MADE EASY

WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS

AUGUST, 2024

Week-3

15-21 August, 2024

★★ *Useful for* ★★

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

15th AUGUST 2024

Uniform Civil Code

- **Context:** In his 11th Independence Day speech, PM Modi called for a Uniform Civil Code (UCC), framing it as a "Secular Civil Code" as distinct from the existing "communal civil code".

About Uniform Civil Code (UCC)

- A Uniform Civil Code refers to the provision of one law for the entire country, applicable to all religious communities, in their personal matters such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, adoption, etc.
- Currently, separate personal laws apply for the members of different major religions.
- The Supreme Court in 2019 hailed Goa as a "shining example" of an Indian State which has a functioning UCC.

Constitutional Provisions

- Article 44 contained in part IV of the Constitution says that the state "shall endeavor to secure for the citizens a uniform civil code throughout the territory of India".
- Part IV of the Constitution outlines the Directive Principles of State Policy, which, while not enforceable or justiciable in a court of law, are fundamental to the country's governance.

UCC in India

- **UCC in Goa:** It follows the Portuguese Civil Code of 1867, which means that people of all religions in Goa are subject to the same laws on marriage, divorce, and succession.
  - The Goa Daman and Diu Administration Act of 1962, which was passed after Goa joined the union as a territory in 1961, gave Goa permission to apply the Civil Code.
- States like Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Assam have expressed their willingness to follow the UCC, none have officially adopted it.

UN Security Council

- **Context:** Recently, the G4 Countries have said that without reforms the UN Security Council is ill equipped to address global challenges.

Need For Reform

- The G4 nations stressed that the lack of adequate geographic representation in the Security Council is responsible for its failures.
- Specifically, they highlighted the non-representation of Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean, as well as the under-representation of the Asia-Pacific region in the permanent category of the UNSC. Addressing this historical imbalance is crucial for the Council to effectively tackle current global challenges.
- India's Charge d'Affaires and Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN pointed out that recent geopolitical events have revealed the UNSC's limitations in safeguarding international peace and security.
- The realities of 1945, when the Council was established, no longer align with today's geopolitical landscape.
- The G4 nations firmly believe that any reform of the Council must address the lack of representation, especially in the permanent category. Failing to do so would exacerbate existing imbalances.

About United Nations Security Council (UNSC)

- It is one of the UN's six main organs and is aimed at maintaining international peace and security.
- **The UNSC currently consists of five permanent members (P5):** China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States.
- These P5 members hold veto power, allowing them to block any substantive resolution.
- Additionally, there are ten non-permanent members elected for two-year terms.
- More than 50 United Nations Member States have never been Members of the Security Council.

Mpox

- **Context:** The World Health Organization (WHO) declared Mpox a "public health emergency of international concern (PHEIC)".

About Mpox:

- Mpox is caused by the monkeypox virus (MPXV), an enveloped double-stranded DNA virus of the Orthopoxvirus genus.
- **There are two genetic clades of the virus:** Clade I and Clade II.
- **Origin:** Discovered in monkeys in Denmark (1958)
  - First human case reported in a nine-month-old boy in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (1970)
  - Initially emerged in central, east, and west Africa

Global outbreak occurred in 2022–2023

- **Transmission:** Physical contact with an infectious person:
  - Contact with contaminated materials
  - Contact with infected animals
- **Vaccination and Funding:** Two vaccines for Mpox are currently in use, recommended by WHO's Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on Immunization and approved by various national authorities.
  - An initial $15 million is needed for surveillance, preparedness, and response.
  - WHO has released $1.45 million from its Contingency Fund for Emergencies, with potential for additional funds as needed.

16th AUGUST 2024

National Pest Surveillance System (NPSS)

- **Context:** Union Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Minister Shivraj Singh Chauhan inaugurated the National Pest Surveillance System (NPSS) in New Delhi.

Key Highlights

- The aim of NPSS is to reduce the dependence of farmers on pesticide retailers and inculcate a scientific approach among them towards pest management.
- The system will help farmers to connect with agriculture scientists and experts on controlling pests using their phone.
  - Farmers can take photos of the infested crops or the insect using the NPSS platform and these will reach scientists and experts.
- NPSS will analyze the latest data on pests using AI tools to help farmers and experts in pest control and management.

