

National and International Weekly Current Affairs 08 to 15 October 2023**National News****The GST Council cleared several pending issues.****Context**

The GST council has cleared several pending issues in a recent meeting.

Decisions taken by GST council

- Lowered the tax rates on certain millet-based products.
- Make an amendment in the age-related norms for members of the GST Appellate Tribunals
- Ceded the taxation rights on extra neutral alcohol to the States.

GST Council

- The 101st Amendment Act of 2016 (122nd Amendment Bill), paved the way for the implementation of GST.
- The GST Council is a joint forum of the Centre and the states under Article 279-A of the constitution.
- Article 279-A. gives the President the authority to appoint a GST Council by executive order.
- The members of the Council include the Union Finance Minister (chairperson), and the Union Minister of State (Finance) from various states.
- As per Article 279, it makes recommendations to the Union and the states on important issues related to GST.
- It also decides on various rate slabs of GST.

Ganga-Ghagra basin canals pose a threat to dolphins: study**Context**

A recent study has revealed that 19 Gangetic River dolphins had been rescued from the irrigation canals of the Ganga-Ghagra basin in Uttar Pradesh between 2013 and 2020.

Key facts

According to Shailendra Singh of the Turtle Survival Alliance Foundation India, one of the lead authors of the paper, the paper gives data for eight years but from 2013 to 2023, 28 dolphins had been rescued.

Gangetic Dolphin:

- Though the species is not known to be gregarious i.e. they do not prefer to form a group but they may prefer to live and/or hunt in the pod
- IUCN: Endangered
- Wildlife (Protection) Act: Schedule-I
- CITES: Appendix

Turtle Survival Alliance Foundation India

- It is a non-profit organization established in 2016
- It works primarily in the domain of Energy & Environment.

India's Scheduled Areas**Key facts**

- India's 705 Scheduled Tribe (ST) communities — making up 8.6% of the country's population — live in 26 States and six Union Territories.
- Article 244, deals with administration of Scheduled and Tribal Areas. It is the single most important constitutional provision for STs.
- Article 244(1) provides for the application of Fifth Schedule provisions to Scheduled Areas notified in any State other than Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram.
- The Sixth Schedule applies to these States as per Article 244(2).

How are Scheduled Areas governed?

- The President of India notifies India's Scheduled Areas.
- States with Scheduled Areas need to constitute a Tribal Advisory Council with up to 20 ST members.
- They will advise the Governor on matters referred to them regarding ST welfare.
- The Governor will then submit a report every year to the President regarding the administration of Scheduled Areas.

Did you know?

Scheduled Areas cover 11.3% of India's land area, and have been notified in 10 States: Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Odisha, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Himachal Pradesh.

IRDAI issues norms on Bima Vahaks**Context**

The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) issued guidelines on Bima Vahaks, the women-centric, dedicated distribution channel to enhance insurance inclusion with a focus on rural areas.

Key points

- Bima Vahaks are the women-centric, dedicated distribution channel to enhance insurance inclusion with a focus on rural areas.
- This is a part of a multi-pronged strategy to achieve its 'Insurance for All goal'.
- Bima Vahaks are expected to play a key role in taking Bima Vistaar, or 'affordable, accessible and

comprehensive cover' mooted by the regulator, to the target segment.

Centre sets up protocol to help malnourished children

Context

The Centre launched a standardised national protocol to identify and provide extensive care to malnourished children in the country

Key points

- This includes fresh initiatives like appetite testing and "buddy mother" concept.
- The 'Protocol for Management of Malnutrition in Children' was launched by Union Minister for Women and Child Development in New Delhi.
- It provides detailed 10-step guidelines for identification and management of malnourished children at the anganwadi level, including decision-making for referral, nutritional management and follow-up care of after intervention.

Cabinet okays royalty rates for lithium, niobium

Context

- The Union government approved royalty rate for lithium, niobium, and for Rare Earth Elements (REEs).
- For lithium and niobium a royalty rate of 3% each has been fixed.
- For Rare Earth Elements (REEs), the rate has been set at 1%.

Niobium

- It is a soft, ductile transition metal which is resistant to corrosion due to the presence of an oxide layer on its surface.
- It is one of the most common elements found in the Earth's Crust.
- It is often found in the pyrochlore mineral.

