

National and International Weekly Current Affairs 23 to 29 October 2023

National News

Dogra architecture

Context

Dogra architecture gets a revival at J&K's Maharaj Gunj

- **Objective:** To restore the historical splendor of the market, which has declined due to encroachments and deviations.
- **Significance:** To highlight the distinctive architectural features of the Dogra monarchs who ruled Kashmir between 1846 and 1947.
- **Scope:** The project will cover the market itself, as well as gurdwaras, mosques, temples, tombs, and ancient sanctuaries in the area.
- **Benefits:** The project is expected to draw attention to Srinagar's rich cultural past and boost tourism.

About Dogra Architecture:

- Dogra architecture is a unique style of architecture that developed in the Jammu and Kashmir region of India during the rule of the Dogra dynasty.
- It is a blend of various architectural styles, including Rajput, Mughal, and European.
- Dogra architecture is known for its ornate carvings, intricate designs, and use of local materials, such as sandstone and marble.
- The fine examples of jammu architects are mubarak mandi, bahu fort, jasrota palace, billawar palace, these all buildings were made by kings, the dogra rulers of jammu.
- These palaces have, "mehraab" type of door and arch shaped terraces, and with doomson the top, but Mubarak mandi domes are clear example of blend of shikhara and dome style.
- The sand stones and pebbles, which are found in bulk in Jammu kandi belt, are used very benevolently used for beatification.

Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra

Context

The Centre has asked all departments to deploy officers to showcase its achievements across the country down to the village level, through a roadshow titled **Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra**

Key points

- The yatra will publicize the government's welfare schemes across the country and is targeted at the "lower middle class".

It is scheduled from November 20 to January 26.

NCERT panel suggests replacing 'India' with 'Bharat' in textbooks

Context

A high-level committee set up by the National Council of Educational Research and Training to revise the social sciences curriculum has recommended that the name of the country be changed from "India" to "Bharat" in school textbooks

About NCERT

- National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) is an autonomous organisation of the Government of India.
- Established in 1961, it is a literary, scientific and charitable Society under the Societies Registration Act.
- Its headquarters are located at Sri Aurobindo Marg in New Delhi.
- Dr. Dinesh Prasad Saklani is Director of the council since 2022.

Mitigating tragedies in the Himalayan region

Key facts

- A study published in Nature indicates that 90 million people across 30 countries live in 1,089 basins containing glacial lakes.
- Of these, one-sixth live within 50 km of a glacial lake and 1 km of potential GLOF runout channels.

Issues

- The Himalayan Region is susceptible to a range of hydro-meteorological, tectonic, climate and human-induced mountain hazards.
- The enormity of the challenge is seen in the National Remote Sensing Centre's (NRSC) Glacial Lake Atlas of 2023.
- Three major river basins, of the Indus, Ganga, and Brahmaputra, are host to 28,000 glacial lakes greater than 0.25 hectares in area, in five countries.
- Of these, 27% are in India, in six States and Union Territories.

Multi-disciplinary effort for Mitigation

- NRSC's atlases have provided high-resolution data via remote sensing, which allows for monitoring spatial change.
- The Central Water Commission is conducting hydro-dynamic assessments of high-risk lakes, mapping water flow, height and routing

simulations using digital elevation models.

- The NDMA's national guidelines (2020) provide States with a technical overview of the hazard and risk-zonation and suggest strategies for monitoring, risk-reduction and mitigation.

Unhealthy urban India

Context

- India's urban population is estimated to reach 675 million in 2035, the second highest in the world.
- Although there is widespread recognition that cities have been fuelling India's rapid rise to economic superpower status, almost all are failing their inhabitants in terms of delivering on health, environmental and equity targets.

Issues

- India's urban inhabitants experience: -
 - multi-scalar health risks including the world's highest levels of air and noise pollution, limited greenery,
 - lack of access to sidewalks and parks that limit active lifestyles,
 - archaic modes of transport that contribute to air pollution,
 - pernicious access to nutritionally dense unhealthy foods and
 - unprecedented exposure to toxic chemicals and heavy metals.
- Unhealthy diets, reduced physical activity and air pollution in cities in India pose a greater risk to morbidity and mortality than most other risk factors combined including drugs, tobacco, alcohol and accidents.

Maharashtra State News

First integrated solid waste management project - in Badlapur

In News:

- Mumbai's first integrated solid waste management project will be set up in Badlapur to treat waste from three cities, with a capacity of 641 tonnes per day.

