



CURRENT AFFAIRS : JULY 2023

UNIFORM CIVIL CODE

Recently, the 22nd Law Commission of India (LCI) sought suggestions from various stakeholders on a Uniform Civil Code (UCC).

About Uniform Civil Code (UCC)

- A UCC provides for the formulation of one law for the entire country, which would apply to all religious communities in their personal matters such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, adoption, and succession.
 - o Currently, Indian personal law is complex, with each religion adhering to its specific laws.
- ✓ For instance, Hindu Succession Act 1956 governs Hindus, Sikhs, Jains and Buddhists; Muslim Personal Law governs Muslims; and Indian Succession Act 1925 applies to Christians, Parsis, and Jews.
- Earlier, the Law Commission had furnished a consultation paper on “Reform of Family Law” in 2018, which stated that
 - o A UCC was “neither necessary nor desirable at this stage”.
 - o It recommended that existing family laws across religions required to be amended and codified to tackle discrimination, inequality in personal laws and limit “ambiguity in interpretation” and application.
- Goa is the only place in India where a form of common civil code is in practice, the Portuguese Civil Code of 1867.

Important Judicial Pronouncements related to UCC

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|  | Ahmed Khan v. Shah Bano Begum and others (1985): Parliament should outline the contours of a common civil code. |
|  | Sarla Mudgal v Union of India (1995): Reiterated the need for parliament to implement UCC. |
|  | Shayara Bano v Union of India (2017): SC held that practice of talaq-e-biddat or instantaneous triple talaq is unconstitutional. |

JUDICIAL PENDENCY

The Ministry of Law and Justice recently informed the Rajya Sabha that over 5.02 crore cases were pending in various courts.

- **69.76 thousand, 60.6 lakh, and 4.4 crore cases** are pending in Supreme Court, High courts, and district and subordinate courts.
- **21 judges for every million people** whereas Law Commission had recommended **50 Judges per million.**
- **0.08-0.09%** of the GDP is the budgetary allocation to the judiciary.

Reasons for the pendency of cases

- **Low ratio of judges to population** and delay in filling the vacancies of judicial officers and judges.
- **Frequent Adjournments:** The laid down procedure of allowing a maximum of three adjournments per case is not followed in over 50 per cent of the matters being heard by courts, leading to rising pendency of cases.
- **Lack of infrastructure:** Court complexes lack adequate funds, internet, lackadaisical working style of staff, and courtrooms to occupy judges (if new appointments are made)

- **Delayed investigation:** Delay in processing both civil and criminal cases due to non-availability of counsel, misaligned incentives, the complexity of facts involved, nature of evidence etc. leads to rising judicial pendency.

Initiatives taken to curb Judicial Pendency

- **Memorandum of procedure, 2016:** It has been under discussion to **bring transparency in judicial appointments** and **setting up a permanent secretariat in SC** for maintaining records of high court judges.
- **Project Sahyog** to reduce pending cases.
- **Legal Information Management and Briefing System (LIMBS)**, a web-based application for monitoring cases involving the central government of India, more effectively and transparently.
- **Mediation Bill, 2023** provides pre-litigation mediation by parties.
- **e-Courts** to improve access to justice using technology.
- **National Litigation Policy (NLP)** is under consideration to lay down guidelines for preventing, controlling and reducing litigation.
- **Administrative Mechanism for Resolution of Disputes (AMRD)** to resolve Inter-Ministerial/ Departmental disputes.
- **Fast Track Courts (FTCs)** are dedicated courts expected to ensure swift dispensation of justice.

SAGAR SAMPARK

- Indigenous Differential Global Navigation Satellite System (DGNSS) – “SAGAR SAMPARK” was inaugurated by the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (MoPSW).
- DGNSS is a terrestrial-based enhancement system which corrects errors and inaccuracies in Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS), allowing for more accurate positioning information.
 - o GNSS refers to a constellation of satellites providing signals from space that transmit positioning and timing data to GNSS receivers to have Global coverage.
 - o Major GNSS are: GPS (USA), GLONASS (Russia), Galileo (Europe), BeiDou (China), NAVIC(India).