Uses of Niobium

- It is used in stainless steel alloys for cutting tools, nuclear reactors, jets, missiles, and welding rods.
- It is used in the manufacturing of MRI scanners and NMR equipment.
- Its alloys are used in making surgical implants.
- It is used for the production of stainless steel and high-temperature resistant alloys.

Rare Earth Elements (REE)

- REE are a set of seventeen elements in the periodic table. These include the fifteen lanthanides on the periodic table plus scandium and yttrium.
- REE are all metals, and the group is often referred to as the "rare earth metals."

- Although called "rare", they are actually found relatively abundantly in the Earth's crust.
- They are called "rare" because these metals are very difficult to mine because it is unusual to find them in concentrations high enough for economical extraction.

Applications of REE

- REE and alloys that contain them are used in many devices that people use every day such as computer memory, DVDs, rechargeable batteries, cell phones, catalytic converters, magnets, fluorescent lighting and much more.
- Rare earths are used as catalysts, phosphors, and polishing compounds.

Parliamentary Forum on 'LiFE: Lifestyle for Environment'

Context

- Speaker addressed the Parliamentary Forum on 'LiFE: Lifestyle for Environment', ahead of the ninth G-20 Parliamentary Speakers' Summit (P-20).
- The pre-P-20 Summit event focused on Mission Lifestyle.

About LiFE Mission

- Mission LiFE, or Lifestyle for Environment, is an India-led global mass movement to nudge individual and community action to protect and preserve the environment.
- It was launched by the Indian Prime Minister at the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) in Glasgow in November 2021.
- The program hopes to "mobilize one billion Indians as well as people in other countries to become individuals who practice sustainable lifestyles."
- The global movement will showcase sustainable goals and climate actions taken by countries and individuals around the world.
- It emboldens the spirit of the P3 model, i.e. Pro Planet People.
- It functions on the basic principles of 'Lifestyle of the planet, for the planet and by the planet'.

PM Modi to inaugurate 141st IOC session

Context

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the 141st International Olympic Committee (IOC) session at the Jio World Centre in Mumbai.
- India is hosting the IOC session for the second time and after a gap of about 40 years.

Key points

- The IOC session serves as a key meeting of the members of the International Olympic Committee

(IOC).

- Important decisions regarding the future of Olympic games are made at the IOC Sessions.
- The 141st IOC session, being held in India, embodies the nation's dedication to fostering global cooperation, celebrating sporting excellence, and furthering the Olympic ideals of friendship, respect, and excellence.
- It provides an opportunity for interaction and knowledge sharing among the various sports related stakeholders.

Maharashtra State News

Shasan Aplya Dari - Women empowerment campaign

Context

MH govt has announced a new women's empowerment campaign on the lines of 'Shasan Aplya Dari' (govt at your doorstep) campaign.

Key facts

- 1 crore women in the state will be benefited from this campaign
- All government departments implementing schemes for women will be brought under one roof.

Nodal agencies-

1. Commissioners in municipal areas
2. Chief Executive Officers of Zilla Parishads in rural areas

Events under campaign-

Health camps, training camps, employment fairs, Sakhi insect distribution, cultural programs, and giving incentive prizes

Each district has been given a target of benefiting 25 thousand women.

Funding-

1. 20 lakhs will be taken from the funds of each MLA for this campaign.
2. 5 percent of the reserved funds from Municipalities, Panchayat Samiti and Nagar Panchayats
3. 10 percent of the reserved funds from Gram Panchayats, Panchayat Samiti and Zilla Parishads will be allowed to be used for this campaign.

Shasan Aplya Dari Campaign (Government at your doorstep)

About campaign

- Shasan Aplya Dari campaign launched in May 2023 by Maharashtra government.

- The objective of "Shasan Aplya Dari" is to take government schemes to the doorstep of the common people so that they could be benefitted of different schemes without any hassle.
- For the initiative, a dedicated cell has been set up in the Chief Ministers Office (CMO).
- The 15,146 volunteers have been appointed across the state for the campaign.

Increase in Child mortality

Context

Deaths of children aged 1 to 5 have increased in the districts of Amravati, Chikhaldara, Akola.

Key facts

- This reality has come to light through Right to Information.
- However, these deaths have reduced in Nagpur and pune.

