

National and International Weekly Current Affairs 06 to 12 November 2023

National News

NCERT to introduce electoral literacy content in textbooks

Context

In a bid to address voter apathy among young Indians, the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) will introduce and update textbooks to include content on electoral literacy

Key points

- The measures are part of a memorandum of understanding signed the Election Commission of India (EC) and the Education Ministry.
- It is aimed at extending the EC's flagship Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) in schools and colleges.
- The MoU aims to address issues such as voter apathy among urban and young Indians.

Did you know?

Almost 297 million of the 910 million electors did not vote in the Lok Sabha election in 2019

SC seeks data on donations through electoral bonds, reserves verdict on scheme

Context

The Supreme Court gave the Election Commission of India (EC) two weeks to produce updated data on contributions received by political parties through the electoral bonds scheme.

About Electoral Bond Scheme

- The electoral bond scheme was launched by the Union government in 2018.
- It is a bearer instrument, like a promissory note that can be bought by any Indian citizen or company incorporated in India.
- The citizen or corporate can then donate the same to any eligible political party of his/her choice.
- The bonds are similar to bank notes that are payable to the bearer on demand and are free of interest.
- An individual or party is allowed to purchase these bonds digitally or through cheque.
- EBs are issued/purchased for any value, in

multiples of Rs 1,000, Rs 10,000, Rs 1,00,000, Rs 10,00,000 and Rs 1,00,00,000.

- The electoral bonds are available for purchase for 10 days at the beginning of every quarter.
- SBI is the only bank authorized to sell these bonds.
- Anonymous cash donations were capped at Rs 2,000.
- EBs have a life of only 15 days during which it can be used for making donations to political parties.

Eligibility for 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, are eligible to receive electoral bonds.
- The bond can be encashed by an eligible political party only through a designated bank account with the authorized bank.
- The political parties have to disclose the amount to the Election Commission.
- The electoral bonds will not bear the name of the donor.

Bharat Atta

In news

- With wheat flour (atta) becoming costly around the festival season, Govt. expands 'Bharat Atta' sale.

Key points

- Union Food and Consumer Affairs Ministry released more stocks of the 'Bharat' brand atta for moderation of prices.
- Bharat Atta will be available at ₹27.50 a kg to increase supplies in the market at affordable rates.
- 100 mobile vans used for distribution
- Other outlets of at Kendriya Bhandar, National Cooperative Consumers' Federation of India Ltd. (NCCF), and National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Ltd. (NAFED).

Come out with policy for providing sanitary napkins at schools: SC

Context

- The Supreme Court gave the Centre four weeks to

finalize and place on record an "optimum" menstrual hygiene policy with focus on the distribution of sanitary napkins.

- It would serve as a "catalyst to raise awareness, challenge societal norms and foster a society that embraces menstrual hygiene as a natural and normal part of life".

Key data

The latest National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5) found a significant improvement in the percentage of women aged 15-24 who use a hygienic method of protection during their menstrual cycle, rising from 58% in NFHS-4 to 78%.

National Family Health Survey

1. National Family Health Survey (NFHS) is a large-scale, multiround survey conducted in a representative sample of households throughout India.
2. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) has designated the International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS) Mumbai, as the nodal agency for providing coordination and technical guidance for the survey.
3. IIPS collaborates with a number of Field Organizations (FO) for survey implementation.
4. First National Family Health Survey (NFHS-1) was conducted in 1992-93.
5. Second National Family Health Survey (NFHS-2) was conducted in 1998-99
6. Third National Family Health Survey (NFHS-3) was carried out in 2005-2006
7. Fourth National Family Health Survey (NFHS-4) in 2014-2015
8. Fifth National Family Health Survey NFHS-5 has captured the data during 2019-20
9. Its survey depends upon 67 indicators like population & household survey, marriage & fertility, family planning, maternal & child health, vaccination, etc.

National Family Health Survey-5 (2019-20)

International Institute for Population Sciences, Mumbai conducts the survey.

According to this survey:

- Malnutrition has worsened.
- Stunting has risen in 11 out of 18 states.
- Wasting increased in 14 states.
- Obesity increased

- NFHS-5 includes some new topics, such as preschool education, disability, access to a toilet facility, death registration, bathing practices during menstruation, and methods and reasons for abortion.

Maharashtra State News

Lifetime Achievement given to Digambar Gadgil

In News:

- This year's Bird Friend Lifetime Achievement Award was announced to Digambar Gadgil from Nashik.

Key Points:

- 'Maharashtra Pakshimitra' has announced the 2023 Pakshimitra Awards.
- It is an organization working on birds in Maharashtra for the last four decades.

About Lifetime Achievement Award:

- The Maharashtra Pakshimitra Award is given to individuals or organizations who have made significant contributions to the conservation of birds in Maharashtra.
- The organization was founded in 1981 and has since grown to become one of the leading bird conservation organizations in India.