Key Points:

- The project is expected to be completed in nine months.
- MMRDA has contributed ₹128 crore for the project
- The company will segregate garbage and sell waste materials to manufacturers, reducing waste disposal costs.

About Integrated Solid Waste Management (ISWM):

- Integrated solid waste management (ISWM) is a strategic approach to solid waste management that considers all aspects of the waste stream, from generation to disposal.
- ISWM aims to reduce the amount of waste generated, maximize the recovery of recyclable and reusable materials, and dispose of remaining waste in an environmentally sound manner.

NMMC to use smart lighting technology

In News:

- NMMC(Navi Mumbai Municipal Corporation) to use smart lighting technology to beautify the city

Key Points:

- The lighting will be based on different occasions and themes.
- The initiative aims to improve the city's ranking in the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan.
- In addition, decorative lights will be installed on trees along Palm Beach Road.

Global Maritime India Summit 2023

In News: World looking at us with new aspirations: PM

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi said India is gaining economic strength and will soon be among the top three global economies.

Key Points:

- He emphasized the importance of the maritime sector and highlighted the potential benefits of the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor.
- Modi also announced projects worth over ₹23,000 crore and unveiled the 'Amrit Kaal Vision 2047' for the Indian maritime blue economy.
- The Global Maritime India Summit aims to attract investment in the maritime sector and will discuss various key issues in the industry.

India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor.

- The India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) is a planned economic corridor that aims to bolster economic development by fostering connectivity and economic integration between Asia, the Persian Gulf and Europe.
- The corridor is proposed to stretch from India to Europe through the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Israel and Greece.
- It will encompass a vast network of roads, railways, seaports and airports, as well as digital infrastructure.
- IMEC was first announced in 2023, and is still in its early stages of development.

- However, it has the potential to be a major transformative project, with the potential to boost trade, investment and economic growth across the region.
- The corridor is seen as a complement to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), but with a focus on promoting democratic and market-based values.
- It is also seen as a way to counter China's growing influence in the region.

Maha state universities to soon offer undergraduate courses

In News: Maha state universities to soon offer undergraduate courses to increase campus enrolment

- Campuses of state universities, which are primarily known for their postgraduate (PG) education, will soon start offering a plethora of undergraduate (UG) courses.

Key Points:

- Currently, UG courses are mainly offered at affiliated colleges of state universities.
- With university campuses recording poor enrolment across PG courses in their departments, the Maharashtra government is pushing all state universities to add more UG programmes.
- This is also in line with the University Grants Commission (UGC) guidelines for National Education Policy (NEP) which expects universities to offer multi-disciplinary education from UG to PhD.

PM Kisan Yojna

In News:

- Just 85 lakh farmers in Maharashtra beneficiaries of PM Kisan Yojna
- There is a steady decline in the number of farmer beneficiaries under the much-publicized PM Kisan Yojna in Maharashtra.

Key Points:

- The scheme aims to provide financial assistance of Rs 6,000 per year to each of the eligible farmers.
- It was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in February 2019 to enhance their economic status and tackle the agrarian crisis.
- According to official records, 1.17 crore farmers had registered their names on the PM Kisan Yojna portal, of whom 97 lakh were declared as eligible for financial assistance while 85 lakh received the funds as the rest had failed to comply with the norms.

Think:

Read about PM Kisan Yojana

MNREGA

Context: MNREGA is the only support in the drought situation

Key Points:

- This year, due to lack of rain at the right time and in the right amount, the farmer is in trouble
- Tankers and fodder camps may be the immediate answer to this calamity, but there is no alternative to MNREGA for the long-term overall welfare of farmers.
- Drought crisis often comes in slow steps and its impact is long lasting.

Key facts:

- MNREGA, is a social welfare program in India that aims to provide at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work.
- The Act was passed in 2005 and came into effect in February 2006.

Khelghar (PlayHouse)

In News:

- Shubda Joshi, has been successfully implementing the creative education experiment 'Khelghar', for the past 27 years.

Key Points:

- Today, 200 children between the ages of 6 and 18 are coming to the 'Khelghar' every day and getting to know the world beyond school through games, art, communication and reading.
- 'Khelghar' is an innovative experiment in creative education, which develops the personality of children from underprivileged groups between the ages of 6 and 18 through games, art and communication in an informal way outside of school.

Did you Know?

