



# WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS

**OCTOBER, 2024**

**Week-4**

**22-31 Oct., 2024**

★★ Useful for ★★

**CSE, ESE, PSUs, State Services Exams,  
SSC and Banking Exams**

22<sup>nd</sup> OCTOBER 2024

## Rome Declaration on Water Scarcity in Agriculture

- **Context:** The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and Global Framework on Water Scarcity in Agriculture (WASAG) adopted the Rome Declaration on Water Scarcity in Agriculture.

### Key Highlights

- The declaration was launched on the occasion of the High-level Rome Water Dialogue, taking place on the sidelines of FAO's annual World Food Forum (WFF).
- The Declaration was aimed at addressing water scarcity increasingly exacerbated by the climate crisis.
- The WASAG initiative was launched at the United Nations Climate Conference in Marrakesh in 2016 to support countries in addressing water scarcity challenges.

### About Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)

- FAO is a specialized agency of the United Nations that leads international efforts to defeat hunger and improve food security.
- It was founded on 16 October 1945.
- The FAO comprises 195 members, including 194 countries and the European Union.
- **Headquarters:** Rome, Italy.

### About World Food Forum (WFF)

- WFF was launched in 2021 by the Youth Committee of the Food and Agriculture Organization as an independent network of partners.
- It serves as the premier global platform to actively shape agrifood systems for a better food future, accelerating the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- The Global Family Farming Forum was launched by the FAO and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).

- **The theme of 2024 WFF:** 'Good food for all, for today and tomorrow'.

## Egypt declared Malaria-free

- **Context:** The World Health Organization (WHO) has certified Egypt as malaria-free.

### Key Facts

- Certification is granted when a country can prove that indigenous malaria transmission has been interrupted nationwide for at least three consecutive years and has the capacity to prevent re-establishment.
- Egypt is the second country, after Cabo Verde, to achieve this status in 2024 and the fifth in Africa.

### About Malaria

- Malaria is a life-threatening disease, is caused by the Plasmodium parasite and transmitted through bites from infected female Anopheles mosquitoes.
- It is most prevalent in tropical and subtropical regions, including sub-Saharan Africa, Southeast Asia, and South America.
- The most-deadly species is Plasmodium falciparum, but Plasmodium vivax is the most widespread.
- After entering the human body, the parasite multiplies in the liver and then infects red blood cells.

## 6th India-Singapore Defence Ministers' Dialogue

- **Context:** The 6th India-Singapore Defence Ministers' Dialogue will be co-chaired by India's Raksha Mantri Rajnath Singh and Singapore's Defence Minister Dr. Ng Eng Hen.

### Key Facts

- India and Singapore share a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.
- Singapore is a key pillar of India's Act East Policy and an important partner of the Indo-Pacific vision.
- The defence and security partnership between the two countries is an important factor of stability in the Indo-Pacific region.

- The meeting aims to carry forward defence cooperation between the two countries and they will also exchange views on regional and global issues of shared interest.

## 23<sup>rd</sup> OCTOBER 2024

### Space Docking Experiment (SPADEX)

- **Context:** A private entity based in Hyderabad, has delivered two 400 kg satellites to ISRO for its upcoming Space Docking Experiment.

#### About SPADEX (Space Docking Experiment)

- The goal of SPADEX is to enable two spacecraft, a 'Chaser' and a 'Target,' to autonomously dock in orbit, demonstrating precision, navigation, and control—skills crucial for assembling space stations, refueling, and transferring astronauts and cargo in space.
- The development of docking systems dates back to the Cold War, with the Soviet Union achieving the first successful docking in space in 1967, followed by the USA's Apollo-Soyuz Test Project in 1975.
- Since then, docking technology has evolved significantly, becoming more automated and integral to modern space missions, as seen in Russia's Soyuz spacecraft, NASA's Crew Dragon, and China's Tianzhou cargo spacecraft.

#### Significance

- The mission is significant for India's future space exploration plans, including human spaceflight, satellite servicing, and constructing large space structures.
- This experiment is a stepping stone toward India's ambitious space exploration vision, following ISRO's recent successes like Chandrayaan-3 and Aditya-L1.