Vishnudas Bhave award to Prashant Damle

In News:

- Vishnudas Bhave Gauravpadak, which is regarded as an honor in Marathi theater, was presented to senior actor, theater artist Prashant Damle.

About Vishnudas Bhave award:

- The Vishnudas Bhave Award is a prestigious award given to Marathi theater personalities for their outstanding contributions to the field.
- The award was instituted in 1959 by the Akhil Bharatiya Natya Vidyamandir
- The award was instituted in memory of Vishnudas Bhave, one of the pioneers of modern Marathi theater.
- The award is presented annually on November 5th, which is celebrated as Marathi Rangbhumi Din (Marathi Theater Day).
- The recipient of the award is selected by a committee of eminent theater personalities.
- The Vishnudas Bhave Award is one of the most coveted awards in Marathi theater.

- It is a recognition of the recipient's talent, dedication, and contributions to the field.

Reservation for the Maratha community

Context:

- Efforts have been started at the government level to get reservation for the Maratha community.
- The work of collecting empirical data is going on to prove the backwardness of the Maratha community in the Supreme Court and Kunbi records are also being checked at the state level.

About Maratha community:

- The Maratha community is the largest social group in Maharashtra, accounting for approximately 30% of the state's population.
- The Marathas are traditionally a peasant community, but they have made significant progress in education and employment in recent decades.
- Despite their social and economic advancement, the Marathas continue to lag behind other communities in terms of representation in government jobs and educational institutions.
- This is why the Maratha community has been demanding reservation for itself.
- In 2018, the Maharashtra government passed a law granting 16% reservation to the Maratha community in education and jobs.
- However, the law was struck down by the Supreme Court in 2021 on the grounds that it breached the 50% reservation ceiling in the state.

MH govt encourages farmers to cultivate bamboo to curb menace of air pollution

Context:

- The Maharashtra CM has appealed to farmers to cultivate bamboo in large quantities through group farming
- He also said bamboo parks will be established in cities in view of the increasing pollution in urban areas.

Significance of Bamboo:

- Sugarcane cultivation generally yields about 100 tons per hectare and the price is at least Rs 2,500 per ton, the minimum production per hectare of bamboo is 100 tons but the price is at least Rs 4,000 per ton Thus, making cultivators financially stronger.

- Bamboo production starts in the third year and it is better for soil protection and water conservation.
- In order to boost the agricultural economy, ethanol is being produced from bamboo.
- If one hectare of sugarcane is cultivated, two crore liters of water is needed for it and if one ton of sugarcane is crushed, 80 liters of ethanol is produced.
- If one hectare of bamboo is cultivated, 20 lakh liters of water is required and if one ton of bamboo is crushed, 400 liters of ethanol can be produced,
- Bamboo also releases 320 kg of oxygen in the air in a year.

Maharashtra Namu Shetkari Maha Samman Nidhi Yojana

Context:

- The Maharashtra Namu Shetkari Maha Samman Nidhi Yojana (NSMN) is a scheme launched by the Government of Maharashtra to provide financial assistance to farmers in the state.
 - Financial Assistance of Rs. 6,000/- per Year to all Farmers.
 - This Assistance will be Provided in 3 Installments of 2,000/- each in every 4 Months.
- The scheme provides Rs. 6,000 per year to eligible farmers, in addition to the Rs. 6,000 per year that they receive under the Central Government's Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana (PM-KISAN).
- This means that eligible farmers in Maharashtra will receive a total of Rs. 12,000 per year under the NSMN and PM-KISAN schemes.

Kunbi records of Marathas

Context:

- Drive of tracing documents of Kunbi antecedents of Marathas, which is currently being implemented in the Marathwada region, will be carried out across the State.
- This campaign should be implemented in a mission mode.
- The Kunbis are a community of agriculturalists in Maharashtra.

- They are classified as Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in the state and enjoy reservation benefits in education and government jobs.
- The Marathas are a dominant caste in Maharashtra.
- They were traditionally warriors and landowners.

Did you Know?

- During the Nizam era, the Marathas of Marathwada were officially classified as Kunbis.

Hingoli district to have a medical institution

Context:

- Hingoli, the only district in Marathwada without a medical college, is set to receive a new medical institution with a capacity of 100 students.
- This initiative is part of a broader development package for the Marathwada region worth ₹59,000 crore.
- The government aims to complete the project before the next academic year in 2024-25.

Tata Memorial Hospital to set up Ayurveda-based cancer hospital in Khopoli

Context:

- Tata Memorial Hospital in Mumbai will become the first cancer hospital in India to offer Ayurveda treatment.
- The hospital plans to integrate Ayurveda with modern medicine and will also grow its own medicinal plants for research purposes.
- The hospital has received funding of INR300 crore (\$39.8m) from the Department of Atomic Energy for the project.
- The facility is expected to be operational by 2026 and will also provide standard cancer treatments such as radiotherapy and chemotherapy.