- Khelghar is a non-governmental organization (NGO) in India that works to provide holistic education and development to underprivileged children.
- Khelghar was founded in 1972 by Maitreyi Devi, a social activist and educationist

Tourism even in grasslands in Pune, Solapur district

Context: Now there will be tourism even in grasslands; 'This' is the first experiment in the state in Pune, Solapur district

- For the first time in Maharashtra, grass safari is being started in Pune and Solapur districts.
- It is likely to start in Baramati and Indapur talukas.
- This activity is being implemented on behalf of Pune Forest Department.
- Safari registration for citizens is starting from October 18.
- In this regard, the Forest Department has developed an 'Online Booking App'.

Namo city beautification drive

In News: To mark PM's 73rd birthday, state asks 73 civic bodies to undertake beautification.

- As part of the 'Namo 11 point programme', the state has decided to implement 'Namo city beautification drive' in 73 cities across the state.
- All civic bodies will have to spend money from their own funds.
- The beautification drive will be undertaken in 48 Municipal councils and 25 municipal corporations, including CM Eknath Shinde's hometown, Thane.

Pramod Mahajan Grameen Kaushalya Vikas Kendras

In News:

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi will launch 511 rural skill development centres in the name of late BJP leader Pramod Mahajan in Maharashtra via video conferencing.

Key Points:

- The PMO said in a statement that these centres are being established across 34 rural districts of Maharashtra.
- They will conduct skill development training programs across various sectors to provide employment opportunities to the rural youth, it said.

Blackbuck Killed in Gondia

In News:

- A sub-adult blackbuck died after being hit by a speeding vehicle in Maharashtra's Gondia district

Key Points:

- The deceased Blackbuck's remains were transported to the forest department's 'Van Bhavan' in Gondia.
- The blackbuck (*Antelope cervicapra*), also known as the Indian antelope, is a species of antelope native to India and Nepal.
- It is a medium-sized antelope with a slender build and long, spiral horns.
- The male blackbucks have black fur

- The females and juveniles are fawn-colored.

IUCN Status: Least Concern

SPPU unveils unique emblem to Celebrate platinum jubilee year

In News:

- In honor of the Platinum Jubilee Year of Savitribai Phule Pune University (SPPU), MH CM and Deputy CM unveiled a unique emblem.

Key Points:

- The ceremony, attended by various ministers, including Vice-Chancellor Dr. Suresh Gosavi, Pro-Chancellor Dr. Parag Kalkar, and President of the Amrit Mahotsav Committee, Rajendra Vikhe Patil, was a momentous occasion.
- SPPU, known for its national prominence, is celebrating its Amrit Mahotsavi year (Platinum Jubilee Year) throughout the academic year 2023-24.
- To mark this significant milestone, a series of activities and events have been thoughtfully organized.

One State, One Uniform policy in Maharashtra from next year

In News: The 'One State, One Uniform' policy will be implemented in all government schools in Maharashtra from the academic year 2024-25.

Key Points:

- The standardized uniforms for class 1 to 8 could not take off this academic year as many schools were ready with their own uniforms when they reopened in June.
- The state's identical attire will be on the lines of a scout and guide uniform.
- Students will get two sets of uniforms.
- One of the two uniforms will have shoulder strips and double pockets.

Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj statue for installation in J&K

In News: Maharashtra Governor and CM Shinde flag off Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj statue for installation in J&K

- Maharashtra Governor Ramesh Bais and Chief Minister Eknath Shinde flagged off statue of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj to be installed in Kupwara in Jammu and Kashmir.

Key Points:

- The statue will be presented to the Rashtriya Rifles 41 Maratha Light Infantry Regiment at Kupwara.
- The statue is made of bronze and is 11 feet tall.

About Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj:

- Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj was a 17th-century Indian warrior king who founded the Maratha Empire.
- Shivaji was **born in the hill fort of Shivneri in 1630**.

His father, Shahaji Raje Bhonsle, was a Maratha general who served the Bijapur Sultanate.

Mumbai's air quality worsens

In News:

- BMC has issued new air quality guidelines as the city's average air quality worsens.

Key Points:

- The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) issued a warning that it would halt construction activities at all sites if dust and pollution control measures were not being implemented
- The civic body also plans to operate anti-smog guns on major roads.
- Experts from the Maharashtra Pollution Control Board and BMC will verify pollution levels caused by refineries, the Tata power plant and the RCF plant in the city. not meet these requirements.

About Air Quality Index

Key points:

- The Air Quality Index (AQI) is a measure of the level of air pollution in a particular location.
- It is calculated using the concentrations of five major air pollutants:
 1. Ground-level ozone (O₃)
 2. Particulate matter (PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀)
 3. Nitrogen dioxide (NO₂)
 4. Sulfur dioxide (SO₂)
 5. Carbon monoxide (CO)

France Navy Ship 'Languedoc'

In News:

- French Navy Ship 'Languedoc' visited Mumbai from 13 to 18 October.

