience.
- Recognised globally as effective in sustainable forest management.

### Way Forward

- Ensure genuine implementation of FRA with focus on CFR recognition.
- Strengthen role and capacity of Gram Sabhas.
- Avoid over-reliance on digital systems; ensure human-led verification.
- Guard against policy dilution and uphold rights-based governance.

### Broader Dimensions

- **Gender inclusion:** Women play vital roles in forest conservation but are often excluded from governance structures.

- **Sacred groves and cultural landscapes:** CFR framework more inclusive for traditional and religious conservation practices than wildlife-centric laws.

## **Sigandur Bridge**

**Syllabus: GS-3; Infrastructure**

### **Context**

- Union minister Nitin Gadkari inaugurated Sigandur bridge in Shivamogga connecting Kalasavalli & Ambaragodlu.
- It's the country's **second longest cable-stayed bridge**.



### **Location**

- Built across the **Sharavathi River** in Sagara Taluk, Shivamogga district, Karnataka
- Connects Sigandur village to the mainland of Sagara

### Significance

- A vital connectivity project replacing the traditional **Sigandur ferry service**, which was the only means of crossing the river earlier
- **Reduces travel time** between Sigandur, Sagara, and nearby towns
- **Boosts pilgrimage tourism** to the famous Sigandur Chowdeshwari Temple
- **Enhances rural connectivity**, emergency access, and development in surrounding areas

### Project Details

- Total length is approximately 1 kilometer
- Constructed by the **Karnataka Public Works Department (PWD)**
- Supported under state government infrastructure schemes

### Environmental and Strategic Importance

- Located in the Sharavathi Valley, a rich ecologically sensitive zone
- Care was taken to minimize ecological damage during construction
- Facilitates movement near the Sharavathi Hydroelectric Project region

### Cultural Importance

- Sigandur is a popular pilgrimage site due to the **Chowdeshwari Devi Temple**, attracting thousands of devotees
- The bridge improves religious tourism and contributes to the local economy

## RhoDIS India Programme

**Syllabus: GS-3; Scientific innovation aiding biodiversity protection, GS-4; Environmental Ethics**

### Context

- The forest department in Assam has started the process for DNA profiling of over 2,500 rhino horns, most of which were burnt in 2021 to bust the myths about medicinal values of the horns that aids poaching.



### What is RhoDIS?

- RhoDIS stands for **Rhino DNA Indexing System**.
- It is a wildlife forensic tool that uses DNA profiling to **identify individual rhinos**.
- Originally developed in **South Africa**, it is now being implemented in India to help track rhinos, curb poaching, and aid legal investigations.

### Launch in India

- Launched in 2016
- Implemented by:
  - **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC)**
  - **Wildlife Institute of India (WII)**, Dehradun
  - WWF-India
  - State Forest Departments of Assam, West Bengal, and Uttar Pradesh

### How It Works

- Samples like dung, horn, tissue, and blood are collected from rhinos.
- DNA is extracted and a unique genetic profile is created for each rhino.
- This helps match any seized horn or body part to a specific individual.
- The DNA database is maintained at WII, Dehradun.



### Key Features

- More than 500 rhino DNA profiles have been stored, with over 400 generated from dung samples.
- Around 2,573 rhino horns (destroyed in 2021) are now being DNA profiled and added to the system as of 2025.
- The system helps trace the origin of seized rhino horns in poaching cases.
- It has helped investigate at least 16 poaching cases in India.

### Importance

- **Enhances law enforcement** against poaching and illegal wildlife trade.
- Helps in prosecution by providing forensic evidence in courts.
- **Tracks rhino populations and monitors genetic health.**
- Promotes inter-agency collaboration for wildlife conservation.

## Sierra Leone World Heritage

**Syllabus: GS-3: Environment – Conservation of natural heritage.**

### Context:

Activist Tommy Garnett's decades of work paid off when Sierra Leone's Tiwai island — a lush forest home to one of the world's highest concentrations of primates — landed a spot Sunday on the UN cultural agency's World Heritage list.

### Sierra Leone's First UNESCO World Heritage Site

**Site Name:** Gola-Tiwai Complex

**Inscription:** Recognized as a **UNESCO World Heritage Site** for its exceptional biodiversity and conservation efforts.

### Constituent Areas of the Site

- **Gola Rainforest National Park (GRNP)**
  - Largest tropical rainforest in Sierra Leone.
  - Habitat for endangered species like:



- Pygmy hippopotamuses
- African forest elephants



➤ **Tiwai Island Wildlife Sanctuary**

- Area: Only **12 sq. km**, located on the **Moa River**.
- Home to **11 primate species**, including:
  - Western chimpanzees (Endangered)
  - King colobus monkeys
- Functions as a **biodiversity research hub**.
- Serves as a **model for community-based conservation** in West Africa.

**Role of the Environmental Foundation for Africa (EFA)**

- **Established:** 1992
- Initiated conservation in **Tiwai Island** in the early 2000s.

- Focus post-**1991–2002 civil war**:
  - Reversing deforestation, poaching, and illegal logging.
  - Promoting **community engagement** and ecological restoration.
- Sustained efforts despite:
  - Ebola outbreak (2014)
  - COVID-19 pandemic
  - Extreme weather conditions

### Significance of the UNESCO Recognition

- Marks **Sierra Leone's first-ever World Heritage Site**.
- Highlights:
  - Decades of grassroots conservation efforts
  - Ecological resilience
  - Local community empowerment
- Validates **NGO-led, community-rooted conservation models** in Africa.