RTS Act may be amended to include compensation clause

In News:

- The state government is considering amending the Maharashtra Right to Public Services Act, 2015, to include a clause on providing compensation to citizens facing delays.

Maharashtra Chief Minister Fellowship Program

Context:

- The following benefits will be provided to fellows/ selected applicants under Maharashtra Chief Minister Fellowship Program:-
 - Position Equivalent to Grade - A Officer will be Provided.
 - Monthly Stipend of Rs. 70,000/- per Month.
 - Rs. 5,000/- per Month separately will be provided for Travel and Other Expenses.
 - Accidental Insurance Cover.
 - Special Academic Course Certificate from IIT Mumbai or IIT Nagpur.
 - Fellowship Completion Certificate from Maharashtra Government.
 - Leave of 8 Days during the Period of Fellowship.

The Udyog Ratna Award

Key Points:

- The Udyog Ratna Award is a prestigious award that recognizes the outstanding achievements of entrepreneurs and industrialists in India.
- It is conferred by the Institute of Economic Studies, India (IES), affiliated with the government of India.
- The award is given to individuals who have made significant contributions to the economic development of the country.

The Bhagwan Birsa Munda Jodaraste Scheme

Key Points:

- The Bhagwan Birsa Munda Jodaraste Scheme is a flagship initiative launched by the Maharashtra government
- Aim is to enhance connectivity and improve the lives of tribal communities residing in the state.
- Named after the revered tribal leader and freedom fighter Birsa Munda, the scheme aims to connect all tribal villages in 17 districts of Maharashtra with main roads, addressing the challenges faced by these communities in accessing essential services and fostering their socio-economic development.

The Bhagwan Birsa Munda Jodaraste Scheme is driven by several key objectives:

1. **Improved Connectivity:** Connecting tribal villages with main roads will significantly enhance accessibility to healthcare facilities, educational institutions, markets, and other essential services.

2. **Economic Empowerment:** Improved connectivity will facilitate better market access for agricultural produce and handicrafts, thereby boosting the economic opportunities for tribal communities.
3. **Social Inclusion:** By bridging the connectivity gap, the scheme aims to promote social inclusion and integration of tribal communities into the mainstream society.
4. **Infrastructure Development:** The construction of roads will not only enhance connectivity but also stimulate infrastructure development in tribal areas.

Mumbai: The City of Seven Islands

Key Points:

- Mumbai, formerly known as Bombay, is the capital of the Indian state of Maharashtra and the most populous city in India.
- It is also a major financial and commercial center. Mumbai is located on the western coast of India, on a peninsula that juts out into the Arabian Sea.
- The city is known as the "City of Seven Islands" because it was built on what was once an archipelago of seven islands.
- These islands were eventually joined together by land reclamation projects.

The seven islands are:

- Isle of Bombay
- Parel
- Mazagaon
- Mahim
- Worli
- Old Woman's Island (Little Colaba)
- Colaba
- In 1947, India gained independence from Britain. Mumbai became the capital of the new state of Bombay.
- In 1950, the state of Bombay was split into two states: Maharashtra and Gujarat.

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

Air Quality MH

Context:

- Pimpri Chinchwad, a city in Maharashtra, has reported PM2.5 levels
- It is almost double the safe limit and thus making it one of the most polluted cities in the state.
- Other cities in Maharashtra, including Mumbai and Pune, also exceeded the National Ambient Air Quality Standards.
- The Maharashtra Pollution Control Board (MPCB) has developed an action plan to address the high pollution levels, which includes controlling vehicular pollution, using dust suppression systems at construction sites, and removing old vehicles.

About Air Quality Index:

- To assess the severity of air pollution, the Air Quality Index (AQI) was developed
- It provides a numerical value that categorizes air quality based on the concentration of five major air pollutants:
 1. **Particulate Matter (PM2.5 and PM10):** These tiny particles can penetrate deep into the lungs, causing respiratory problems, heart disease, and even premature death.
 2. **Ozone (O3):** This gas can irritate the lungs and eyes, aggravate asthma, and contribute to respiratory infections.

3. **Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂):** This pollutant can damage the lungs and reduce lung function, especially in children and individuals with respiratory conditions.
4. **Sulfur Dioxide (SO₂):** This gas can irritate the airways, causing coughing, wheezing, and difficulty breathing.
5. **Carbon Monoxide (CO):** This gas reduces the oxygen supply to the body, affecting the heart, brain, and other organs.
 - The AQI ranges from 0 to 500, with higher values indicating more severe air pollution.

Shivraj Maharaj statue

Context:

- Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj statue unveiled in Jammu and Kashmir's Kupwara district.
- This equestrian statue of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj has been erected at 41 National Rifle (Maratha LI) near the India-Pakistan border in Kashmir's Kupwara district.
- MH govt. expressed joy in unveiling of this statue as On October 20, 2023, a grand ceremony marked the arrival of the equestrian statue of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj from Mumbai Raj Bhavan.