New Ramsar Sites

- **Context:** Recently, the Nanjarayan Bird Sanctuary and Kazhuveli Bird Sanctuary in Tamil Nadu; and Tawa Reservoir of Madhya Pradesh have been recognised as wetlands of international importance under the Ramsar Convention, taking the tally to 85.

Nanjarayan Bird Sanctuary

- Located in Tiruppur district, in Tamil Nadu this sanctuary is a haven for avian biodiversity, especially for waterfowl habitats.
- The sanctuary is named after Nanjarayan, a local deity associated with the well-being of birds and animals.

Kazhuveli Bird Sanctuary

- Found in Villupuram, Kazhuveli in Tamil Nadu that provides essential habitat for various bird species, including migratory visitors.
- With the addition of Nanjarayan and Kazhuveli, Tamil Nadu now boasts 18 Ramsar sites—the highest number in India.

Tawa Reservoir

- It is located in Madhya Pradesh's Narmadapuram district.

- Its inclusion underscores our commitment to preserving these vital ecosystems, which play a crucial role in maintaining biodiversity, water purification, and flood control.

Purandar Figs

- **Context:** The Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) has facilitated the export of India's first ready-to-drink fig juice, made from GI-tagged Purandar Figs, to Poland.

About Purandar Figs

- It is grown in the Purandar taluka of Maharashtra's Pune district and is known to be one of India's finest figs.
- It has high pulp content and a rich source of vitamins & minerals. Also, it has an excellent sweet taste and an attractive violet colour.
- These specialties are attributed to the climatic factors, red-black soil & salt-free well irrigation technique followed in the Region.
- In 2016, it was given the Geographical Indication (GI) tag.

17ᵗʰ AUGUST 2024

National Geoscience Awards

- **Context:** The President of India, Droupadi Murmu, conferred the prestigious National Geoscience Awards (NGA) for the year 2023.

About the National Geoscience Award (NGA)

- It is one of the oldest and most prestigious national awards in the field of geosciences, instituted by the Ministry of Mines, Govt. of India in the year 1966.
- Before the year 2009, these awards were called National Mineral Awards.
- The objective of these Awards is to honour individuals and teams for extraordinary achievements and outstanding contributions in various fields of geosciences i.e., mineral discovery & exploration, Mining Technology & Mineral Beneficiation, fundamental/ applied geosciences.
- Any citizen of India with significant contribution in any field of geosciences is eligible for the award.
- The Ministry of Mines confers National Geoscience Awards every year in three categories:
  - National Geoscience Award for Lifetime Achievement
  - National Geoscience Award
  - National Young Geoscientist Award

Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV)

- **Context:** The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) successfully launched the third developmental flight of the Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV) from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota.

Key Highlights

- The SSLV-D3 placed the Earth observation satellite EOS-08 precisely into orbit.
- It also marks the completion of ISRO/Department of Space's SSLV Development Project.
- NewSpace India Limited (NSIL), ISRO's commercial arm, and India's private space industry can now produce SSLVs for commercial missions.

About SSLV

- It is a three-stage Launch Vehicle configured with three Solid Propulsion Stages.
- It also has a liquid propulsion-based Velocity Trimming Module (VTM) as a terminal stage, which can help adjust the velocity as it prepares to place the satellite.
- **Significance:** Essentially, the aim behind SSLVs is to produce low-cost launch vehicles with short turnaround times and minimal infrastructural requirements.
  - The SSLV can launch satellites weighing up to 500kg and accommodate multiple satellites.

- Before SSLVs, smaller payloads had to be sent into Space using other launch vehicles carrying multiple, bigger satellites. They depended upon the launch schedules of those satellites.

18th AUGUST 2024

Nord Stream Gas Pipeline

- **Context:** Almost two years after bombing of the Nord Stream pipelines under the Baltic Sea, it remains unclear who sabotaged the pipes.

About the Nord Stream Pipeline

- Nord Stream is a twin pipeline system, a subsea export gas pipeline that runs under the Baltic Sea carrying gas from Russia to Europe, built and operated by Nord Stream AG.
- **Source:** Bovanenkovo oil and gas condensate deposit in Western Siberia, and runs from Vyborg, Russia to Lubmin near Greifswald, Germany.
- It crosses the Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) of Russia, Finland, Sweden, Denmark and Germany, as well as the territorial waters of Russia, Denmark, and Germany.
- Nord Stream 1, completed in 2011 (From Vyborg in Leningrad to Lubmin near Greifswald, Germany).
- Nord Stream 2, completed in September 2021 (From Ust-Luga in Leningrad to Lubmin).