About Chikhaldara

- The area comprises Melghat region, one of the backward regions in Maharashtra.
- The region comprises Melghat Tiger Reserve.
- Inhabitants of Melghat are predominantly scheduled tribes. These include 'Korku', 'Gond' and 'Nihal'.

Did you know?

Child mortality measures (also known as under-five mortality rate) refers to the probability of dying between birth and exactly five years of age expressed per 1,000 live births.

Think about

Infant mortality

Data about child mortality in Maharashtra

- ❖ Amravati 84 in 2021-22. But in 2022-23 this number increased to 92.
- ❖ Akola 45 deaths in 2021-21 to 54 child deaths in 2022-23.
- ❖ Chikhaldara, a backward area, recorded 15 deaths in 2019-20, 32 deaths in 2021-21, 17 deaths in 2021-22, 20 child deaths in 2022-23.

Melghat Tiger Reserve

About

- Melghat Tiger Reserve is located on the southern offshoot of the Satpura Hill Range.
- It was established as a wildlife sanctuary in 1967, and was declared a tiger reserve in 1974
- It was among the first nine tiger reserves notified in 1973-74 under Project Tiger.
- It was the first tiger reserve of Maharashtra.

- It is still one of the biggest tiger reserves in the country in terms of area.
- The endangered and 'back from extinction' Forest Owllet is also found in various areas of Melghat.

Person in news: Ojas Devtale

Context

He won the gold medal in the men's individual compound Archery final at the Asian Games.

About

- Ojas is the world's top-ranked international archer.
- Ojas is the first Nagpur native to win a gold medal in the Asian Games.
- He has also won gold for India in the archery mixed team compound event on Wednesday.
- He also won gold in the Archery Men's Compound Team event.
- He hails from Nagpur

Govt Schemes to benefit Women

In news:

- The Eknath Shinde government in Maharashtra is launching a "Chief Minister Women Empowerment Campaign" ahead of upcoming elections.

Key Points:

- The campaign aims to provide government scheme benefits to at least one lakh women in each district of the state.
- The campaign will be coordinated by the Chief Minister's secretariat, with a committee chaired by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, including various stakeholders.
- Monthly meetings will be held, and the State Women and Child Development Minister will review the campaign's progress.
- An IAS officer will serve as the state coordination nodal officer, and District Collectors will act as district coordinators for the campaign.

New Healthcare Vision 2035 after weeks of tragedy

In news:

- Tragedy in Nanded Hospital: 38 patients died within 72 hours due to staff shortage and lack of medical supplies.

Key Points:

- Following public outcry, the state government launched a program called Vision 2035 to address healthcare issues.
- The Chief Minister instructed the public health department to create a plan to establish

government hospitals in 25 districts and fill staff vacancies.

- The state aims to align existing district hospitals with medical colleges and build new state-of-the-art hospitals to improve healthcare infrastructure.
- 18000 crore worth health projects including setting up and upgrading existing ones.

Namo Shetkari Mahasman Nidhi Yojana

In news:

- Maharashtra Govt disbursed 1720 cr as the first tranche of funds under this scheme.

Key Points:

- As part of this scheme Rs.6000(paid in instalments) will be transferred to farmer accounts in addition to the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Yojana which is a centrally sponsored scheme.

Lek Ladki Scheme

In news:

- The state cabinet has approved a scheme called 'Lek Ladki' to promote girl childbirth and support the education of girls from low-income families.

Key Points:

- Families with an annual income up to ₹1 lakh are eligible for this scheme, which provides financial assistance of ₹1,01,000 in phases until the girl reaches the age of 18.
- Under the scheme:
- families having yellow and orange ration cards will get
 - ₹5,000 at the time of birth,
 - ₹6,000 when she enters Class 1,
 - ₹7,000 after entering Class 6, ₹8,000 after entering Class 11 and
 - ₹75,000 after completing 18 years of age.
- Max- 2 girls in a family will be benefitted who are born after April 1 2023.

Majhi Kanya Bhagya Scheme

- In this scheme, the Government used to keep a fixed deposit of ₹25,000 for one time, and the maturity amount was given to the girl at the age of 18.