Key Points:

- Personnel of the French and the Indian Navy undertook professional exchanges through cross-visits and shared best practices.
- Languedoc (D653) is an Aquitaine-class frigate of the French Navy
- Languedoc is also equipped with a variety of electronic warfare and communications systems

Maharashtra spends only 4.1% of its budget on health.

In News:

- Maha at bottom of 28 states' list with 4.1% health budget'
- Maharashtra's health budget is significantly lower than recommended, and the state is not even fully spending what is allocated.

Key Points:

- The national health policy says 8% of the state budget should be allocated to health.
- States such as Meghalaya and Goa spend over 8%, larger states such as Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh spend 6%-7%
- The health system in Maharashtra is facing multiple challenges, including low budgetary allocation and failure to fully spend the allocated funds on healthcare.
- This leads to inadequate infrastructure and manpower, resulting in unfortunate situations such as high death rates in hospitals.

Basketball Federation of India (BFI) has appointed a three-member committee in MH

Context:

- To clear the mess in Maharashtra's basketball associations, Basketball Federation of India (BFI) has appointed a three-member committee to run the affairs in the state.
- The development came a week after newly elected and youngest president of BFI Aadhav Arjuna visited Mumbai and held discussions with members of various district associations, senior coaches, and administrators of Maharashtra.

Two 660MW units at Koradi Power Station

In News: Chief minister Eknath Shinde announced that the cabinet has given its approval for setting up of two 660 MW coal-based supercritical units at the Koradi thermal power station.

Key Points:

- Located at Koradi near Nagpur, Maharashtra.
- This will ensure more power is generated in Maharashtra and can meet any shortfall in power distribution in future.
- The project costs Rs 10,625 crore.

Five air quality monitoring stations starts functioning in MH

In News:

- Five more Continuous Ambient Air Quality Monitoring System (CAAQMS) stations, set up and established by the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), are now functional in the city.

Key Points:

- Mumbaikars will have a total of 25 air quality measuring stations in the city.
- The air pollutants measured are as follows: SO₂, NO, NO₂, NH₃, CO, O₃, CO₃, VOC, PM₁₀, and PM_{2.5}.

Significance:

CAAQMS stations are important because they:

- Help calculate the air quality index
- Issue health advisories
- Formulate action plans to meet standards
- Enable small-scale environmental data monitoring
- Can be deployed in large numbers across urban and rural areas
- Make environmental monitoring possible even in remote areas

Increase in VAT on liquor

In News:

- Starting November 1, the cost of liquor in hotels, bars, lounges and clubs in Maharashtra will rise due to a 5 per cent increase in the Value Added Tax (VAT) announced by the state government.

Key Points:

- The VAT rate for permit room liquor services will now be 10 per cent, up from the previous 5 per cent.
- Furthermore, the government is considering implementing a new excise policy that links pricing to the alcohol content of beverages and permits the sale of bottled liquors in bars and permit rooms.

No coastal zone authority nod needed to construct structures up to 300 sqm

In News:

- MCZMA informs urban planning bodies in coastal districts that no permission is needed for less than 300 sqm construction or redevelopment.

Key Points:

- So far, owners of such properties had to get permission from MCZMA or district coastal zone management authorities and it took a significant time before applicants got permission.
- Now, the applicants will have to apply to the respective municipal councils, corporations or district-level authorities.

State News

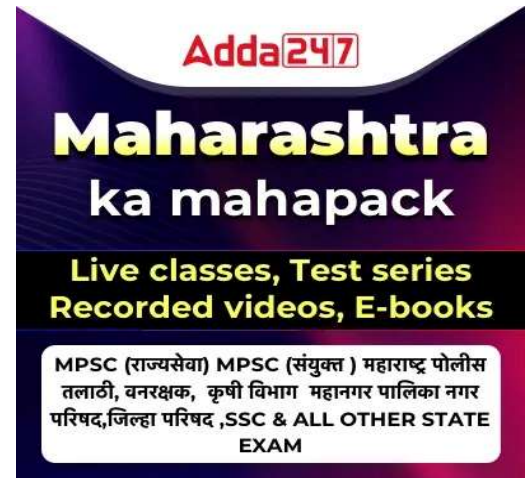
Ayodhya to be UP's 1st model solar city

Context

The state is pouring heavy investment to develop the temple town as the first model solar city.

About Saubhagya(Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana) Scheme:

- It was launched in October, 2017 focusing on last mile connectivity and electricity connections to all the unelectrified households in the country.
- It is a concurrent program to Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti.