### Exercise Naseem-Al-Bahr

- **Context:** The Indian Navy and the Royal Navy of Oman recently concluded a bilateral naval exercise, 'Naseem-Al-Bahr' off the coast of Goa.

#### Key Facts

- Initiated in 1993, the exercise was conducted in two phases: the harbour phase and the sea phase.
- The exercise reaffirms India's commitment to constructive collaboration and mutual growth with like-minded nations in the Indian Ocean Region.
- Oman is a crucial pillar of India's West Asia Policy and its oldest regional strategic partner.
- Also, Oman is the first Gulf country with which all the three wings of India's defense forces hold joint exercises.
- The exercise Eastern Bridge is conducted between the Air Force of the two countries, while the exercise Al-Najah is conducted between the Army of the two countries.

## 24<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2024

### Mission Mausam

- **Context:** India is establishing a first-of-its-kind cloud chamber at the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM) under Mission Mausam.

#### Key Facts

- India has previously conducted experiments on cloud seeding through the Cloud Aerosol Interaction and Precipitation Enhancement Experiment (CAIPEEX), which showed that, under the right conditions, cloud seeding could enhance rainfall by up to 46%.
- India's cloud chamber will focus on understanding cloud physics specific to Indian weather systems, particularly monsoon clouds.
- This facility is unique as it will have convection properties, which are rare globally, allowing for detailed studies of cloud behavior under various conditions.
- It will enable scientists to study the particles that contribute to cloud formation and behavior.

## About Cloud Chamber

- A cloud chamber is a closed environment where water vapor and aerosols are injected under controlled humidity and temperature, allowing clouds to form.
- It will be Located at Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), Pune.
- It is First-of-its-kind in India, focusing on convective properties to study Indian monsoon clouds.

## COP 16 of Convention on Biological Diversity

- **Context:** The Sixteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP 16) will be held in Cali, Colombia.

## About Convention on Biological Diversity

- The Convention was opened for signature in 1992 at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Rio Earth Summit). The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) entered into force on 29 December 1993.
- The first session of the COP was scheduled in 1994 in the Bahamas.
- **Secretariat:** Montreal, Canada.
- **Ratification:** The CBD has been ratified by 196 nations, making it one of the most widely adopted international treaties.
  - The United States is the only UN member state that has not ratified the convention.
- **It has 3 main objectives:**
  - The conservation of biological diversity
  - The sustainable use of the components of biological diversity
  - The fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources.
- Governing body is the Conference of the Parties (COP), which meets every two years.

## Kartarpur Corridor

- **Context:** India and Pakistan agreed to renew their agreement to operate the Kartarpur Corridor to

facilitate pilgrims from India to visit the Kartarpur Sahib Gurudwara for another five years.

## Key Highlights

- The agreement was signed in 2019 and was operationalised for the 550th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism and the first of the ten Sikh Gurus.
- It provides for visa-free travel of Indian pilgrims, as well as Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) cardholders, from India on a daily basis, throughout the year, however, all pilgrims are required to return the same day.
- There is no restriction on the faith of the pilgrims who travel through the corridor.

## About Kartarpur Corridor

- It serves as a visa-free border crossing and religious corridor, linking the Gurdwara Darbar Sahib Kartarpur in Pakistan to Gurdwara Dera Baba Nanak in Punjab.
- The Indian part of the corridor involves a 4.1-km-long, four-lane highway from Dera Baba Nanak to the international border.
- Pakistani Sikhs do not have access to this corridor and cannot visit Dera Baba Nanak in India without first obtaining an Indian visa.

25<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2024

## Section 6A of the Citizenship Act, 1955

- **Context:** The Supreme Court upheld the constitutional validity of Section 6A of the Citizenship Act, 1955.

## About Section 6A

- It originates from the Assam Accord signed in 1985, establishing a framework for citizenship based on the cut-off date of March 25, 1971, which marked the onset of the Bangladesh Liberation War.
- Under it, Migrants of Indian origin entering Assam before January 1, 1966, are granted citizenship, while those arriving between January 1, 1966, and

March 24, 1971, receive citizenship rights except voting for ten years. Individuals entering after March 25, 1971, are classified as foreigners and subject to deportation.

### Challenge to Section 6A

- Petitioners argued that the cut-off date is discriminatory, violating Article 14 (right to equality) and inconsistent with Articles 6 and 7, which govern citizenship related to Partition-era migration.
- They claimed it disrupts the demographic balance and infringes on the cultural and linguistic rights of indigenous populations, invoking Article 29.

### Majority Ruling

- The majority upheld the differentiated treatment for Assam, citing its unique historical context.
- Justices stated that the provision does not violate Article 14, balancing humanitarian considerations with the impact of mass migration on Assam's resources.
- They clarified that Section 6A is not inconsistent with Articles 6 and 7, as it addresses individuals not covered by those provisions.
- The majority interpreted Article 29 to allow coexistence of cultures and noted grievances may stem from inadequate enforcement of deportation of illegal immigrants.

### Dissenting Opinion

- Justice Pardiwala found Section 6A unconstitutional, arguing it has failed to curb illegal migration and lacks a sunset clause, leading to demographic imbalances.
- He criticized the provision for not allowing self-identification as a foreigner, making detection reliant on state intervention, which deviates from the principles of the Citizenship Act.

### 5th National Water Awards

- **Context:** The President of India, conferred the 5th National Water Awards in New Delhi.

### Key Highlights

- The National Water Awards focus on the good work and efforts made by individuals and organizations across the country in attaining the government's vision of a Jal Samridh Bharat.
- The Awards were introduced in 2018 by the Ministry of Jal Shakti, and first were given in 2019.
- The awards were presented to 38 winners in nine categories including Best State, Best District, Best Village Panchayat, Best Urban Local Body, Best Water User Association and Best Civil Society.
- **Winners in best District category:**
  - Banda (Uttar Pradesh) from North Zone and Ganderbal (J&K) from north zone (joint winner)
  - Indore (Madhya Pradesh) from west zone
  - Visakhapatnam (Andhra Pradesh) from south zone
  - Balangir (Odisha) from east zone
  - Dhalai (Tripura) from the North East zone

### Kazan BRICS Declaration

- **Context:** The Summit in Kazan, hosted by Russia, focused on Strengthening Multilateralism for Just Global Development and Security.

### Key Highlights

- The Kazan Declaration, issued at the summit, is a comprehensive document that emphasizes the need for enhanced cooperation among the participating countries and presents the bloc's unified stance on key global issues.
- The Kazan Declaration emphasized "Strengthening Multilateralism for Just Global Development and Security" with commitment to fostering peace, ensuring a fairer international order, and promoting sustainable development.
- Russia emphasized a BRICS-led payment system against SWIFT, an international financial network that Russian banks were cut off from in 2022, as well as the escalating situation in West Asia.
- The BRICS nations agreed to explore initiatives, such as BRICS Grain Exchange and BRICS (Re)Insurance Company.

- The summit also endorsed the creation of a BRICS Partner Country category, which would allow other nations to collaborate with BRICS on various projects.
- BRICS R&D Vaccine Center was announced for fostering research in vaccine development.
- India's initiative to create an International Big Cats Alliance was recognized during the summit.

### About BRICS

- It is an acronym that refers to a group of five major emerging national economies: Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa.
- **Origin:** The term BRIC was coined by British economist Jim O'Neill in 2001 to represent emerging economies.
  - The group began holding annual meetings starting in 2006 on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly (UNGA), and its success led to formal summits.
  - BRICS nations have met annually at formal summits since 2009.
  - South Africa was inducted in 2010.
- **Expansion of BRICS:** Argentina, Ethiopia, Egypt, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE are the six new additions to the BRICS.

26<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2024

### PM YASASVI Scheme

- **Context:** PM YASASVI Scheme empowers students to reach their full potential and contribute to society.

### About PM YASASVI

- The PM Young Achievers Scholarship Award Scheme for Vibrant India (PM-YASASVI) aims to uplift students from Other Backward Classes (OBC), Economically Backward Classes (EBC), and Denotified Tribes (DNT) by providing access to quality education.
- It was launched by the Ministry of Social Justice and

Empowerment, it integrates previous scholarship initiatives to create a streamlined support system for disadvantaged students.

- **Selection Process:** Candidates are selected based on the YASASVI Entrance Test (YET), conducted by the National Testing Agency (NTA).

### Objectives

- It promotes educational empowerment and helps vulnerable groups overcome financial barriers.
- It addresses financial constraints, providing a pathway for educational growth from school to higher education, thus contributing to a more inclusive society.
- It plays a crucial role in empowering marginalized communities and promoting their participation in the vision of a prosperous India by 2047.

### First Dry Port in Bihar

- **Context:** Bihar got its first dry port at Bihta, a town near state capital Patna.

### Key Highlights

- A dry port, or inland container depot (ICD), provides a logistics facility away from a seaport or airport for cargo handling, storage, and transportation. It acts as a bridge between sea/air ports and inland regions, facilitating efficient movement of goods.
- It was much needed for Bihar as its export goods mainly agro-based, garments and leather products are manufactured in diverse locations.
- Bihar is a major producer of fruits and vegetables such as potato, tomato, banana, litchi and makhana (fox nuts).

### World Telecommunication Standardization Assembly 2024

- **Context:** Recently the International Telecommunications Union – World Telecommunication Standardization Assembly (ITU-WTSA 2024) concluded in New Delhi.

## Key Highlights of the Event

- **Bharat 6G Alliance:** Key MoUs were signed with international stakeholders, a step towards the promise of India's contribution to 10% of global 6G patents.
- **Academic Engagement:** The 15th ITU Kaleidoscope Conference saw record paper submissions, reflecting global interest in the future of digital infrastructure.
- **Championing Gender Balance:** The event celebrated unprecedented female participation, advancing gender equity in telecommunications with the highest female participation of 26% for the WTSA's held outside Geneva (in Geneva 2022, it was 32%)

## About WTSA

- WTSA is the governing conference for the standardization work of the International Telecommunication Union, organized every four years.
- It is for the first time that the ITU-WTSA is being hosted in India and the Asia-Pacific.
- It is a pivotal global event that has brought together more than 3,000 industry leaders, policy-makers and tech experts from over 190 countries, representing telecom, digital, and ICT sectors.

## About International Telecommunications Union (ITU)

- It is the United Nations specialized agency for Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs).
- Founded in 1865 to facilitate international connectivity in communications networks.
- India has been a member of ITU since 1869.
- It allocates global radio spectrum and satellite orbits.
- It develops the technical standards that ensure networks and technologies seamlessly interconnect, and strive to improve access to ICTs to underserved communities worldwide.

27<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2024

## Emissions Gap Report 2024

- **Context:** The Emissions Gap Report, an annual publication of the UN Environment Programme, has been released.

### Key Highlights

- It is UNEP's spotlight report launched annually in advance of the annual Climate negotiations.
- It tracks the gap between where global emissions are heading with current country commitments and where they ought to be to limit warming to 1.5°C.
- Each edition explores ways to bridge the emissions gap.
- The report assessed countries' Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), which they are required to update every five years, to determine how much the world might warm if these plans were fully implemented.

### Major Findings

- **1.5 Degree Target:** It warned that the Paris Agreement objective of keeping global rise in temperatures to within 1.5 degree Celsius would be gone within a few years.
  - The bare minimum required to keep the 1.5 degree target in sight was 42 percent reduction. The reductions must increase to 57 percent by 2035 to keep the target alive.
- Global emissions in 2023 was 1.3 percent higher than the previous year.
  - Greenhouse gas emissions of China and India, two of the top three emitters, grew by 5.2 percent and 6.1 percent respectively.
- Current climate actions, even in the most optimistic scenario, could reduce global greenhouse gas emissions by only 10 percent by 2030 on 2019 levels.
  - The 2-degree Celsius threshold would be in danger of being breached, unless countries dramatically scale up their climate actions to reduce global emissions in two years.