ONLINE GAMING

The GST council recently imposed a GST of 28% on online gaming, horse racing and casinos.

- Tax rate: 28% on electronic gaming, casinos, and horse racing.
 - o To be applied on the initial amount paid upon entry, not on the total value of each bet placed.

- Covers both games based on both skill and chance.

Types of Online Games:

- **Game of Skill:** Games in which **the outcome depends on the player's expertise, practice, and experience** and not merely on chance.
 - Until now, **18% GST was charged on the platform's commission/ service fee or gross gaming revenue.**
 - **Example:** rummy and fantasy sports games like Dream 11.
- **Game of Chance:** Games in which **the outcome is decided by randomised events** and treated similarly to betting, gambling and horse racing.
 - Till now a **28% GST was charged** on these games.
 - Example: Ludo, poker, lottery etc.
- Besides this, a **TDS of 30% is deducted from the winnings in both game types.**

EXERCISES IN NEWS

- JIMEX 23: 7th edition of the bilateral Japan-India Maritime Exercise 2023, hosted by the Indian Navy, is being conducted at/ off Visakhapatnam.
- SALVEX: The Seventh edition of the Indian Navy – US Navy, Salvage and Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) exercise, SALVEX, was conducted recently in Kochi.
- Operation Southern Readiness – 2023: It is an annual multinational exercise (India, USA, Italy, UK, Seychelles) conducted by Combined Maritime Forces.
- Nomadic Elephant – 2023: It is a joint military exercise between India-Mongolia.

PROTECTION OF PLANT VARIETIES AND FARMERS' RIGHTS (PPVFR)

Recently, Delhi High Court dismissed an appeal filed by PepsiCo India Holdings (PIH) against a 2021 order revoking PIH's registration of a potato variety FL-2027.

Background of the Issue

- The FL-2027 variety of potatoes (commercial name FC-5) was introduced by Pepsi in 2009 through a contract farming arrangement.
- The FL-2027 variety was registered under the Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights (PPV&FR) Act 2016.

- In 2019, Pepsico sued some farmers in Gujarat for illegally growing its registered potato variety and violating its IPR under the Act.
- In 2021, the registration of FL2027 was revoked on the grounds of furnishing incorrect information and infringing farmers' rights.

About the Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights (PPV&FR) Act 2001

- Enacted: In 2001 under Article 27(3) (b) of the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS).
 - o The act conforms with International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV), 1978.
- World's only IPR legislation: that grants intellectual property rights not only to the plant breeders but also to the farmers by protecting new, extant and farmers' varieties.
 - o Unlike UPOV, the Act facilitates the protection of not only new but even existing varieties.
- Protection period:
 - o Trees and vines: 18 years.
 - o For other crops, 15 years.
 - o For extant varieties: 15 years
- Institutions/Authorities:
 - o **Plant Varieties Protection Appellate Tribunal (PVPAT)**: Decisions of the PVPAT can be challenged in the High Court. The Tribunal shall dispose of the appeal within one year.
 - o **Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Authority (PPV&FR Authority)**: Established to implement the provisions of the Act by the Department of Agriculture and Cooperation, Ministry of Agriculture.

STATUS OF TIGER REPORT

The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) recently released the Status of Tigers, co-predators and Prey in India-2022 report.

Key observation from the Status of Tiger report

- Land area: 53 tiger reserves cover 2.3% of India's total land area.
- Population: India currently harbours almost 75% of the world's wild tiger population.
 - o Central India and the Shivalik Hills and Gangetic Plains witnessed a notable increase in tiger population.

FOREST CONSERVATION (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2023

Both the houses passed the Forest Conservation (Amendment) (FCA) Bill 2023.

About Forest Conservation (Amendment) (FCA) Bill, 2023

- It will amend Forest (Conservation) Act 1980.
 - o Forests is a subject under the Concurrent List in the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution of India, empowering the Parliament of India to enact a law on it.
- Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980: puts several restrictions on the de-reservation of forests or use of forest land for non-forest purposes and specifies penalties for contravention of any of its provisions.
 - o The Act has been given a new name through the amendment—'Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam' (Forest (Conservation and Augmentation) Act), 1980.
- Bill will enable India to increase its forest/tree cover; achieve national and international targets; Fast track Strategic & security-related projects; etc.

CHANDRAYAAN-3

Chandrayaan-3 was successfully launched from the Satish Dhawan Space Center (SDSC) in Sriharikota.

About Chandrayaan-3:

- Objectives:
 - o Demonstrate Safe and Soft Landing on Lunar Surface
 - o Demonstrate Rover roving on the moon and
 - o Conduct in-situ scientific experiments.
- Launch vehicle: Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle Mk III will place the integrated module in an Elliptic Parking Orbit (EPO).
- Indigenous Payloads:
 - o Lander module (LM),
 - o Propulsion module (PM): will carry the Lander from launch vehicle injection till final lunar 100 km circular polar orbit
 - o Rover: carry out in-situ chemical analysis of the lunar surface
- Landing site: Similar to Chandrayaan-2 i.e. near south pole of moon at around 70 degrees latitude.
 - o Chandrayaan-3 will reach the lunar orbit almost a month after its launch.
 - o Its lander (Vikram), and rover (Pragyaan), are likely to land on the Moon on August 23.
- If successful, Chandrayaan-3 will become world's first mission to soft-land near lunar south pole and India will become fourth country to soft land on moon, after US, Russia, and China.

BLACK HOLES

Scientists recently observed a class of black holes (quasars) demonstrating time dilation in the early universe.

- This time dilation showed how time then passed only about a fifth as quickly as it does today.

- Quasars are tremendously active supermassive black holes millions to billions of times more massive than our sun, usually residing at centres of galaxies.

- o There are no quasars near Milky Way.

About Time Dilation

- It refers to the fact that time passes at different rates for different observers, depending on their relative motion or positions in a gravitational field.
- Einstein's Theory of Relativity: Time dilation is a consequence of Einstein's Theory of relativity.
 - o The theory showed that time and space are intertwined and that the universe has been expanding outward in all directions since the Big Bang.
- Occurrence:
 - o This occurs because objects with a lot of mass create a strong gravitational field.
 - o Stronger the gravity, the more space-time curves, and the slower time itself proceeds.



RIGHT TO SILENCE

- Supreme Court said that all accused have a right to silence, and investigators cannot force them to speak up or admit guilt.
- Right to silence emanates from Article 20(3), which states that no one can be compelled to be a witness against himself.
 - o Protection is limited only to criminal proceedings.
 - o Right is not available to a person being interrogated under Customs Act, 1962, or Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999, since the person is not “accused of an offence” and isn’t entitled to a lawyer.
 - o In **Nandini Satpathy v. P.L. Dani case**, SC stated that compelling a person to answer a question within the limits of the police station may result in a violation of Article 20(3).

GOODS AND SERVICES TAX (GST)

- The 6th Goods and Services Tax (GST) Day was celebrated with the vision GST@6 सरलीकृत कर, समग्र विकास.

About Goods and Services Tax (GST)

- GST is a unified tax system that replaced multiple indirect taxes levied by the Central and State Governments.
- It was implemented on 1st July 2017.
- GST Structure: The GST system follows a dual structure, comprising Central GST (CGST) and State GST (SGST), levied concurrently by the Central and State governments, respectively.
 - o An Integrated GST (IGST) is also levied on interstate supplies and imports, collected by the Central Government but apportioned to the destination state.
- GST Council (GSTC): It is a joint forum under Article 279A of the Constitution of India consisting of the Union Finance Minister (as Chairperson) and representatives from all States and Union Territories.

BASTILLE DAY AND FRENCH REVOLUTION (1789-1815)

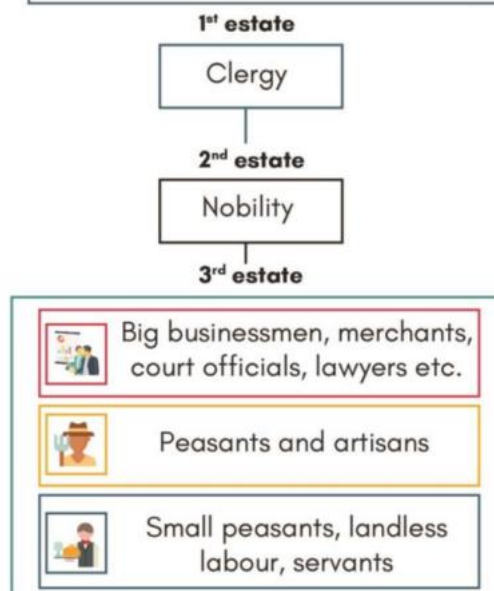
Recently Prime Minister of India attended Bastille Day Parade as a Guest of Honour in France.

About Bastille Day

- July 14 marks the anniversary of the storming of the Bastille prison on 14th July 1789, which marks the beginning of the French Revolution (FR).
- Events of the day:
 - o King and Assembly were suspicious of each other. The King commanded the troops to move into the city.

- o Rumours spread that king would soon order the army to open fire upon the citizens.
- o A group of several hundred people stormed the fortress prison, the Bastille, where they hoped to find hoarded ammunition. (Bastille was a 14th-century fortress prison in Paris that was hated by all because it stood for the despotic power of the king.)
- o The Commander of the Bastille was killed and the prisoners were released by the mob.
- This was the beginning of a chain of events in FR which was as much a struggle of weapons as of ideas.

3 Estates of French Society

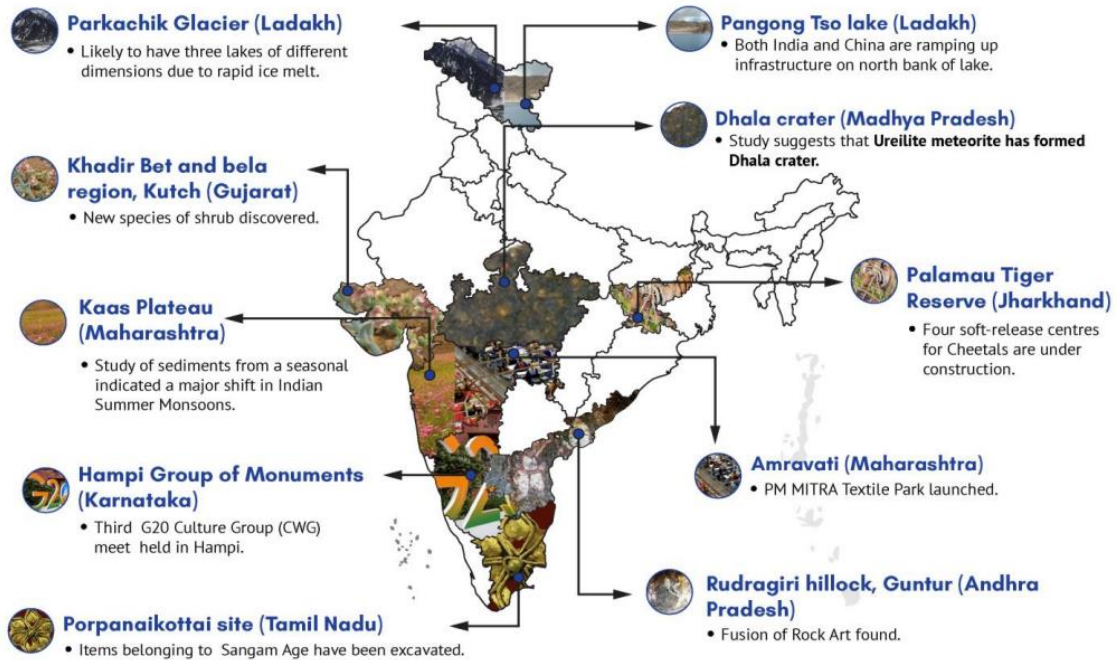


TANKAI SHIPBUILDING METHOD

- Ministry of Culture and Indian Navy to launch a project to revive the 2000-year-old technique of shipbuilding known as the Tankai method.
- In this method, the ship is constructed by stitching wooden planks together rather than using nails.

- This method offered flexibility and durability, making them less susceptible to damage from shoals and sandbars.

Places in News: India



Places in News: World