Mid-day meals

Context:

- Government schools in MH are set to diversify their mid-day meal offerings, bringing more nutritious choices to students.
- Children in these schools will now enjoy a broader menu that includes egg pulav, egg biryani, boiled eggs, and local fruits, in addition to the traditional khichdi.

About Mid-Day Meal Scheme:

- The Mid-Day Meal Scheme (MDMS) is now known as the POSHAN Scheme
- It is a flagship program of the Government of India that provides free lunches on working days to children in government and government-aided primary and upper primary schools, government-aided Anganwadis, Madrasas, and Maqtabs.
- The scheme aims to improve the nutritional status of children, enhance enrollment and attendance in schools, and reduce child labor.

Shasan Aplya Dari program

In News: 1.5 crore people reap benefits from Maha's govt at your doorstep program, says CM Shinde

- MH govt. announced that 1.5 crore individuals have derived benefits from the government's prominent Shasan Aplya Dari program
- It is designed to deliver government schemes directly to the common people's doorsteps.
- The Government at Your Doorstep initiative was introduced by the state government in May 2023.

Shasan Aplya Dari program:

- It is a government initiative in Maharashtra that aims to bring government services to the doorsteps of citizens.
- Under the program, government departments will set up camps in rural and urban areas to provide citizens with a variety of services, including:
 - Identity documents, such as Aadhaar cards, PAN cards, and voter ID cards
 - Social welfare schemes, such as pension schemes, housing schemes, and education schemes
 - Agriculture and allied services, such as crop insurance, soil testing, and animal husbandry
 - Healthcare services, such as vaccination, health checkups, and treatment.

Maha govt to acquire iconic Air India building

Context:

- The Maharashtra government decided on Wednesday to pay Rs 1,601 crore to acquire the iconic Air India building located in Mumbai's Nariman Point.
- The building was constructed in 1974 on land owned by the state government, which will now use it for its office space.
- After the 2012 fire at Mantralaya, the state secretariat building in south Mumbai, four major departments public health, medical education, water supply and sanitation, and rural development have been operating from GT Hospital.

170 butterfly species recorded

In News:

- The Pench Tiger Reserve (PTR), Maharashtra, is home to 170 species of butterflies, revealed a pre and post monsoon citizen science-based survey

Key Points:

- With 35 new records, PTR is now home to 170 species of butterflies.
- The survey is conducted twice a year, once during the pre-monsoon season and once during the post-monsoon season.
- It involves volunteers from all over the country, who help to collect data on a variety of species, including butterflies, birds, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians.

Pench Tiger Reserve:

- Maharashtra, being the third largest state in India and a leader in protecting biodiversity, bears maximum numbers (six) of tiger reserves in India along with Madhya Pradesh.
- Pench Tiger Reserve situated in the northern part of eastern Vidarbha is spread in Ramtek, Parseoni and Saoner tehsil of Nagpur district.
- It is the 25th tiger reserve of India.
- The Pench Tiger reserve (PTR) which derives its name from its lifeline - the River Pench is spread over 741.41 Sq.km of area.

Maharashtra govt approves export promotion policy

In News:

- The Maharashtra government approved its first export promotion policy with an objective to create employment opportunities by attracting the foreign direct investment

Key Points:

- The policy is to be implemented from the current financial year till 2027-'28,
- It would facilitate investment of Rs 25,000 crore in the state.
- The policy aims at increasing exports of the state from 72 billion dollars to 150 billion dollars i.e, to increase the state's exports from the current 7% to 14%.

High powered committee for Dhangar schemes

Context:

- The Maharashtra government has formed a high power committee (HPC) to oversee the implementation of schemes for the Dhangar community
- The committee is led by CM Eknath Shinde

- The Dhangars, currently classified as Nomadic Tribes, are seeking Scheduled Tribe (ST) status, which would entitle them to a higher quota.
- The community represents around 9% of Maharashtra's population.

Shiv Bhojan scheme

In News:

- The Maharashtra government's Shiv Bhojan scheme has been facing funding issues in Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar district.

About Shiv Bhojan scheme:

- The Shiv Bhojan scheme is a government-subsidized meal scheme in the Indian state of Maharashtra.
- It was launched in January 2020
- Its aim is to provide nutritious and affordable meals to the poor and needy.
- Under the scheme, a thali (plate) of food is provided for Rs. 10 only, while the actual cost of the thali is Rs. 50 in urban areas and Rs. 35 in rural areas. The government subsidizes the rest of the cost.

State News

Air pollution in states

Context

Delhi and parts of the surrounding States of Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh encounter their annual air quality inflection point.

Reasons for pollution of North India in winters

- Stubble Burning
- Geographical location
- Temperature inversion
- Firecrackers due to festive season
- Vehicular Pollution
- Construction

About CAQM

- CAQM stands for Commission for Air Quality Management.
- CAQM is a statutory mechanism to coordinate and oversee diverse efforts to improve air quality in Delhi, Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan and UP, with the underlying remedial approach.

