- EU's Act aims to ensure that **fundamental rights, democracy, rule of law and environmental sustainability are protected from high risk AI,** while **boosting innovation.**
- **Key highlights of AI Act**
  - EU act defines **4 levels of risk- for AI systems:**
    - **Unacceptable risk (Prohibition):** Violation of EU Fundamental Rights.
    - **High-risk (Require conformity assessment and monitoring):** Impact on health, safety Fundamental Rights, etc.
    - **Specific Transparency risk (Require Information and transparency obligations):** Risk of manipulation, impersonation, etc.
    - **Minimal risk (No specific regulations):** Common AI systems like spam filters.
  - **General-purpose AI models** with systemic risks are mandated to **assess and mitigate risks, report serious incidents, conduct state-of-the-art tests, etc.**
  - Use of **real-time remote biometric identification in publicly accessible spaces** (i.e. facial recognition using CCTV) is prohibited with few exceptions.
  - **Tackling racial and gender bias:** High-risk systems need to be trained with sufficiently representative datasets to minimise the risk of biases.
- **Steps taken by India to Promote AI**
  - Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology issued an **Advisory directing all platforms to label any under-trial/ unreliable AI models, and secure explicit prior approval from government** before deploying such models.
  - **India AI mission** to encourage Development of AI in India.
  - **National AI Strategy, 2018.**

> **Other Steps taken to promote AI Globally**
> - **Bletchley Declaration** for AI signed by **29 countries including India** and also by EU.
> - **Global Partnership on AI (GPAI) New Delhi Declaration** built consensus among GPAI members on advancing safe, secure, and trustworthy AI.
> - **Hiroshima AI Process (HAP) by G7** to regulate AI.

International Energy Agency (IEA) released annual Global Methane Tracker 2024 report

- **Key findings**
  - **Methane Emissions (ME) from energy sector** remained near a **record high in 2023.**
    - Production and use of **fossil fuels** (oil, natural gas and coal) **accounted for nearly 120 million tonnes** (Mt) and **bioenergy accounted for 10 Mt** of ME.
  - Around **70% i.e. 80 Mt of ME from fossil fuels** comes from **top 10 emitting countries.**
    - **United States is largest emitter** of methane from oil and gas operations, followed by Russia. China is highest emitter in coal sector.
  - Around **US $170 Billon is required by 2030** to achieve a **75% cut in ME.**
- **Methane (CH_4)** is an **Odorless, Colorless,** and **Flammable** gas. It is a **greenhouse gas.**
  - It is a **second most contributor to global warming** after carbon dioxide and **primary contributor** to formation of **ground-level ozone.**
- **Initiatives to control Methane emission Global**
  - **International Methane Emissions Observatory by UNEP** to provide reliable data to reduce ME.
  - **Global Methane Pledge** launched at **COP26 (2021)** to cut ME by 30% by 2030.
  - **Global Methane Initiative** focused on use of methane as a valuable energy source.
  - India
    - **GobarDhan** (Galvanizing Organic Bio-Agro Resources) scheme.
    - **National Biogas and Organic Manure Programme.**

> **International Energy Agency (IEA)**
> - **Created in 1974** to help co-ordinate a collective response to major disruptions in oil supply.
> - Consists of **31 member countries, 13 Association countries,** and **5 accession countries.**
>   - **India** is one of the **associate members.**
> - To be a member, **country should be an OECD member** along with a capacity to **hold a crude reserve for 90 days** of previous year's import.

NITI Aayog released Boosting Exports from MSMEs (Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises) Report

▶ **Opportunities for MSMEs export highlighted by report**
- ➡ **Wood products and handloom textiles** have huge potential because of its **unique aesthetics and cultural appeal.**
- ➡ Growing demand for **natural and sustainable products** in other countries.

▶ **Challenges in boosting export from MSMEs**
- ➡ **Limited access to finance:** Current supply of credit via commercial banks fulfills only 16% of credit demand of MSMEs, Lack of access to working capital finance etc.
- ➡ **Limited Market Access:** Limited exposure to global exports market, constraints related to international quality standards, etc.
- ➡ **Business environment-related challenges:** Numerous regulatory compliances, delays in customs clearance, Shortage of credible and internationally accredited testing labs etc.
- ➡ **Taxing merchandise export procedure:** High volume of paperwork, requirement of approval from multiple authorities, etc.

Definition of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises

Parameters	Micro	Small	Medium
Investment in Plant and Machinery	< 1 Crore INR	< 10 Crore INR	< 50 Crore INR
Annual Turnover	< 5 Crore INR	< 50 Crore INR	< 250 Crore INR

▶ **Recommendations from report**
- ➡ **Creating one-stop information channel** for exporters to serve as knowledge base for export procedures, and product- specific regulations.
- ➡ **Creation of National Trade Network Portal** to improve efficiency of export process and reduce costs.
- ➡ **Promoting e-commerce exports** and **ease of merchandise exports** by supporting first-time exporters.
- ➡ **Better measurement of exports originating from MSMEs** for identifying areas of improvement and evaluations of policy interventions.

Cabinet approves Inter-Governmental Framework Agreement (IGFA) with UAE on India-Middle East Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC)

▶ **Aim of the IGFA:** To enhance bilateral relations and further strengthen relations between the two countries in the Ports, Maritime, and Logistics sectors.

It also includes exploring further potential of **future joint investment and collaboration** for development of the IMEC.

▶ **About IMEC**

It is a **proposed transit network** that aims at integration of Asia, Europe, and the Middle East.
- ➡ ♦ It consists of **railroad, ship-to-rail networks** (road and sea), **and road transport routes** (and networks)

MoU was signed between India, European Union, France, Germany, Italy, Saudi Arabia, UAE, and the US **at New Delhi G20 summit to establish it.**

▶ **Significance of IMEC**
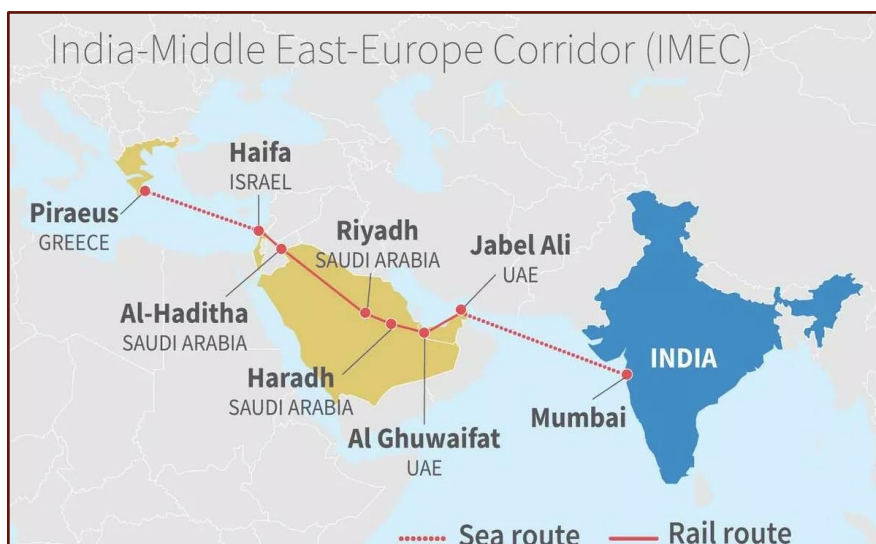
Enhancing Prosperity: Through an increased flow of energy and digital communications.
- ♦ The combined GDP of IMEC nations is about **40 percent of the world's total GDP.**

It offers an alternative approach to **China's Belt and Road Initiative.**
- ➡ It will make the **global supply chain more resilient.**
- ➡ Speed up **trade between India and Europe and** help India to increase **strategic engagement with the Arab world.**

▶ **Challenges:** Complex geopolitics of the region (present Israel-Hamas crisis), lack of commitment regarding the financial cost, etc.

India-Middle East-Europe Corridor (IMEC)

Piraeus GREECE · Haifa ISRAEL · Riyadh SAUDI ARABIA · Jabel Ali UAE · Al-Haditha SAUDI ARABIA · Haradh SAUDI ARABIA · Al Ghuwaifat UAE · Mumbai · INDIA

········ Sea route — Rail route

Cabinet approves signing of various MoUs between India and Bhutan

- **Signed MoUs areas and their Significance**
  - **General Supply of Petroleum and Related Products:** To promote trade in hydrocarbons and to ensure a secured supply of petroleum to Bhutan.
  - **Energy Efficiency and Energy Conservation:** To assist Bhutan in enhancing energy efficiency in the household sector by promoting star labeling program.
  - **Food safety:** To promote ease of doing business by reducing compliance costs.
- **India and Bhutan's Relationship:** The basic framework of the relationship is the **Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation** signed in 1949, which was renewed in 2007.
  - **Trade:** Bilateral trade reached **$ 1.42 Billion (2021-22),** accounting for 80% of Bhutan's overall trade, India is Bhutan's top import and export destination.
  - ♦ **Trade, Commerce, and Transit Agreement (2016)** establishes a free trade regime and allows Bhutan duty-free transit of goods to/ from third countries.
  - **Developmental:** Scholarships to Bhutanese students, support in Skill development initiatives and sectors like health, agriculture, etc.
  - **Hydropower:** India constructed **four major hydroelectric projects in Bhutan.**
  - **New areas of Cooperation:** Launch of **RuPay, and BHIM app in Bhutan,** joint development of **India-Bhutan SAT, etc.**
- **Challenges:** Bhutan-China border discussions on the Doklam plateau, Delay in completion of projects by India, etc.

Uniform Civil Code (UCC) in Uttarakhand gets the President's assent, becomes law

- Uttarakhand became the **first state in the country** after independence to adopt UCC.
  - A common civil code has been in place in Goa since the **Portuguese Civil Code was adopted in 1867.**
- UCC is **set of laws** that **govern personal matters,** including marriage, divorce, adoption, inheritance, and succession, **for all citizens regardless of religion.**
  - **Article 44 of the constitution** endeavors to secure UCC for citizens throughout Indian territory.
- **Key features of the act**
  - **Applicability:** to all residents of Uttarakhand, except tribal communities.
  - **Regulates live-in relationships:** stipulates registration of live-in relationships.
  - **Prohibits bigamy or marriages** with more than one person.
  - **Inheritance:** It extends equal property rights for sons and daughters across all classes.
- **Need for UCC**
  - **Ensuring Equality:** Presently, different communities are governed by different personal laws.
  - **Gender Justice:** It will promote gender justice by removing the inbuilt discriminatory provisions of personal laws.
  - **National Integration:** It will separate religion from social relations and personal laws, ensuring equality and thus harmony in society.
  - ♦ Also held by the Supreme Court in **Mohd. Ahmed Khan v Shah Bano Begum** (1985) case.

Challenges in the adoption of UCC

- **Plurality and diversity:** Hugely diversified customary practices make it difficult to evolve consensus on UCC.
  - In 2018, **the Law Commission of India** opined that UCC is **"neither necessary nor desirable at this stage"** in the country.
- **Indian Secularism:** which is based on diversity of religion and people.
- **Concerns of Minorities:** Fear of loss of identity and marginalization.
- **Contradictory provisions of the Constitution** as constitution safeguard the local customs of many tribes.

Also in News

Dibang Multipurpose Hydroelectric Project (DMHP)

- Prime Minister has laid the foundation stone for the **DMHP recently.**
- **Capacity:** It will produce around **2,880 MW** of electricity.
- **Location: Lower Dibang Valley district** of Arunachal Pradesh.
  - Designed as a project under National Hydroelectric Power Corporation and developed over **Dibang River** (a tributary of Brahmaputra)
- To be constructed with **Roller Compacted Concrete (RCC)** technique.
  - It will be the **highest RCC dam in the World.**
- It will be **278 meters high** and would be the **highest Concrete-Gravity dam in India.**

Levels & Trends in Child Mortality Report 2023

- The **United Nations Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation (UN IGME)** has released it.
- **Key highlights**
- Global under-five child deaths **drop to historic low in 2022.**
  - ♦ However, at current rates, **59 countries will miss the SDG under-five mortality target.**
  - Despite progress, **an estimated 4.9 million children** died before their fifth birthday in 2022.
- **About UN IGME**
  - was formed in 2004.
  - **Aim:** to share data on child mortality, improve methods for child mortality estimation.
  - Led by the **United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).**

Prasar Bharti - Shared Audio Visuals for Broadcast and Dissemination (PB-SHABD)

- Ministry of Information & Broadcasting launched **PB-SHABD, websites of DD News and Akashvani News** and updated News on Air mobile app.
- **About PB- SHABD**
  - A news sharing service from **Prasar Bharati.**
  - Platform is **designed to provide daily news feeds** in video, audio, text, photo and other formats to the subscribers from media landscape.
  - Service is offered **free of cost for the first year** and will provide news stories in **all major Indian languages across fifty categories.**

World Monuments Fund (WMF)

- **The Eri (tank) network** in the Kazhuveli watershed region in **Tamil Nadu** is to be proposed for **nomination to the World Monuments Fund Watch 2025 program.**
  - **The World Monuments Watch** is a nomination-based program that connects local heritage preservation to global awareness and action.
- **About WMF**
  - It's the leading **independent organization** devoted to **safeguarding the world's most treasured places.**
  - **Headquarters in New York, also has an office in India.** It has preserved **more than 700 sites in 112 countries.**

Devin: Artificial Intelligence (AI) software engineer

- US-based applied AI lab has introduced the world's first **autonomous** AI software engineer.
- **About Devin AI:**
  - It can **build and deploy apps end-to-end** and can also **train and fine-tune its own AI models.**
  - It can **plan and execute complex engineering tasks** requiring thousands of decisions.
  - It can **recall relevant context at every step, learn over time, and fix mistakes.**

Electric Mobility Promotion Scheme (EMPS) 2024

- **The Ministry of Heavy Industries** has launched EMPS **to accelerate the adoption of EVs** in the country.
- It is a fund-limited scheme with a **total outlay of Rs. 500 crore** for **4 months.**
- **Eligible EV categories** include
  - **Two Wheelers** (Private, Corporate, and Commercial Vehicles)
  - **Three-wheelers** (including E-Rickshaws and Carts)
- The Scheme aims **to support around 3.7 Lakh EVs** during its tenure
- It applies **to only those vehicles that are fitted with advanced batteries.**

Pradhan Mantri Samajik Utthan evam Rozgar Adharit Jankalyan (PM-SURAJ) portal

- Prime Minister launched one-stop PM-SURAJ portal for credit schemes for marginalized sections.
- **About PM-SURAJ Portal**
  - **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MoSJE).
  - **Objective:** Uplifting most marginalized sections of society, and **supporting credit assistance** to **one lakh entrepreneurs** hailing from **disadvantaged communities.**
  - **Credit support** will be provided **to eligible persons** across country, facilitated through **banks, Non-Banking Financial Company-Micro Finance Institutions' (NBFC-MFIs),** and other organisations.

Adopt a Heritage 2.0 Program

- **The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)** and various agencies have signed MoUs for **monument adoption** under Adopt a Heritage 2.0.
- **Adopt a Heritage 2.0 Program:**
  - Different **corporate stakeholders** can **adopt a monument or specific amenities** at a monument under the program.
  - It clearly defines amenities sought for different monuments as per **Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act 1958.**
  - **Aim:** to enhance the amenities at the monuments by utilizing corporate stakeholder **CSR funds.**

Personality in News — Bhima Nayak

Recently, Government paid tribute to Great Tribal Leader Bhima Nayak.

- **About Bhima Nayak** (sometimes spelled as **Bhima Naik**)
- Resident of Dhaba Bawdi in **Badwani district of Madhya Pradesh. Prominent leader of Bhils of Nimar.**
  - First revolutionary to get **punishment of Kalapani** and died in 1876.
  - **Contributions**
- Took part in **Uprising of 1857 against British Raj** raising an **anti-British force** by bringing in men from Bhil, Bhilala, Mandoi, and Naik tribes, and **collaborated with Tantia Tope.**
  - Known as **Robinhood of Nimar** as he looted British treasury and distributed same amongst poor people.
  - Important role in **1857 Ambagani War. Values:**
  - Courage, Valour, Leadership etc.