Spirit of Juvenile Justice: Nullified

In news:

- The Bombay High Court highlights the backlog of over 40,000 cases in Maharashtra related to juvenile justice boards (JJBs) and CWCs under Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015.

Key Points:

- Justices Nitin Jamdar and Manjusha Deshpande expressed worry - having 10,008 cases pending before JJBs and 30,043 cases before CWCs(Child welfare committies) undermines the spirit of the Act.
- This issue was brought to the court's attention through a public interest litigation (PIL) submitted by the NGO Bachpan Bachao Andolan

Key facts:

- Juvenile justice is a legal framework that addresses crimes committed by minors, typically under the age of 18.
- A/c to 2015 act JJBs and CWCs have a 4 month time for inquiries with a max potential extension of 2 months.

Amended IT rules against Fake news on social media

In news:

- The Bombay High Court concerns that amended Information Technology (IT) Rules related to fake news on social media has no clear guidelines and safeguards.

Key points:

- The court questioned the need for a separate Fact Checking Unit (FCU) when the Press Information Bureau (PIB) already conducts fact-checking on social media.
- The government argued that the PIB was inadequate.

Key facts:

On April 6, 2023, the Union government promulgated certain amendments to the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021, including a provision for a Fact Checking Unit to flag fake, false or misleading online content related to the government.

Arogya Vardhini Kendras

In news:

- Govt orders local bodies for setting up 1300 Arogya Vardhini Kendras.

Key points:

- Funds to be allotted from 15th Finance Commission.
- 400 AVK's to be set up by Nov 1.
- Result of Nanded death tragedy.
- 50 to 60 centers will be set up for a municipality depending on population.
- These are similar to clinics.

- Govt already has a scheme called Aapla Dawakhana for health care.

Aapla Dawakhana

- Aapla Dawakhana Yojana is the major health care scheme of Maharashtra Government. Scheme was announced in Oct 2022.
- It was started in the name of Late Sh. Balasaheb Thackery to pay tribute to him.
- 1 hospital for the general population of 25 thousand to 30 thousand.
- Aim: provide basic medical facilities free of cost to people of Maharashtra.

IOC and Reliance sign deal to boost Olympic sports

In news:

- The International Olympic Committee (IOC), the Olympic Museum, and Reliance Foundation have announced an agreement to promote Olympic values among children in Mumbai.

Key Points:

- **The agreement will involve**
 - grade-specific activities in selected schools,
 - sessions between athletes and students
 - to encourage physical activity, and initiatives to raise awareness about Olympism and Olympic values.
- This initiative primarily benefits underprivileged children, offering them access to sports for the first time, and
- This marks a significant step in implementing major IOC projects in India, such as the Olympics Value Education Program (OVEP) launched in Odisha last year.

A new Railway station between Badlapur-Ambernath

In news:

- New railway station called Chikhholi on the Kalyan - Badlapur route in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region has received approval.

Key points:

- The Mumbai Rail Vikas Corporation (MRVC) will build the Chikhholi station at a cost of ₹82 crore.

International News

Israel 'at war' after Hamas attack

Context

Palestinian Islamist group Hamas launched the biggest surprise attack on Israel.

About Hamas

- Hamas is a Palestinian Islamist political organization and militant group that has waged war on Israel since the group's 1987 founding.
- It seeks to replace Israel with a Palestinian state.
- It also governs Gaza independently of the Palestinian Authority.

Gaza Strip

- It is a part of Palestinian authority along with the West Bank.
- It is governed by Hamas, a militant, fundamentalist Islamic organization.
- It borders Egypt on the southwest, Israel on the east and north, Mediterranean on the west.
- Gaza Strip is situated on the northeast of the Sinai Peninsula.

Two State solution

- The two-state solution refers to a solution of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict which calls for "two states for two groups of people."
- The two-state solution envisages an independent State of Palestine alongside the State of Israel, west of the Jordan River.
- The boundary between the two states is still subject to dispute and negotiation, with Palestinian and Arab leadership demanding full Israeli withdrawal from territories it occupied in 1967, which is rejected by Israel.
- The territory of the former Mandate Palestine (including West Jerusalem), which did not form part of the Palestinian State, would continue to be part of Israel.