Enemy property' Butler Palace to turn into a tourist haven

Context

Lucknow's once-grand three-storey Butler Palace, left deserted and in darkness for many decades, will see a facelift.

Key points

- Built a century ago, the palace is a mix of Rajasthani and Indo-Mughal styles
- The palace, originally built as the official residence of the Commissioner of Avadh, Harcourt Butler, in 1915, was owned by the royal family of Mahmudabad.
- By its own account, the family migrated to India in the 13th century and settled in erstwhile Avadh, current Lucknow, in the 16th century, and owed allegiance to the Mughals.
- Mohammed Amir Ahmad Khan, the king at the time of Independence, migrated to Pakistan, while his son Mohammad Amir Mohammad Khan, stayed on in India as a citizen, fighting a legal battle over several properties, including Butler Palace.
- After the India-Pakistan war in 1965, Butler Palace was declared "enemy property" by the Government of India
- After being declared enemy property in the 1960s, the premises were handed over to the Uttar Pradesh government, who used it as a sales tax office.
- In the 1980s, it was given to the Indian Council of Philosophical Research, an organisation under the Union Human Resource Development Ministry.

Fact Checking Unit (FCU) by the Tamil Nadu government

In news

- The PIL in High Court challenges formation of Fact Checking Unit by the government.

Key points

- Objective of FCU: Fact Check Unit is to act as a deterrent to creators and disseminators of fake news & misinformation and to provide people with an easy avenue to report suspicious and questionable information pertaining to the Government of India for fact-checking.
- The Information Technology (Amendment) Bill, 2020 ensures that all electronic documents, records, and information of Indian citizens are retained in data centers located in India.

- The bill also gives the government the power to direct decryption and block information

Bihar seeks to raise reservation to 65%

In news

- The Bihar Cabinet has approved a proposal to increase reservations in the State for SCs, STs, OBCs and Extremely Backward Classes EBCs to 65%.
- Decision comes after caste survey report published.

Key point

- Reservation for SCs, STs, OBCs and EBCs to become 65%.
- Including 10% reservation for Economically Weaker Sections (EWS), quota will go up to 75% crossing the ceiling set by the Supreme Court.
- Currently 50% quota in the state.

According to survey

SCs:-

19.7% population, should get a quota of 20%, higher than the current 16%.

STs:-

1.7% share in population, should get reservation doubled from 1% to 2%.

OBCs:-

27% population to get a quota of 12%, while EBCs 36% of the population and get a quota of 18%; together should get a quota of 43%.

Odd-even vehicle rotation scheme to return in Delhi

Context

As air pollution in Delhi touched about 18 times the limit set by the World Health Organization, the Environment Minister announced that the government would implement an odd-even vehicle rotation scheme in the city to reduce air pollution.

About Scheme

- The odd-even scheme entails allowing vehicles whose registration number ends in even digits to ply on even dates and those with odd digits to ply only on odd dates.
- On odd days, only vehicles with license plates

ending in one, three, five, seven, and nine will be allowed, while on even days, vehicles with numbers ending with zero, two, four, six, and eight will be allowed to operate.

International News

India set to open new consulate in Seattle

Context

- The Ministry of External Affairs has appointed its first Consul-General in the U.S. city, Seattle.
- This will be the sixth consulate in the U.S.

Russia test-fires nuclear-capable ballistic missile from submarine

Context

- Russia had successfully test-launched an intercontinental ballistic missile capable of carrying nuclear warheads from one of its submarines.
- The launch of the “Bulava” missile comes as Russia ramps up nuclear rhetoric since revoking its ratification of a key nuclear test ban treaty

About Nuclear Test Ban Treaty

- The Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty prohibits “any nuclear weapon test explosion or any other nuclear explosion” anywhere in the world.
- The treaty was opened for signature in September 1996, and has been signed by 187 nations and ratified by 178.
- The treaty cannot formally enter into force until it is ratified by 44 specific nations, eight of which have yet to do so: India, China, Pakistan, North Korea, Israel, Iran, Egypt, and the United States.
- In order to verify compliance with its provisions, the treaty establishes a global network of monitoring facilities and allows for on-site inspections of suspicious events.
- Since the conclusion and opening for signature of the CTBT, nuclear testing has become taboo.
- Today, even those nuclear-armed states that have not signed or not ratified the CTBT, including India, Israel, and Pakistan, observe nuclear testing moratoriums.
- Only one country has conducted nuclear test explosions in this century, and even that country—North Korea—halted nuclear testing in 2017.

- Although the CTBT has not formally entered into force, the treaty has, for now, achieved its primary goal: ending nuclear weapon test explosions.