- Objective of Scheme is to Provide last mile connectivity and electricity connection to all un-electrified households in rural areas.

Mission Mahila Sarathi

Context

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has flagged off 51 State transport corporation buses under Mission Mahila Sarathi on the occasion of Durga Ashtami in Ayodhya

Key points

- These buses will have women drivers and conductors.
- The initiative seeks to connect and empower women

International News

Sri Lanka announces free visas for Indians

Context

Sri Lanka waived visa fee for Indians and tourists from six other countries, as part of its efforts to boost tourist arrivals and help rebuild the island nation's battered economy

Key points

- India has remained Sri Lanka's top source market for many years. This year, over 2 lakh Indian

tourists — constituting 20 % of the total tourist arrivals — have visited the island nation until September 2023.

- The Cabinet announced implementation of a pilot project to issue free tourist visas to tourists from China, India, Russia, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Japan until March 31, 2024.

United Nations Day 2023

- United Nations Day is an annual commemorative day, reflecting the official creation of the United Nations on 24 October 1945.
- It is celebrated on 24th October each year.
- The United Nations Day 2023 theme is “Equality, Freedom and Justice for All.”
- This year marks the 75th anniversary.

EU report calls for 2% global wealth tax on billionaires

Context

The European Union Tax Observatory in its ‘Global Tax Evasion Report 2024’ has called for a global minimum tax on billionaires equal to 2% of their wealth.

Key points

- This step was taken because tax evasion was enabling billionaires to enjoy effective tax rates equivalent to 0% to 0.5% of their wealth.
- This would both address evasion and “generate nearly \$250 billion from less than 3,000 individuals
- While the number of taxpayers affected by it would be miniscule, the tax rate for them (2%) “would still be very modest” given that the wealth of billionaires has grown at 7% a year annually on average since 1995 (net of inflation).

Canada’s actions are in violation of Vienna Convention

Context

- According to the Indian External Affairs Minister, Canada’s inability to provide safety and security to Indian diplomats challenges the “most fundamental aspect” of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations.

About Convention

- The Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (1961) is a treaty that defines the framework for the conduct of diplomatic relations between countries.
- It was adopted in 1961 by the United Nations Conference on Diplomatic Intercourse and Immunities held in Vienna, Austria.
- This treaty lays down the rules and regulations of diplomatic relations between countries and also the privileges that diplomats enjoy in other

countries.

- India ratified the convention through the Diplomatic Relations (Vienna Convention) Act of 1972.

White phosphorus

Context

Human Rights Watch recently accused Israel of using white phosphorus munitions in Gaza, and said that such weapons put civilians at risk of serious and long-term injury

About White phosphorus

- It is useful in military operations. But it also poses environmental dangers.
- White phosphorus can be employed to create dense smoke screens in the context of combat, hindering visibility and providing cover for military manoeuvres.
- It can be used in incendiary devices such as grenades and artillery shells, which can result in persistent and intense fires, effective against people, equipment, and structures.

Legality issue

The Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) imposes restrictions on the use of incendiary weapons, including white phosphorus, with the aim of safeguarding civilians.

Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons

It was adopted on 10 October 1980 and entered into force in 1983.

- The purpose of the Convention is to ban or restrict the use of specific types of weapons that are considered to cause unnecessary or unjustifiable suffering to combatants or to affect civilians indiscriminately.

Hong Kong to have own national security law in 2024

Context

- The semi-autonomous city would create its own national security law in 2024, four years after Beijing imposed sweeping legislation aimed at silencing dissent.

About

- Hong Kong, officially the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China
- It is a city and a special administrative region in China.
- With 7.4 million residents of various nationalities in a 1,104-square-kilometre (426 sq mi) territory, Hong Kong is one of the most densely populated territories in the world.

India-Canada Relations facts

- According to the Census of Canada 2021, Canada is home to over 1.86 million people of Indian origin, i.e., about 5% of the country's 36.99 million population, and 5.8% of the 32 million strong global Indian diaspora.
- According to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) data, 225,940 or over 40% of 549,260 total study permits to international students were issued to Indians in 2022.
- In 2022, India was Canada's 10th largest bilateral trading partner (exceeding \$13.7 billion).
- Canada was India's ninth largest partner, with exports up to \$5.3 billion.
- Similarly, visitors from India comprised Canada's fourth largest international air travel market. Many of these traders and investors are members of the Indian diaspora in Canada.
- In 2021, Canadians visiting India spent \$93 million, and tourists from India exceeding 89,500, the highest from any single country, spent \$3.4 billion in Canada.