2023 on course to be warmest year on record

Context

The year 2023 is on course to possibly become the warmest year in recorded history, with temperatures nearing 1.4°C above the pre-industrial era average.

Key facts

- In September 2023, global temperatures reached a record high.
- The average surface air temperature was 16.38°C, which is 0.93°C higher than the September average between 1991 and 2020. Moreover, it was 0.5°C warmer than the earlier record set in September 2020.

Operation Ajay

Key points:

- Special chartered flights have been arranged to evacuate Indian citizens who wish to return from conflict-hit Israel.
- This operation has been code named as 'Operation Ajay'.

International Day of the Girl Child

- It is observed on October 11.
- The theme of International Day of the Girl 2023 according to the UNICEF is, "Invest in Girls' Rights: Our Leadership, Our Well-being."
- The theme focuses on taking action to curtail girls' and women's rights and gain progress on gender equality.

India reiterates call for a 'sovereign Palestine state'

Context

India reiterated its call for the creation of a sovereign Palestinian state saying that there was an "obligation" to uphold humanitarian principles.

India's stand

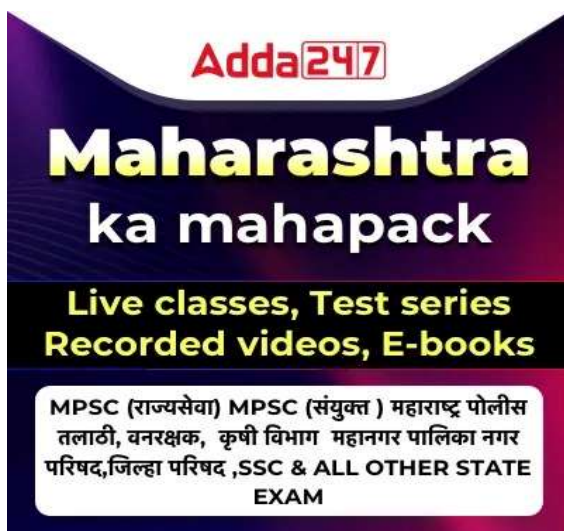
- India's position on Palestine has been "long-standing and consistent".
- India always advocated the resumption of direct negotiations towards establishing a sovereign, independent and viable state of Palestine, living within secure and recognised borders, side by side at peace with Israel.

Economy News

Urban unemployment

Context

The Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS), carried out by the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO), has reported that unemployment rate in urban areas of the country has



Adda247

Maharashtra ka mahapack

Live classes, Test series
Recorded videos, E-books

MPSC (राज्यसेवा) MPSC (संयुक्त) महाराष्ट्र पोलीस तलाठी, वनरक्षक, कृषी विभाग महानगर पालिका नगर परिषद, जिल्हा परिषद, SSC & ALL OTHER STATE EXAM

shown a decrease during the period April-June 2023.

Key facts

- UR in urban areas decreased from 7.6% in April-June 2022 to 6.6% in April-June 2023 for persons of age 15 years and above
- For men, it decreased from 7.1% to 5.9% during this period and for women, it decreased from 9.5% to 9.1%.
- There is an improvement in key labour market indicators in urban areas compared with those in pre-pandemic period

Direct tax collections and CBDT

In news:

According to CBDT -

- India's net direct tax collections grew 21.8% to ₹9.57 lakh crore surpassing over half of the Budget estimates for this year.
- Personal income tax revenues rose 32.5% and corporate taxes increased 12.4%.

Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT):

- It is a statutory authority functioning under the Central Board of Revenue Act, 1963.
- The CBDT is a part of the Department of Revenue in the Ministry of Finance.
- Its functions include formulation of policies, dealing with matters relating to levy and collection of direct taxes, and supervision of the functioning of the entire Income Tax Department.
- CBDT also proposes legislative changes in direct tax enactments and changes in rates and structure of taxation.

IMF's GDP growth forecast for India in FY24

- It is 6.3 in percentage.
- The International Monetary Fund-raised India's GDP projection marginally by 0.2% from July's estimates of 6.1% even as it slashed the global growth forecast to 3% for FY24

State-owned NBFCs put under PCA norms

Context

- The Reserve Bank of India informed that the strict supervisory norms under the Prompt Corrective Action (PCA) Framework will apply to state-owned non-banking financial companies from October 2024.
- Some of the major government non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) include PFC, REC, IRFC and IFCI.