- Without dramatic cuts to greenhouse gas emissions, the world could face an inevitable 3.1°C temperature rise.

### About The United Nations Environment Program (UNEP)

- It is the leading environmental authority in the United Nations system established in 1972.
- The UN Environment Assembly is the policy-making organ of UNEP.
- **Headquarter:** Nairobi, Kenya.
- **Major Reports:** Global Environment Outlook, The Rise of Environmental Crime Report, Actions on Air Quality, Frontiers Report, Adaptation Gap Report.

### SIMBEX 2024

- **Context:** The 31st edition of the Singapore India Maritime Bilateral Exercise (SIMBEX) began in the Eastern Naval Command at Visakhapatnam.

### Key Facts

- SIMBEX, which began as 'Exercise Lion King' in 1994, holds the distinction of being the longest continuous naval exercise that the Indian Navy has with any other country.
- SIMBEX 2024 will be conducted in two phases – the Harbour Phase at Visakhapatnam and the Sea Phase in the Bay of Bengal.
- This year's edition aims to further strengthen the strategic partnership between India and Singapore by enhancing interoperability, improving maritime domain awareness, and fostering cooperation to address common maritime challenges.

### NOTE:

The Singapore Army and Indian Army conduct bilateral exercises Bold Kurukshetra and Agni Warrior.

### Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY)

- **Context:** The government has doubled the loan limit under the Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY) to Rs. 20 lakh to enhance entrepreneurship in India.

### About Pradhan Mantri MUDRA Yojana (PMMY)

- It was launched by the Prime Minister on April 8, 2015 for providing loans up to Rs.10 Lakh to the non-corporate, non-farm small/micro enterprises
- It aims to provide financial inclusiveness and support to the marginalised and hitherto socio-economically neglected classes.
- **Categories:** MUDRA loans are offered in three categories namely, 'Shishu', 'Kishore And 'Tarun' which signifies the stage of growth or development and funding needs of the borrowers:-
  - **Shishu:** covering loans upto Rs. 50,000/-
  - **Kishore:** covering loans above Rs. 50,000/- and up to Rs. 5 lakhs
  - **Tarun:** covering loans above Rs. 5 lakh and up to Rs. 10 lakh.
- **Latest Developments:** A new "Tarun Plus" category will be introduced for loans ranging from Rs.10 lakh to Rs. 20 lakh, specifically for eligible entrepreneurs.
  - This change, announced by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman during the Union Budget 2024-25, aims to support entrepreneurs who have previously taken and successfully repaid loans under the "Tarun category."
  - The guarantee coverage of PMMY loans for amounts up to 20 lakh will be provided under the Credit Guarantee Fund for Micro Units (CGFMU).

28<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2024

### The Mukaab: World's Largest Building

- **Context:** Saudi Arabia has officially commenced construction of the Mukaab — if completed, it is set to become the world's largest structure.

### Key Highlights

- Located in the capital city of Riyadh, this 400m cube-shaped building will encompass a staggering two million square metres of floor space, equivalent to twenty times that of New York's iconic Empire State Building.



- The 'Mukaab' is part of the ambitious 'New Murabba' project, which aims to revitalise downtown Riyadh and contribute significantly to the Kingdom's Vision 2030 initiative.
- The Mukaab will be built using the modern Najdi architectural style, one of the most prevalent architectural patterns in Saudi Arabia.

### Najdi architectural style combines three main factors:

- the need to respond to the hot desert climate,
- the need for privacy in residential buildings, and
- the need to use locally available materials such as mud brick stone and wood.

## Digital Infrastructure Growth Initiative for India Framework (DiGi Framework)

- **Context:** The US, Japan, and South Korea launched the DiGi Framework to bolster digital infrastructure in India, focusing on 5G, data centers, AI, and smart cities.

### About DiGi Framework

- The DiGi Framework will support projects across India's information and communications technology (ICT) sector, targeting critical areas like 5G, Open RAN, submarine cables, optical fiber networks, data centers, smart cities, e-commerce, AI, and quantum technology.
- This collaboration between the U.S., Japan, and South Korea and Indian private sector partners aims to boost connectivity, enhance digital infrastructure, and advance technological innovation across these sectors in India.
- It further reflects the shared commitment to advance digital transformation and sustainable development in India and the Indo-Pacific region.

### Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)

- It encompasses the foundational digital systems and services that enable efficient, inclusive, and

transparent public service delivery. It refers to the shared digital systems and services that support public service delivery at scale.

- It includes digital identity systems, payment platforms, data exchange frameworks, and other foundational technologies, and characterised by its interoperability, open standards, societal scale, and robust governance frameworks.
- India has become the first country to establish all three foundational Digital Public Infrastructures (DPIs), collectively known as the India Stack. This comprehensive digital framework includes:
  - **Digital Identification (Aadhaar):** Providing a unique digital identity for citizens.
  - **Real-time Rapid Payment System (UPI):** Enabling fast and seamless digital payments.
  - **Data Sharing Architecture (Data Empowerment and Protection Architecture, DEPA):** Facilitating secure and consent-based data sharing.

## YuvAi Initiative and Center for Generative AI, Srijan ("GenAI CoE")

- **Context:** IndiaAI and Meta have launched the Center for Generative AI, Srijan, at IIT Jodhpur, alongside the "YuvAi initiative" in partnership with AICTE.

### About YuvAi Initiative

- Meta, in collaboration with MeitY and the All-India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), launched the "YuvAi initiative for Skilling and Capacity Building".
- The program aims to bridge the AI talent gap in the country by empowering 100,000 students and young developers aged 18-30 to leverage open-source large language models (LLMs) to address real-world challenges.
- **This will include**
  - The establishment of a Gen AI Resource Hub with courses, case studies, and open datasets;
  - An LLM for Young Developers Course designed by Meta; and
  - Master Training Activation Workshops to introduce participants to foundational AI concepts.

## Center for Generative AI, Srijan

- The GenAI CoE aims to advance research and development in AI while fostering the growth of responsible and ethical AI technologies in India.
- It will support and enhance open science innovation across the AI technology landscape.

29<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2024

## 21st Livestock Census

- **Context:** The Union Minister of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, launched the 21st Livestock Census.

### Key Facts

- It is conducted every five years and carries out a headcount of the number of domesticated animals, poultry, and stray animals in the country.
  - Information about the species, breed, age, sex, and ownership status is noted.
- Since 1919, a total of 20 livestock censuses have been carried out so far, with the last being conducted in 2019.

### About 21st Census

- It will take place between October 2024 to February 2025.
- It is expected to cover 30 crore households in India.
- 16 animal species will be collected in the census.
- It will also carry out a headcount of poultry birds such as fowl, chicken, duck, turkey, geese, quail, ostrich, and emu.
- The data from the census will also be crucial to track progress of achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations.

## Rule of Law Index

- **Context:** Recently the Rule of Law Index has been published by the World Justice Project (WJP).

## Key Highlights

- It has evaluated countries based on different factors, including constraints on government powers, absence of corruption, open government, fundamental rights, order and security, regulatory enforcement, civil justice, and criminal justice.
- India stands at 98 out of 142 countries.
- **Top Rank:** Denmark has secured first rank, followed by Norway, Finland, Sweden, and Germany in terms of law and order.
- **Worst Rank:** Pakistan has been ranked 140 among 142 countries making it the third worst country in the world. Mali and Nigeria are the only countries ranked lower than Pakistan.

## The World Justice Project (WJP)

- It is an independent, nonpartisan, multidisciplinary organization working to create knowledge, build awareness, and stimulate action to advance the rule of law worldwide.

30<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2024

## Belt and Road Initiative

- **Context:** Brazil recently decided against joining China's multi-billion-dollar Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

## Key Highlights

- This marks a major setback to China's BRI after India's refusal to endorse the mega project.
- Brazil has become the second country after India in the BRICS bloc to deny support.
- Brazil wants to take the relationship with China to a new level, without having to sign an accession contract.
  - Joining BRI may fail to bring any tangible benefits for Brazil in the short term but could also make relations with the U.S.A more difficult.