UNESCO Man and the Biosphere (MAB) programme

- It is an intergovernmental scientific programme launched in 1971 by UNESCO to establish a scientific basis for enhancing the relationship between people and their environments.
- Under the programme, UNESCO has established the World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR).
- Biosphere reserves are nominated by national governments.
- If selected by UNESCO, they are included in the WNBR.
- There are 12 biosphere reserves of India which have been recognized internationally under Man and Biosphere (MAB) Reserve program.
- These are:
 1. Nilgiri (First one to be included)
 2. Gulf of Mannar
 3. Sunderban
 4. Nanda Devi
 5. Nokrek
 6. Pachmarhi
 7. Similipal
 8. Achanakmar – Amarkantak
 9. Great Nicobar
 10. Agasthyamala
 11. Khangchendzonga (2018) and
 12. Panna (2020).

World Biosphere Reserve Day

Key points:

- This day celebrates the role of biosphere reserves in conserving biodiversity and promoting sustainable development.
- Established by UNESCO in 2022, to be observed annually on November 3.
- Aims to raise awareness, share best practices, and showcase achievements of the World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR).
- The theme for 2023 was #ItsAboutLife.

Chinese vessel begins research off the coast of Sri Lanka amid India’s concerns

Context

Chinese research vessel Shiyan 6, amid concerns raised by India and the U.S., is set to begin its two-day research off the Sri Lankan coast

Key points

- The research will be pursued off Sri Lanka's western coast, and in collaboration with Sri Lanka's National Aquatic Resources Research and Development Agency (NARA) and the University of Ruhuna
- It is marine scientific research.

India Bhutan regional connectivity

In news

- India and Bhutan agreed to discuss new routes of regional connectivity and upgrade border and immigration posts.

Key points

- 58-km cross border rail link between Gelephu and Kokrajhar in Assam to be built by India.
- Agreed to explore a second rail link for about 18 km between Samtse in Bhutan and Banarhat in West Bengal tea gardens area.
- Allows Bhutanese trade items to be carried further on from Haldibari in West Bengal to Chilahati in Bangladesh
- Agreed to designate the Darranga-Samdrup Jongkhar border crossing between Assam and Bhutan as an immigration check post, so as to allow third country nationals to enter and exit as well "for enhancing connectivity, and promoting tourism"
- Bhutan plans for a smart city at Gelephu on the border between Bhutan and Assam, and to have an international airport and Special Economic Zone at Gelephu.

The Indo-Pacific Maritime Domain Awareness (IPMDA) initiative

In news

- Navy Chief Admiral R. Hari Kumar says, IPMDA initiative proof of our commitment to a free Indo-Pacific Region.

Key fact about IPDMA

- The IPMDA was announced by the Quad grouping, comprising India, Australia, Japan and U.S., at the Tokyo summit in early 2022

- Aim to track "dark shipping" and build a "faster, wider, and more accurate maritime picture of near-real-time activities in partners' waters".
- Integrating three critical regions in the Indo-Pacific — the Pacific Islands, Southeast Asia, and the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).
- Become a critical platform for fostering cooperation and addressing maritime security challenges in the IOR.
- "Sharing of intelligence and information also contributed to enhanced Maritime Domain Awareness [MDA].
- Navy's Information Fusion Centre for Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR) located at Gurugram, had greatly improved the situational awareness in the IOR region.

World Tsunami Awareness Day

- World Tsunami Awareness Day is an annual event held on 5 November
- It is to raise awareness of the dangerous effects of tsunamis and the importance of tsunami preparedness and early warning of tsunamis
- The 2023 World Tsunami Awareness Day theme is "Fighting Inequality for a Resilient Future," which mirrors the subject highlighted during the International Day for Disaster Reduction.
- The observance encourages all sectors of society to engage and collaborate on disaster risk reduction.

International Day for Preventing the Exploitation of Environment in War and Armed Conflict

- International Day for Preventing the Exploitation of Environment in War and Armed Conflict is celebrated on November 6th each year
- It is to raise awareness about the devastating impact of war and armed conflict on the environment.
- The theme for International Day for Preventing the Exploitation of Environment in War and Armed Conflict 2023 is "Together for a more sustainable and peaceful future."

Economy News

Climate finance

- It refers to local, national, or transnational financing—drawn from public, private and alternative sources of financing—that seeks to support mitigation and adaptation actions that will address climate change.

- The UNFCCC, Kyoto Protocol, and the Paris Agreement call for financial assistance from Parties with more financial resources (Developed Countries) to those that are less endowed and more vulnerable (Developing Countries).

Status of India's Economy post-COVID-19 years

Context:

- The Indian economy has increased in the post-COVID-19 years.
- In FY2023, it grew at YoY at **7.2%**, the fastest among major economies.

Key Points:

According to IMF,

- India's YoY growth to be 6.3% for FY2024
- India is currently the 5th largest economy in the world in U.S. dollar terms
- India to become the third largest by 2027

Reasons for India's high growth rates

- It was propelled by strong growth in world trade
- domestic credit boom
- Government's measures since 2014

Government's measures since 2014

- Calibrated liberalization of the economy - led to high foreign direct investment inflows
- Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) introduced in 2015 - Lowered non-performing assets in the banking sector
- Policies to increase private corporate investment
- 2016 demonetisation drive - improved tax compliance
- Goods and Services Taxes (GST) rolled out in 2017 - increased revenues
- reduction in the corporate tax rate in 2019 increased corporate reserves and private capital investments
- large Capex programmes by both Centre and State Governments
- containing the fiscal deficit
- Focus on improving physical infrastructure
- Focus on inclusive growth - Commitment to Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas
- various steps to lift people above the poverty line, livelihood enhancement, skill development,

women's empowerment, and infrastructure development

Way ahead:

India aims to achieve the following for a majority of its citizens

- high-income status
- high quality of life
- Realizing high aspirations of its citizens
- To address weak domestic demand.

According to NITI Aayog report -

- Multidimensional poverty in India declined: 13.5 crore Indians are estimated to have escaped multidimensional poverty between 2015-16 and 2019-21.
- India witnessed tangible progress in rural living standards.

According to National Family Health Survey for 2019-21

India witnessed a significant improvement in an array of indicators concerning -

- the quality of rural lives
- access to electricity
- improved drinking water sources
- coverage under health insurance schemes
- institutional births
- immunization
- health insurance coverage

Government support to Agriculture has led to-

- Improved growth of dairy, fisheries and livestock products sector
- Share of fruits and vegetables in the food basket has increased to 19.4% in 2021.
- Country's food basket is more nutritious today than ever.

Awards news

54th IFFI

- The 54th International Film Festival of India (IFFI) is scheduled to be held in Goa from November 20

to 28, 2023.

- The Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, Government of India, through National Film Development Corporation (NFDC), jointly with the State Government of Goa through its Entertainment Society of Goa (ESG), is organizing the festival.

The festival will include:

- An announcement by Union Minister Anurag Thakur that India's media & entertainment industry is 5th largest globally, growing 20% annually.

Do you know?

- The theme for the festival is "Celebrate the Joy of Cinema."
- This theme highlights the immense happiness, excitement, and inspiration that cinema brings to people's lives.
- It aims to showcase the diversity and richness of Indian culture through the lens of cinema, arts, millets, textiles, and Indian scripts. Stills of several Indian Movies like Lunch Box, RRR, Manikarnika, Kantara, Tanhaji, can be seen on the poster.
- The concept for the 54th International Film Festival of India poster revolves around a central motif of a peacock, surrounded by a captivating representation of iconic Indian cinema, arts, millets, textiles, and Indian scripts.
- This visually striking composition captures the joy and magic of cinema and invites audiences to celebrate the diverse cultural heritage of India.
- IFFI this time introduces the "Best Web Series (OTT) Award."

Key facts:

- Satyajit Ray Lifetime Achievement Award: Micheal Douglas

Indian Panorama:

- This section of IFFI will highlight 25 feature films and 20 non-feature films from India.
- The opening film in the feature section is the Malayalam film "Aattam," while the non-feature section features "Andro Dreams" from Manipur.

Schemes and Committees News

Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY)

Context

The Union government's scheme to provide 5 kg of free food grains every month to 80 crore Indians, which is slated to end this December, will be extended for another five years.

Key points

- The Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) was introduced in 2020 as a pandemic relief measure, providing 5 kg of free foodgrains per beneficiary a month in addition to the 5 kg of subsidised foodgrains they were entitled to under the National Food Security Act.
- This is now being extended to another 5 years.

Production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme

In news

- About 80% funds for semiconductor PLI remain unused.
- About \$8 billion of the \$10 billion allocated by the Centre for the production of semiconductors under the PLI.

Key points

Production-linked incentive scheme

- Aims to enhance India's manufacturing capabilities and exports in 14 economic sectors
- Scheme comes under Ministry of Commerce & Industry
- Govt has allocated a \$26 billion fund.
- PLI scheme is expected to have a cascading effect on the country's MSME ecosystem
- India is expected to raise bilateral trade with South Korea to \$50 billion by 2030 in battery storage solutions through PLI scheme.

The 14 sectors under PLI

1. Mobile Manufacturing and Specified Electronic Components
2. Critical Key Starting Materials/Drug
3. Intermediaries & Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients
4. Manufacturing of Medical Devices
5. Automobiles and Auto Components
6. Pharmaceuticals Drugs
7. Specialty Steel
8. Telecom & Networking Products
9. Electronic/Technology Products
10. White Goods (ACs and LEDs)
11. Food Products

12. Textile Products: MMF segment and technical textiles
13. High efficiency solar PV modules
14. Advanced Chemistry Cell (ACC) Battery Drones and Drone Components.

Defense News

De-induction of the IL-38

Context

- The de-induction of the IL-38 aircraft was done recently.
- C-295 aircraft in the medium-range maritime patrol aircraft (MPA) can take its role in the future

About IL-38

- IL-38 is a maritime reconnaissance aircraft that was commissioned into the Indian Navy in 1977 and remained a formidable air asset throughout its service life for nearly 44 years.
- It was with the induction of IL 38 aircraft that the Navy moved into the arena of airborne Long Range Maritime Reconnaissance (LRMR) combined with long range anti-submarine search and strike, anti-shipping strike, electronic signal intelligence and distant SAR.
- The IL 38 is an all-weather aircraft with long endurance and substantial operating range. Having clocked nearly 10,000 hours of operational flying.

Leave benefits for women in armed forces

Context

Defence Minister has approved a proposal to grant maternity, childcare and child adoption leave to women soldiers, sailors, and air warriors on a par with the officers.

Key points

- The move was in line with the vision of “inclusive participation” of all women in the armed forces, irrespective of their ranks.
- At present, women officers get maternity leave of 180 days with full pay for each child, subject to a maximum of two children.
- Childcare leave of 360 days is granted in total service career (subject to the child being less than 18 years of age) to women officers.
- Child adoption leave of 180 days is granted after the date of the valid adoption of a child below one

year of age.

Bongosagar-23

About:

- It is an annual naval exercise which is aimed at developing a high degree of interoperability and joint operational skills through the conduct of a wide spectrum of maritime exercises between India and Bangladesh
- Indian Navy ships Kuthar, Kiltan and Maritime Patrol Aircraft (MPA) Dornier participated in the exercise.
- INS Kuthar is an indigenously built guided-missile Corvette.
- INS Kiltan is an indigenously built anti-submarine Corvette.
- Both ships are part of the Indian Navy's Eastern Fleet based at Visakhapatnam.

Science and Technology News

NICED makes quick detection of drug-resistant H. pylori possible

Context

- A two-step PCR-based assay of a small region of the Helicobacter pylori (H. pylori) bacteria can help detect H. pylori infection and also identify clarithromycin-resistant bacteria and those which are drug-sensitive in six-seven hours
- This has been developed by a team of researchers from the National Institute of Cholera and Enteric Diseases (ICMR-NICED), Kolkata.

Traffic Collision Avoidance Systems (TCAS)- Kavach

Context

The deadly collision between two passenger trains in southern India's Vizianagaram district in Andhra Pradesh which killed 14 people and injured fifty persons could have been averted if Traffic Collision Avoidance Systems (TCAS) were in place.

About TCAS - Kavach

- Kavach is a cab signalling train control system with anti-collision features.
- Simply put, it plays the role of a watchdog over the existing signalling system.
- It was developed over a period of 10 years, starting in 2012, by the Indian Railways Research Designs and Standards Organisation (RDSO).

- Kavach is designed to give out warnings to the loco pilot in case he does not notice the 'red signal,' and instead of stopping, is going to overshoot the signal.
- After giving warnings on the loco pilot's display, if the pilot does not slow down below 15 kilometres per hour, the Kavach system automatically applies brakes to bring the train to a halt.

Miscellaneous News

Zika Virus

Context

Five Karnataka villages come under surveillance after Zika virus outbreak.

About Zika Virus

- It is a mosquito-borne virus that was first identified in the Zika Forest of Uganda in 1947.
- It is primarily transmitted to humans through the bite of infected Aedes mosquitoes, particularly Aedes aegypti and Aedes albopictus.
- It can also spread through sexual contact, blood transfusion, and from an infected mother to her baby during pregnancy or childbirth.
- This virus infection is usually mild, it can have serious consequences for pregnant women and their babies.
- Infection during pregnancy can lead to birth defects such as microcephaly, as well as other neurological disorders in the baby.
- It has also been linked to Guillain-Barré syndrome, a rare autoimmune disorder that can lead to muscle weakness and paralysis.
- Treatment: There is no specific treatment available for Zika virus infection or disease.

Parkinson's Disease

Context

Scientists have discovered a link between air pollution and Parkinson's disease.

About:

- It is a progressive disorder that affects the nervous system and the parts of the body controlled by the nerves.
- Symptoms start slowly
- The risk of developing the disease increases with age.

Symptoms:

- Uncontrollable shaking and tremors
- Slowed movement
- Balance difficulties and eventual problems standing up
- Stiffness in limbs
- Speech changes
- Writing changes
- Loss of automatic movements

Causes:

- Genes
- Environmental triggers
- Presence of Lewy bodies: Clumps of specific substances within the brain cells are microscopic markers of Parkinson's disease. These are known as Lewy bodies.

Parkinson disease also have the following additional problems:

- Thinking difficulties
- Swallowing problems
- Depression and emotional changes
- Problems with chewing
- People also experience rapid eye movement sleep behaviour disorder, which involves acting out dreams.
- Bladder problems
- Constipation

Treatment:

- Currently there is no cure for Parkinson's disease but medicines, surgical treatments and other therapies can relieve some symptoms.
- The main therapy for Parkinson's is Levodopa- Nerve cells use levodopa to make dopamine to replenish the brain's dwindling supply.