Impact

Being put under the PCA framework means

- restrictions on dividend distribution/remittance of profit;
- promoters/ shareholders to infuse equity and reduction in leverage; and
- restrictions on taking on other contingent liabilities on behalf of group companies.
- The objective is to **enable supervisory intervention** at the appropriate time.

Prompt Corrective Action (PCA)

- It is a framework introduced by the Reserve Bank of India in 2022.
- The Prompt Corrective Action framework is a structured early-intervention mechanism for banks with weak financial records due to loss of profitability or poor asset quality.
- Reserve Bank of India uses the PCA framework to keep track of banks that haven't performed well financially.

Retail inflation cooled from 6.83% in Aug. to 5% in Sept.

Context

India's retail inflation eased from 6.83% in August to 5.02% in September with the rise in food prices easing to 6.6% from almost 10%.

About Monetary Policy Committee (MPC):

- The Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934 (RBI Act) has been amended by the Finance Act, 2016 to provide for a statutory and institutionalized framework for an MPC.
- The MPC is entrusted with the task of fixing the benchmark policy rate (repo rate) required to contain inflation within the specified target level.
- MPC will have six members - the RBI Governor (Chairperson), the RBI Deputy Governor in charge of monetary policy, one official nominated by the RBI Board, and the remaining three members would represent the Government of India.
- The MPC takes decisions based on a majority vote. In case of a tie, the RBI governor will have the second or casting vote.
- The decision of the MPC would be binding on the RBI.

Inflation cooled to 5% in September

Key facts

- Rajasthan and Haryana recorded the steepest inflation at 6.5%.
- Inflation was the lowest in Chhatisgarh at 1.98%
- It was below the 5% mark in eight other States,

including Tamil Nadu (4.5%), Madhya Pradesh.

- Costs of services like health, up 5.9% in September, and personal care, up 8.5%, are still rising.

IIP rises at 14-month high of 10.3%

Context

India's industrial output surged at a 14-month high pace of 10.3% in August, from a revised 6% rise in July, aided by favourable base effects

About IIP

- It is one of the Prime indicators of economic development for the measurement of trends in the behavior of Industrial Production over a period of time with reference to a chosen base year.
- It indicates the relative change of physical production in the field of industries during a specified year as compared to the previous year.
- It is computed and published by the Central Statistical Organisation (CSO) on a monthly basis.
- The current base year for the IIP series in India is 2011-12.

About Eight Core Sectors

- These comprise 40.27% of the weight of items included in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP).

The eight core sector industries in decreasing order of their weightage: Refinery Products> Electricity> Steel> Coal> Crude Oil> Natural Gas> Cement> Fertilizers.

Prize and Award News

Economics Nobel Prize 2023

Context

- The Nobel Prize for Economics was awarded to Harvard University professor Claudia Goldin
- She got this prize for her research that has advanced the understanding of the gender gap in the labour market.

Did you know?

Ms. Goldin is just the third woman to win the prize out of 93 economics laureates.

Summits & Conferences News

Indian Ocean Rim Association

Context

Sri Lanka to take over as Chair of Indian Ocean Rim Association

About IORA

- It was established in 1997 as an intergovernmental organisation of states on the rim of the Indian Ocean.
- The IORA has members from Africa, West Asia,

South Asia, Southeast Asia and the Oceania.

- The Association's membership has expanded to 23 member states and 11 dialogue partners.
- Its secretariat is in Mauritius.

BRI Summit

Context

India is likely to skip China's third summit of Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which will be held in the Chinese capital.

Belt & Road Initiative (BRI)

- It is an ambitious project that focuses on connectivity and cooperation among multiple countries spread across the continents of Asia, Africa, and Europe.
- Initially announced in the year 2013, the project involves building networks of roadways, railways, maritime ports, power grids, oil and gas pipelines, and associated infrastructure projects.
- The project covers two parts.
Silk Road Economic Belt: It is land-based and is expected to connect China with Central Asia, Eastern Europe, and Western Europe.

21st Century Maritime Silk Road: It is sea-based and is expected to connect China's southern coast to the Mediterranean, Africa, South-East Asia, and Central Asia.