## About Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)

- China proposed the BRI in 2013 with the purpose of restoring the ancient Silk Route.
  - The initiative aims to connect Asia with Europe and Africa, through a network of railways, highways, ports, airports, and other infrastructure projects with the intent to promote trade, investment, and economic growth in participating countries.
- China has presented the BRI as an open arrangement in which all countries are welcome to participate.
  - So far, China has signed BRI cooperation agreements with more than 150 countries and 30 international organisations.
- **The BRI comprises two main components:** The Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st century Maritime Silk Road.
  - The Silk Road Economic Belt focuses on improving connectivity and cooperation between China and countries in Central Asia, Europe, and West Asia, while the 21st century Maritime Silk Road focuses on strengthening maritime cooperation between China and countries in Southeast Asia, South Asia, and Africa.
- The main portion of the required infrastructure build is expected to continue until 2035.

## Ayushman Bharat

- **Context:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the expanded Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) scheme.

### Key Highlights

- The Scheme will apply to all aged 70 and above, irrespective of their socio-economic status, with a benefit cover of Rs 5 lakh per year in empanelled hospitals across India.
- Under the expanded scheme, senior citizens will get a separate Ayushman Vaya Vandana Card.
- Eligible beneficiaries covered under Private health insurance policies or Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) scheme will also be eligible to avail benefits under PMJAY.

- Those already availing benefits of Central Government Health Scheme (CGHS) and Ex-Servicemen Contributory Health Scheme (ECHS) may have to either choose their existing scheme or opt for PMJAY.

## BRIC-NABI

- **Context:** The Union Science and Technology Minister has inaugurated the BRIC-National Agri-Food Biomanufacturing Institute (NABI).

### Key Highlights

- The establishment of BRIC-NABI is a strategic merger between the National Agri-Food Biotechnology Institute (NABI), and the Centre of Innovative and Applied Bioprocessing (CIAB),
  - Both are autonomous institutes under the Department of Biotechnology (DBT).
- The facility aims to transform India's agri-food sector through advanced biotechnology
- The combined expertise of NABI and CIAB will enhance agricultural productivity through innovations such as genetically modified crops with higher yields, better disease resistance, and improved nutritional content.

31<sup>st</sup> OCTOBER 2024

## Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH)

- **Context:** The Union Government has decided to include four new components, Hydroponics, Aquaponics, Vertical Farming, and Precision Agriculture, under the Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH).

## About Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH)

- It is a Central Sponsored Scheme (CSS) implemented from 2014-15 that promotes the cultivation of fruits, vegetables, root and tuber crops, mushrooms, spices, flowers, aromatic plants, coconut, cashew, cocoa and bamboo.

- Under MIDH, financial & technical assistance is provided to States/UTs for following major interventions/activities:
  - Setting up of nurseries, tissue culture units for production of quality seed and planting material.
  - Area expansion i.e. Establishment of new orchards and gardens for fruits, vegetables, and flowers.
  - Protected cultivation, i.e. poly-house, green-house, etc, to improve the productivity & grow off season high value vegetables and flowers.
  - Organic farming and certification.
  - Creation of water resources structures and watershed management.
  - Bee-keeping for pollination.
  - Creation of Post Harvest Management and Marketing infrastructure.

## United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA)

- **Context:** Israel's parliament passed two Bills to ban the UNRWA from operating in Israel and the Palestinian territories.



### Key Facts

- One Bill prohibits UNRWA's operations in Israel, while the other cuts official ties and removes legal immunity for UNRWA staff.
- UNRWA also designated a terrorist organization, severing all ties with the agency.
- These measures may disrupt aid distribution in Gaza, impacting 2 million Palestinians facing shortages of food, water, and medicine.

### About UNRWA

- The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) was established in 1949 to support Palestine refugees affected by the 1948 War, with operations starting in 1950.
- It is funded mainly by voluntary contributions from UN member states
- It provides essential services, including education, health, and emergency relief, to 5.9 million Palestinian refugees and their descendants across Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan.
- It plays a critical role in Gaza's humanitarian aid distribution and recently implemented an emergency polio vaccination campaign.