Economy News

Bharat Tex to prop India as global textiles powerhouse

Context

Bharat Tex 2024 Expo, to be held from February 26-29 next year, will position India as a truly global textiles powerhouse

Key points

- The event has been conceptualized as the biggest textile fair in the world in terms of exhibition area.
- It show casts India's capabilities as a reliable supplier of textile products spanning the entire value chain under one roof.
- The expo will be held in the newly-inaugurated Bharat Mandapam and Yashobhoomi Complexes.

Agreement news

Bhutan and China make progress in border talks

Context

- Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi met Bhutanese Foreign Minister Tandi Dorji.
- 25th round of discussions was held recently (previous round was held in 2016)
- Beijing pushes for diplomatic ties with Thimphu
- Both sides want a deal on demarcating the boundaries "soon".

Impact on India

Any deal between China and Bhutan that accedes to a "swap arrangement" between areas to the north (Jamparlung and Pasamlung valleys) with Doklam to the west would be of concern to India, given the proximity to India's narrow "Siliguri corridor" that connects the northeastern States with the rest of India.

Appointment News

Head coach of India women's cricket

Context

- Amol Muzumdar, the domestic stalwart-turned-coach, has been appointed as the head coach of India women's cricket team
- He was appointed by the BCCI.

About BCCI

- The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) is the national governing body of Cricket in India.
- Its headquarters is situated at the Cricket centre in Churchgate, Mumbai.
- The BCCI is the wealthiest governing body of cricket in the world.

Defense News

Project Udbhav

Context

An ambitious effort for the integration of India's "ancient strategic acumen" into the contemporary military domain was launched under Project Udbhav, by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh.

About Project

- The project's objective is to synthesise ancient wisdom with contemporary military practices and forging a unique and holistic approach to address modern security challenges
- Project Udbhav was launched at the first Indian Military Heritage Festival (IMHF) being organised by the USI.
- It is a collaboration between the Army and the United Service Institution of India (USI)

Cheetah and Chetak helicopters to be replaced by LUH

Context

- The Army will start phasing out the first lot of vintage Cheetah and Chetak helicopters from 2027 on completion of their total technical life.
- This is to induct the indigenous light utility helicopters (LUHs) to replace them.

About LUH

- The LUH is a 3-tonne class helicopter with glass cockpit for reconnaissance and surveillance roles and as a light transport helicopter.
- The helicopter will be capable of flying at 220 kmph, with a service ceiling of 6.5 km and a range of 350 km with 400 kg payload

Army gets vertical wind tunnel to train special forces

Context

- The Army has installed its first vertical wind tunnel (VWT) at the Special Forces Training School (SFTS) at Bakloh in Himachal Pradesh.
- This is done to augment the training infrastructure of special forces and combat free-fallers.

Key points

- The state-of-the-art wind tunnel is set to refine the combat free fall (CFF) skills of armed forces personnel
- Functioning as a freefall simulator, the VWT creates a column of air at specific velocities, orchestrating different CFF conditions.
- The system offers a controlled environment, enabling trainees to enhance their skills by simulating real-life freefall conditions.

Ranks & Reports News

Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI)

Context:

- Euro zone PMI hit lowest in nearly 3 years and has stirred recession worries.

Key points:

- PMI is an economic indicator, which is derived after monthly surveys of different companies.
- It measures activity at the purchasing or input stage.
- In this sense, it is very different from industrial production which is indicative of actual production.
 - E.g., the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) measures output.

Did you know?

- There are two types of PMI — Manufacturing PMI and Services PMI.
- The index shows trends in both the manufacturing and services sector.
- PMI does not capture informal sector activity.
- PMI data for India is released by S&P Global - a global major in financial information and analytics.

ISA to release report on global adoption of solar technology

Context

The International Solar Alliance (ISA) will for the first time compile and release a 'global solar stocktake report'.

Key points

- This is inspired by the first ever 'Global Stocktake' of the United Nations Conference of Parties
- A key focus area for ISA is expanding solar installations in Africa and to that end the organisation has set up the Global Solar Facility.
- The aim is to boost the scale of solar investment there and following that expand to West Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean.
- The Global Solar Facility will have three funds: a payment guarantee fund, an insurance fund to mitigate project risks, and an investment fund for technical assistance.

Key findings

- Solar photovoltaic installations globally touched 1,133 gigawatts (GW) as of 2022, with 191 GW being added in 2022.
- Nearly a fourth, or about 350 MW, is installed in China, which is not a member of the ISA.
- China is followed by the United States, a member country, at 111 GW.
- India ranks among the top five countries globally with 62 GW.