Schemes and Committees News

Electoral bonds Scheme

In news:

- Supreme Court to hear a slew of petitions challenging the electoral bonds scheme.

What are Electoral bonds?

- They are an instrument through which anyone can donate money to political parties.
- It is like a promissory note that can be bought by any Indian citizen or company incorporated in India from select branches of State Bank of India.

Did you know?

- An individual or party will be allowed to purchase these bonds digitally or through cheque.
- The political parties have to disclose the amount to the Election Commission.
- The electoral bonds will not bear the name of the donor.

About the scheme:

- ❖ Announced in the 2017 Union Budget, electoral bonds are interest-free bearer instruments used to donate money anonymously to political parties.
- ❖ Simply put, anyone can donate money to political parties through them.

Who is eligible to receive electoral bonds?

- ❖ Only political parties registered under Section 29A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 and which secured not less than 1% of votes polled in the last general election to the House of the People or the Legislative Assembly of the State.

Agreement News

India, Italy signs defence agreement

India and Italy signed a defence cooperation agreement to promote cooperation in varied defence domains such as

- security and defence policy,
- R&D,
- education in military field,
- maritime domain awareness,
- sharing of defence information and
- industrial cooperation, including co-development, co-production and
- setting up of joint ventures.

Ranks and Index News

3.21 lakh appeals pending with Information Commissions: report

Context

According to a new report, more than three lakh appeals and complaints are pending in 27 State Information Commissions across the country and the backlog has been steadily increasing.

Key findings

- The name of the report is 'Report Card on the Performance of Information Commissions in India, 2022-23'
- Of the 3,21,537 pending appeals, the maximum number was reported in Maharashtra (1,15,524) followed by Karnataka (41,047). Tamil Nadu declined to provide the information.
- Four Information Commissions — Jharkhand, Telangana, Mizoram and Tripura — are defunct as no new Information Commissioners were appointed upon incumbents demitting office.
- Six Information Commissions are currently headless — the Central Information Commission, and the State Information Commissions of Manipur, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Bihar, and Punjab.

Global Hunger Index (GHI) 2023

Context

- India ranks 111 out of a total of 125 countries in

the Global Hunger Index (GHI) 2023, with its progress against hunger nearly halted since 2015, reflecting a global trend.

- The Union government, though, contested India's performance for the third year in a row, citing flawed methodology.

Key points

- India's ranking is based on a GHI score of 28.7 on a 100-point scale
- This categorises India's severity of hunger as "serious".
- The Global Hunger Index (GHI) is a tool for comprehensively measuring and tracking hunger at global, regional, and national levels.
- GHI scores are based on the values of four component indicators:
 1. Undernourishment
 2. Child stunting
 3. Child wasting
 4. Child mortality
- The GHI score is calculated on a 100-point scale reflecting the severity of hunger - zero is the best score (implies no hunger) and 100 is the worst.
- The GHI is prepared by European NGOs of Concern Worldwide and Welthungerhilfe.

Science and Technology News

ISRO plans Gaganyaan unmanned flight tests

Context

The ISRO, which is planning to commence unmanned flight tests for the Gaganyaan mission, has started to make preparations for the Flight Test Vehicle Abort Mission-1 (TV-D1).

Gaganyaan Mission

- 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 bringing them back safely to earth.
- It is part of the Indian Human Spaceflight Programme (IHSP), which was initiated (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 - the well proven and reliable heavy lift launcher of ISRO, is identified as the launch vehicle for Gaganyaan mission.
- India's heaviest rocket consists of solid stage,

liquid stage and cryogenic stage.

LiDAR Technology

- LiDAR stands for Light Detection and Ranging
- It is a remote sensing method that uses light in the form of a pulsed laser to measure ranges (variable distances) to the Earth.
- These light pulses—combined with other data recorded by the airborne system — generate precise, three-dimensional information about the shape of the Earth and its surface characteristics.
- There are three primary components of a LiDAR instrument — the scanner, laser and GPS receiver.
- Airplanes and helicopters are the most commonly used platforms for acquiring lidar data over broad areas.