Krishi-Decision Support System (Krishi-DSS)

- **Context:** The Department of Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare launched Krishi-Decision Support System (Krishi-DSS).

About Krishi-DSS

- It is a geospatial platform for agriculture.
- It provides access to satellite images, weather data, reservoir storage, groundwater levels, and soil health information.

- It Includes modules for crop mapping, drought monitoring, crop weather watch, field parcel segmentation, soil information, and ground truth data.
- **Functional Capabilities:** Analyzes cropping patterns and encourages sustainable agriculture.
  - Offers real-time information on drought indicators.
  - Tracks weather impacts on crops.
  - Provides comprehensive soil data for crop suitability and conservation.
- **Purpose:** Aims to empower farmers, inform policies, and promote agricultural innovation and sustainability.
  - Supports development of farmer-centric solutions and early disaster warnings.

Green Tug Transition Program (GTTP)

- **Context:** The Union Minister of Port Shipping and Waterways, launched the Standard operating procedure (SOP) for Green Tug Transition Program (GTTP) in New Delhi.

About Green Tug Transition Program (GTTP)

- The GTTP is designed to phase out conventional fuel-based harbor tugs operating in Indian Major Ports and replace them with green tugs powered by cleaner and more sustainable alternative fuels.
- Under Phase 1 of the GTTP four Major Ports— Jawaharlal Nehru Port Authority, Deendayal Port Authority, Paradip Port Authority, and V.O. Chidambaranar Port Authority—will procure or charter at least two green tugs each.
- The goal of the GTTP is to convert at least 50% of all tugs into Green Tugs by 2030 and to have Green Tugs operating at all major ports.

19th AUGUST 2024

Third Voice of Global South Summit

- **Context:** PM Narendra Modi addressed the inaugural session of the third Voice of the Global South Summit (VOGSS).

Background

- India hosted the inaugural Voice of Global South Summit (VOGSS) in January 2023, and the second edition in November 2023.
  - Both the sessions were held virtually.
- The theme of the 3rd Voice of Global South Summit is "An Empowered Global South for a Sustainable Future".

About Global South

- The term "Global South" was coined by Carl Oglesby, an American political activist, in 1969. He used the term to describe countries suffering from political and economic exploitation by developed nations of the Global North.
- In the simplest sense, Global South refers to the countries of Asia, Africa, Latin America, and Oceania.
- Most of these countries, where 88 per cent of the world population lives, experienced colonial rule and historically lagged in achieving substantial levels of industrialisation.

Justice Hema Committee Report

- **Context:** The Justice Hema Committee report exposed pervasive sexual exploitation and rights violations against women in the Malayalam film industry.

Key Facts

- Five years ago, the report was submitted to the Kerala government.
- The committee identified at least 17 forms of exploitation experienced by women working in 30 different categories within the industry.
  - Key issues included the casting couch, lack of basic amenities, and threats against filing complaints.
- The committee confirms the rumoured existence of the practice of "casting couch" in the industry.

Background

- The three-member committee, consisting of retired High Court Justice K. Hema, former actress Sharada, and retired IAS officer K.B. Valsala Kumari, was established in response to a demand from the Women in Cinema Collective.
- This demand followed the abduction and sexual assault of a leading female actor in 2017—a case that remains in trial, with prominent actor Dileep listed as the eighth accused.

Major Concerns

- Producers are warned by the industry's "power group" not to cast actors who fall out of favour with them.
- Even the release of movies can be prevented as the Film Chamber of Commerce has to issue NOC.
- The report highlights the lack of changing rooms or toilet facilities on the set, especially in outdoor locations, leading to urinary infection for many women.
- Junior artists are in some cases "treated worse than slaves" with work extending up to 19 hours.
- The lack of a written contract is exploited by some to deprive the actors and technicians of even the remuneration promised orally.
- Another alarming finding is that many men assume that women willing to perform intimate scenes on-screen are also willing to do so off-set, reflecting a lack of professionalism and understanding of the craft among men in the industry.

20ᵗʰ AUGUST 2024

India-Japan 2+2 Dialogue

- **Context:** In a significant diplomatic engagement, India and Japan recently conducted their third "2+2" dialogue, bringing together their foreign and defence ministers.

About the India-Japan 2+2 Dialogue

- It refers to a high-level meeting between the foreign affairs and defence ministers (or secretaries) of two countries.

- It's a format that allows for comprehensive discussions on a wide range of issues, including defence cooperation, regional security, and strategic alignment.

- It emphasised defence cooperation and the significance of a free and open Indo-Pacific. Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to a rules-based order in the region, especially in light of China's assertiveness.

- The strategic partnership between India and Japan is closely tied to the Indo-Pacific. For India, this aligns naturally with its Act East policy.

- Both countries recognize the importance of a free and open Indo-Pacific region, where maritime security, trade, and connectivity play crucial roles.

Significance of 2+2 Dialogue

- **Comprehensive Engagement:** The "2+2" format allows for a holistic discussion that combines diplomatic and defence perspectives. It ensures that both ministries align their strategies and policies.

- **Strategic Alignment:** In an increasingly complex geopolitical landscape, countries seek reliable partners who share common interests. The dialogue helps strengthen strategic alignment and mutual understanding.

- **Indo-Pacific Focus:** Many of these dialogues emphasise the Indo-Pacific region—a critical area for global security and economic stability. Participants discuss maritime security, freedom of navigation, and regional stability.

Jan Poshan Kendras

- **Context:** The Union Minister of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution launched a pilot project to transform 60 ration shops in 4 States as "Jan Poshan Kendras". On the occasion, he also launched FPS Sahay application, and Mera Ration app 2.0.

Key Highlights

- Jan Poshan Kendra provides solutions to the demand of Fair Price Shop (FPS) dealers across India to raise their income level.

- The Kendras will offer a diverse range of nutrition-rich food items to consumers as well as provide an additional source of income to the FPS dealers.

- The Jan Poshan Kendra will have provision for storing 50% products under the category of nutrition while the rest for keeping other household items.

About **FPS-Sahay and Mera Ration App 2.0**

- FPS-Sahay, is an on-demand Invoice Based Financing (IBF) application designed to offer completely paperless, presence-less, collateral-free, cash flow-based financing to FPS dealers.

- Mera Ration App 2.0 mobile app is launched with more value-added features for the beneficiaries across the nation.

21th AUGUST 2024

First Policy Makers' Forum' Summit

- **Context:** Union Minister J.P. Nadda launched two important digital healthcare tools at the First Policy Makers' Forum in New Delhi: The Indian Pharmacopoeia Online Portal and the Adverse Drug Reaction Monitoring System (ADRMS) software.

Indian Pharmacopoeia Online Portal

- The Indian Pharmacopoeia Online Portal is a new digital resource that makes drug standards easier to access for everyone, both in India and worldwide.

- This portal is part of India's larger push to go digital, making it simpler for people involved in healthcare to get the information they need.

Adverse **Drug Reaction Monitoring System (ADRMS)**

- The ADRMS is a new tool created in India to help keep track of any problems people might have with medicines and medical devices.

- It is the first system of its kind in the country and allows both regular people and healthcare workers to report issues directly.
- This helps ensure that medicines and medical devices are safe for everyone.

Amul: World's Strongest Food Brand

- **Context:** Amul was honored as the world's strongest food brand by Brand Finance, a leading brand valuation firm. Amul achieved this recognition with a high Brand Strength Index (BSI) score of 91 and a brand valuation of $3.3 billion.

Amul's Market Dominance

- Amul is a major player in India's dairy market, holding large shares in several key areas. It controls 75% of the milk market, 85% of the butter market, and 66% of the cheese market in India.
- This strong presence in the dairy industry is a big reason behind its high BSI score and AAA+ rating.
- The brand is also well-known, widely considered, and often recommended by consumers, further contributing to its success.

Brand Value Comparisons

- Amul, with a brand value of $3.3 billion, stands out among global food brands. Although it shares the AAA+ rating with Hershey's, Hershey's brand value is slightly higher at $3.9 billion but has seen a small decrease.
- Nestlé holds the title of the most valuable food brand in the world with a valuation of $20.8 billion, followed by Lay's at $12 billion.