International Solar Alliance (ISA)

- The International Solar Alliance (ISA) is an intergovernmental organization that was launched in 2015, by the Prime Minister of India and the President of France, at the United Nations Climate Change Conference held in Paris.
- ISA is an action-oriented, member-driven, collaborative platform for increased deployment of solar energy technologies.
- The ISA is guided by its 'Towards 1000' strategy, which aims:
 1. To mobilize USD 1000 billion of investments in solar energy solutions by 2030
 2. To deliver energy access to 1000 million people using clean energy solutions.
 3. To mitigate global solar emissions to the tune of 1000 million tonnes of CO2 every year.
- **Vision:** Let us together make the sun brighter.
- **Mission:** Every home, no matter how far away, will

have a light at home.

- **Headquarter:** National Institute of Solar Energy (NISE) in Gurugram, India.

Gender gap in earnings

Context

- The Periodic Labour Force Surveys (PLFS) have been monitoring the gender earnings gap across various forms of employment from April-June 2019 to 2023
- The gender gap in earnings is still a persistent phenomenon.

Key facts

- Men earn more than women across all forms of work, the gap greatest for the self-employed.
- In 2023, male self-employed workers earned 2.8 times that of women.
- In contrast, male regular wage workers earned 24% more than women and male casual workers earned 48% more.
- The gender gap has increased for self-employed workers, while falling for regular wage workers.
- Male regular wage workers earned 34% more than women from 2019 to 2022, with the gap falling to 24% in 2023.

Sports News

Personality in news: Bishan Singh Bedi

Context

Bishan Singh Bedi passed away following prolonged illness.

About Bedi

- He was an Indian cricketer who was primarily a slow left-arm orthodox **bowler**.
- He played **Test cricket for India from 1966 to 1979** and formed part of the famous Indian spin quartet.
- He played a total of 67 Tests and took 266 wickets.
- He also captained the national side in 22 Test matches.
- He was awarded the **Padma Shri award** in 1970 and the **C. K. Nayudu Lifetime Achievement Award** in 2004

Science and Technology News

Gaganyaan test flight successful

Context

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has successfully completed its first test flight to demonstrate a crew escape system for the Gaganyaan mission.

About Gaganyaan

- Gaganyaan project envisages demonstration of

human spaceflight capability by launching a crew of 3 members to an orbit of 400 km for a 3 days mission and bring them back safely to earth.

- It is part of the Indian Human Spaceflight Programme (IHSP), which was initiated (in 2007) by the ISRO to develop the technology needed to launch crewed orbital spacecraft into low earth orbit (LEO).
- Launch Vehicle Mark-3 (LVM3/GSLV Mk3) rocket - is identified as the launch vehicle for Gaganyaan mission.
- India's heaviest rocket consists of solid stage, liquid stage and cryogenic stage.
- Upon its completion, India will become the fourth nation, after the US, Russia, and China, to undertake a manned spaceflight mission.

eSIM card

Context

- Over the years, the SIM card has shrunk from the SIM to the mini SIM to the micro SIM to the nano SIM.
- The latest on this path is the eSIM, with specifications defined by the Global System for Mobile Communications (GSM) Association

Key points

- 'SIM' stands for 'subscriber identification module'.
- Specifically, it is an integrated circuit, or a microchip, that identifies the subscriber on a given network.
- In the eSIM paradigm, the SIM software is loaded on to a UICC that is permanently installed in the mobile equipment in the factory itself, that it can't be removed. (This is called the eUICC.)

Advantages of eSim

- It is considered to be environmentally friendlier than a physical SIM: its reprogrammability means no need for more plastic and metal for a new SIM.
- If a malicious person gains access to your phone, they won't be able to separately access the SIM application nor be able to duplicate it.

Disadvantages of eSim

- In some countries, including the U.S., eSIMs can be programmed by subscribers themselves. But this process might be difficult for those with low digital literacy, such as the elderly.
- An eSIM can in theory allow network operators to track subscribers' data, including inside apps on the device, especially in the absence of data privacy laws.

DNA and face-matching systems at police stations

Context

The Centre is all set to roll out “DNA and face-matching” systems at 1,300 police stations across the country.

Key points

- It will be implemented under the Criminal Procedure Identification Act which was passed last year.
- The law enables police and Central investigating agencies to collect, store, and analyse physical and biological samples, including retina and iris scan of arrested persons.
- NCRB is to prepare the SOPs.

National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)

- NCRB was set-up in 1986 to function as a repository of information on crime and criminals to assist the investigators in linking crime to the perpetrators.
- It was recommended by Tandon Committee, National Police Commission (1977-1981) and the MHA’s Task force (1985).
- NCRB is entrusted with the responsibility for monitoring, coordinating, and implementing the Crime and Criminal Tracking Network & Systems (CCTNS) project.
- It is headquartered in New Delhi and is part of the Ministry of Home Affairs.
- Its publications include:
 - a. Accidental Deaths & Suicides in India
 - b. Prison Statistics India
 - c. Fingerprints in India
 - d. Report on missing women and children in India

Food labels to have QR code

Context

- The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has recommended the use of quick response (QR) codes on food products for accessibility by persons with visual disabilities
- This would ensure access to safe food for all, including those with special needs.

About FSSAI

- It is a statutory body established under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 (FSS Act).
- FSS Act, of 2006 consolidated various acts & orders that had earlier handled food-related issues in various Ministries and Departments.
- Nodal ministry: Ministry of Health & Family

Welfare

Bat Genomes

Context

Scientists have embarked on comprehensive studies of bat genomes, revealing invaluable insights into their distinctive biology.

Key points

- Bats boast relatively small genomes, typically consisting of around 2 billion bases, making them ideal subjects for genomic research.
- The ambitious Bat1K global genome consortium is currently undertaking the task of sequencing genomes of all bat species worldwide, promising further revelations about their genetic makeup.
- The research will highlight how bats enjoy a unique defense against a range of diseases, including cancer.

Facts about Bats

- Bats are the only mammals on the earth that can maintain sustained flight.
- They also have relatively long life-spans and are relatively more protected from a variety of diseases, including cancer.
- They also have a unique ability in echolocation, whereby they use sound to navigate and locate objects, freeing them from being constrained by the availability of light like humans are.
- By population, bats make up 20% of all mammals.
- There are more than 1,400 species of bats today around the world; more than 60 are endangered and 170-odd are classified as vulnerable.
- In all, bats play crucial roles in maintaining the ecological balance, and are essential for pollination.

Did you know?

The bumblebee bat weighs only 2 grams whereas the flying foxes, which have a wingspan of 1.5 metres, weigh up to 1.6 kg.

Nipah virus antibodies found in Wayanad bats

Context

Nipah virus antibodies have been detected in bats in Wayanad as well in Indian Council of Medical Research’s bat surveillance studies

About Bats

- Bats are the largest mammalian group after rodents, with over 1,300 species making up a quarter of all mammals.
- They occur on all continents except Antarctica and

are particularly diverse in South Asia, with 114 species of insect-eating bats and 14 fruit bats, also known as “flying foxes”, occurring in India.

- They roost in large colonies on trees, tree hollows, caves, rock crevices and abandoned manmade structures.
- They play a unique role in maintaining ecosystem structure, making a singular contribution to our food production, economy and well-being.
- They are the only mammals capable of true flight and have a unique sonar-based echolocation mechanism to capture prey at night.

Nipah virus (NiV)

- It is a zoonotic virus (it is transmitted from animals to humans).
- The organism which causes Nipah Virus encephalitis is an RNA or Ribonucleic acid virus of the family Paramyxoviridae, genus Henipavirus, and is closely related to Hendra virus.
- Hendra virus (HeV) infection is a rare emerging zoonosis that causes severe and often fatal disease in both infected horses and humans.
- It first broke out in Malaysia and Singapore in 1998 and 1999.
- It first appeared in domestic pigs and has been found among several species of domestic animals including dogs, cats, goats, horses and sheep.

Miscellaneous News

Paintbrush swift butterfly

Context

The paintbrush swift has been photographed and documented for the first time in Himachal Pradesh's Chamba district.

About Butterfly

- It is a butterfly species of the Hesperidae family.
- It was first described by lepidopterist Frederic Moore more than 145 years ago.
- It is identified based on two separated spots in the upper forewing cell.
- The species' larvae feed on bamboo and some other grass species.
- Habitat: Its habitat is distributed in northeast, central and south India, and rare in Uttarakhand.
- Threats: Habitat loss and scarcity of larval host plants are major causes of the decline in the butterfly population. An increase in pesticide use, deforestation, and climate change.
- This species is legally protected in India under

Schedule IV of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.

Book: Lords of Wankhede

Context

The book titled “Lords of Wankhede” was recently launched.

Key points

- It is authored by WV Raman and R Kaushik.
- The Lords of Wankhede explores the evolution of Indian cricket in the 28 years between the two World Cup successes.