Carbon Dating

- Carbon dating is a widely-used method to establish the age of organic materials, things that were once living.
- Living things have carbon in them in various forms.
- The dating method is based on the fact that Carbon-14 (C-14) is radioactive, and decays at a well-known rate.
- The ratio of C-12 to C-14 in the atmosphere is almost static, and is known.
- The Carbon Dating method cannot be used to determine the age of non-living things like rocks.
- Also, the age of things that are more than 40,000-50,000 years old cannot be arrived at through carbon dating.

ISRO performs trajectory correction for Aditya-L1

Context

ISRO has performed a trajectory correction maneuver on the Aditya-L1 spacecraft which is headed to the Lagrangian-1 (L1) point between sun and earth.

Aditya-L1

- It is the first space-based Indian mission to study the sun from the Lagrangian point 1 (L1) of the sun-earth system which is roughly 1.5 million kilometers from Earth.
- The project was initially proposed as Aditya-1, a 400 kg class satellite carrying a single payload, the Visible Emission Line Coronagraph (VELC).
- It was however renamed 'Aditya-L1 mission' since the satellite was positioned in the hallowed orbit of the Sun-Earth system's Lagrangian point 1 (L1).
- The mission will capture near-simultaneous photos of the many layers of the Sun's atmosphere, revealing how energy is routed and transported

from one layer to the next.

Multimodal artificial intelligence

Context

Google's new yet-to-be-released multimodal large language model called Gemini, is already being tested in a bunch of companies.

About Multimodal AI

- Multimodal AI is artificial intelligence that combines multiple types, or modes, of data to create more accurate determinations, draw insightful conclusions or make more precise predictions about real-world problems.
- Multimodal AI systems train with and use video, audio, speech, images, text and a range of traditional numerical data sets.
- Most importantly, multimodal AI means numerous data types are used in tandem to help AI establish content and better interpret context, something missing in earlier AI.

Quantum dots' applications

- An array of quantum dots **can be a TV screen** by receiving electric signals and emitting light of different colours.
- If one of the energy levels an electron jumps between in a quantum-dot atom is the conduction band, the dot can operate **like a semiconductor**.
- Also, solar cells made with quantum dots are expected to have a **thermodynamic efficiency as high as 66%**.
- A quantum dot can also **highlight a tumour** that a surgeon needs to remove, hasten chemical reactions that extract hydrogen from water, and **as a multiplexer** in telecommunications.

Miscellaneous News

In news: Phonotaxis

About Phonotaxis

- It is the movement by an animal in response to a sound.
- Eg- The click of crickets in the evening or frogs croaking during the monsoon
- It has mostly been observed among crickets, moths, frogs, toads, and a few other creatures.

Types of Phonotaxis

- There are two types of phonotaxis: positive and negative.
- The purpose of positive phonotaxis is attraction. It usually happens when the females of a particular species – including those of crickets and frogs – are

attracted to the sounds made by the males.

- Negative phonotaxis, on the other hand, serves to repel or warn, such as when the sound of a predator nearby signals to an animal that it needs to move away.

Dhole or Asiatic wild dog

Context

A new study has found that overlapping prey availability or habitat suitability could dictate a positive association between dholes and tigers, facilitating coexistence or even cooperative behaviours between the two species of carnivores.

Dhole

- The dhole or Asiatic Wild Dog is found in three clusters across India namely the Western and Eastern Ghats, the central Indian landscape and North East India.
- The Western and Eastern Ghats is a stronghold region for dholes.
- IUCN Red List: Endangered
- The Wildlife Protection Act 1972: Schedule II
- CITES: Appendix II

Tele Manas Seva

Context

- The Tele Manas Seva, has counselled more than 3,50,000 people till date and currently provides counselling to 2,000 people through 44 Tele Manas Cells.
- It was launched last year on the occasion of World Mental Health Day

Key points

- States/UTs were also awarded based on their performance in achieving the highest number of calls in the National Tele Mental Health Programme.
- In the larger States category, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, and Uttar Pradesh were awarded ranking from first to third.
- In the smaller States category, Telangana, Jharkhand, and Kerala were awarded.

World Arthritis Day

Context

October 12 is marked as World Arthritis Day.

Key points

- This year 2023, the World Arthritis Day Theme is "Living with an RMD at all stages of life"
- Arthritis is an inflammatory joint disorder, which

affects the joints tissues around the joint, and other connective tissues, causing joint pain and stiffness.

- Most common are osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis.