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Current affairs summary for prelims

2 August, 2024

Sub-categorisation in Scheduled Caste reservation

Context: *On August 1, the Supreme Court ruled 6:1 in favor of sub-categorizing scheduled castes in reservations, broadening protection for underrepresented groups.*

Current Examination

- The Supreme Court is reviewing whether its 2004 EV Chinnaiah vs. State of Andhra Pradesh ruling, which deemed Scheduled Castes a homogenous group, should be reconsidered.

Previous SC Ruling on Sub-Categorisation

- On February 8, 2024, the Court reserved judgment on the need for sub-categorisation.
- The 2004 ruling stated only the President could notify SC communities for reservation benefits, and states couldn't modify this list.
- The Court's decision emphasized that sub-classification would violate equality by treating communities differently.

Case Background

- In 1975, Punjab divided its SC reservation into two categories, favoring Balmiki and Mazhabi Sikh communities.
- In 2004, the Supreme Court struck down Andhra Pradesh's similar law in EV Chinnaiah, calling it unconstitutional.
- Punjab & Haryana High Court also invalidated Punjab's reintroduced sub-classification law in 2010.
- In 2014, the Supreme Court referred the appeal to a five-judge bench for reconsideration.

Presidential List

- The Central List of Scheduled Castes and Tribes is notified by the President under Articles 341 and 342.
- Parliament must approve any changes to the List; states cannot unilaterally alter it.
- Castes listed by the President are recognized as SCs and STs.
- A caste designated as SC in one state may not be classified as SC in another.
- This variation prevents disputes over reservations.
- No community is listed as SC in Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, or Lakshadweep.

Article 342A

- The President can list socially and educationally backward classes for any State or Union Territory after consulting the Governor.
- Parliament can add or remove classes from the Central List by law.
- Once specified, the President's list cannot be changed by further notifications.
- The 2018 amendment allows the President to declare backward classes, with Parliament able to amend the list. States can only recommend, not declare new classes.
- The amendment gives constitutional status to the National Commission for Backward Classes, making it comparable to the Commissions for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

Culpable homicide not amounting to murder

Context*: The SUV driver was booked under Sections 105 (culpable homicide) and 115(2) (voluntarily causing hurt) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS).*

Meaning

- **Origin**: The term "homicide" comes from Latin, where homo means "man" and cida means "killing." It refers to the killing of a man by another man.
- **Culpable**: Implies responsibility for criminal acts.
- **Combined Meaning:** "Culpable homicide" refers to being blameworthy for killing a person and is punishable by law.

Section 105 BNS

- **Definition**: Section 105 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) replaces Section 304 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC).
- **Criteria**: Applied when an act causing death is done either with intent to cause death or with knowledge that the act is likely to cause death.
- **Punishment:** Ranges from five years to life imprisonment based on the nature of intent and knowledge.
- **Negligence**: Section 106 BNS covers deaths caused due to negligence, with a maximum punishment of five years, which is less stringent than Section 105.
- **Conditions**:
  - Intent to cause death.
  - Causing bodily injury likely to cause death.
  - Knowledge that the act is likely to cause death.

Cases Involving Culpable Homicide Not Amounting to Murder

- **Typical Scenarios**: Includes man-made disasters, negligence, or failure by authorities, where deaths might be avoided with proper action.
- **Common Examples:**
  - Building collapses
  - Railway accidents
  - Construction site accidents
  - Drunken driving incidents

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- **Reason for Charge:** Used when there is knowledge of potential for death due to the accused's actions, despite lack of intent.
- **Recent Examples:**
- **Mumbai Hoarding Collapse:** 17 deaths and over 80 injuries led to charges under Section 105 BNS.
- **Surat Fire (2019):** 22 student deaths resulted in charges against the manager and building owners.

➢ **Case Law**

- **Rampal Singh vs State Of U.P (2012):** Established that Section 299 (culpable homicide not amounting to murder) is a general category, while Section 300 (murder) is a specific instance. All murders are culpable homicides, but not all culpable homicides are murders.
- **Reg. v. Govinda (1876):** Accused's act of causing severe injury without intent to kill was classified as culpable homicide not amounting to murder.
- **Jalluddin 1982:** An Ojha (tantric) causing death through his actions, though not intended, was found guilty of culpable homicide.
- **Kusa Majhi vs State of Orissa, 1985:** Death caused by a son's impulsive act of striking his mother during a moment of anger was deemed culpable homicide.

Cloudbursts

Context: *Following multiple cloudbursts and torrential overnight rains in Himachal Pradesh's Shimla, Mandi, and Kullu districts, the state's rivers are now in spate.*

➢ **Cloudburst Definition and Characteristics**

- **Extreme Precipitation:** A cloudburst is a sudden, intense precipitation event, sometimes accompanied by hail and thunder, that can lead to flooding.
- **Volume of Water:** Can release up to 25 mm of precipitation, equivalent to 25,000 metric tons per square kilometer.
- **Occasion**: Typically occurs through orographic lift or when warm air mixes with cooler air, causing rapid condensation.
- **Origin of Term:** The term "cloudburst" comes from the outdated idea that clouds could burst like water balloons, though this is no longer scientifically accurate.

➢ **Properties**

- **Rainfall Rate:** Defined as a rainfall rate equal to or greater than 100 mm (3.9 in) per hour. Different standards exist, such as the Swedish weather service defining "skyfall" as 1 mm (0.039 in) per minute or 50 mm (2.0 in) per hour.
- **Cloud Height:** Associated convective clouds can reach up to 15 km (9.3 mi) in height.
- **Intensity**: Can result in over 20 mm (0.79 in) of rain in a few minutes, often leading to flash floods.

➢ **Mechanism**

- **Rapid Precipitation:** Results from the Langmuir precipitation process, where large droplets form quickly by combining with smaller, slower-falling droplets.
- **Occurrence**: Not limited to interactions with mountains; can also occur with sudden condensation from hot vapor mixing with cold air.

➢ **Detection and Forecasting**

- **Satellite Limitations:** Satellites are useful for detecting large-scale weather systems but often miss cloudbursts due to their small scale and the resolution of precipitation radars.
- **Forecasting Challenges:** Difficulties in accurately forecasting cloudbursts in hilly regions due to complex interactions between moisture, terrain, cloud microphysics, and atmospheric conditions.

➢ **Frequency of Cloudbursts**

- **Occurrence**: Cloudbursts are relatively common, especially during monsoon months.
- **Geographic Prevalence:** Most frequent in Himalayan states due to favorable local conditions such as topography and temperature gradients.
- **Localization:** Typically affect very small areas, often lacking rainfall measurement instruments.

➢ **Consequences of Cloudbursts**

- **Terrain Impact:** Heavy rainfall can trigger landslides and flash floods, leading to extensive downstream damage.
- **Area of Impact:** Though cloudbursts occur in small areas, their effects can be widespread.

➢ **Trends in Cloudburst Incidents**

- **Long-Term Trends:** No clear long-term increase in cloudbursts as per IMD definitions.
- **Extreme Weather:** There is a rise in extreme rainfall and other extreme weather events globally, including India.
- **Rainfall Patterns:** While total rainfall has not changed significantly, it is increasingly concentrated in short periods, with extended dry spells in between.
- **Climate Change:** This shift in rainfall patterns, linked to climate change, suggests a potential increase in cloudburst events.

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NEWS IN BETWEEN THE LINES

Digi Yatra

Recently, the Civil Aviation Minister Kinjarapu Ram Mohan Naidu has revealed that Digi Yatra has been implemented at 15 airports in the country and this facility will soon be launched in 12 more airports.

About Digi Yatra:

- Digi Yatra is a technology that **uses facial recognition** to allow passengers to travel through airports in a **paperless** and **contactless** manner.
- It is part of the **Biometric Enabled Seamless Travel** Experience (BEST) initiative, which aims to make airport check-in and travel more accessible for passengers.
- The system also **provides a decentralized mobile wallet-based identity** management platform where travelers can store their IDs and travel documents.
- To use Digi Yatra app, passengers must register with personal details, including Aadhaar.

Vattezhuthu

Recently, the Archaeologists have found one 'Vattezhuthu' and eight Tamil inscriptions estimated to be more than 1,100 years old were found on the walls of Thaleekeeiswarar Temple at Kovilpalayam near Koduvai in Tiruppur, Tamil Nadu.

About Vattezhuthu:

- Vattezhuthu, **meaning "round script**," is an **ancient Dravidian script** used in **South India** and **Sri Lanka**.
- This inscription was a **form of Tamil writing script** that was prevalent from **5th Century** Common Era (CE) to **12th Century** CE.
- Vattezhuthu was mainly found in **Tamil Nadu**, **Kerala** and parts of **Sri Lanka**.
- It was used for writing **Tamil** and **Malayalam** languages.
- Vattezhuthu evolved from the **Tamil-Brahmi script** and later influenced the development of the modern Tamil and Malayalam scripts.
- It is characterized by its **rounded letterforms** and lack of straight lines.
- It was developed into the Koleluttu script, which was **used by Christians** and **Muslims** in Kerala **until the 19th century**.

Uniform Civil Code

Rajasthan has been considering enactment of Uniform Civil Code in the state.

About the Uniform Civil Code:

- The Uniform Civil Code (UCC) refers to the **formulation of one law for India,** which would be applicable to all religious communities in matters such as **marriage**, **divorce**, **inheritance**, **adoption** and maintenance.
- **Article 44** of the Directive Principles of State Policy in the Indian Constitution directs the state to strive for the implementation of a UCC throughout the territory of India.
- **Dr. B R Ambedkar**, while **formulating the Constitution** had said that a Uniform Civil Code is desirable but for the moment it should remain voluntary and thus the **Article 35** of the draft Constitution was added as a part of the Directive Principles of the State Policy in part IV of the Constitution of India as **Article 44**.
- The concept of the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) traces its origins back to colonial India during the **British rule.**
- **In 1835**, the British government submitted a report emphasizing the need for uniformity in Indian law, particularly in areas like **crimes**, **evidence** and **contracts**.
- The Supreme Court of India has, in various judgments, emphasized the need for a UCC, notably in cases like **Shah Bano (1985**) and **Sarla Mudgal** (1995).
- **Goa is the only state in India** that has a form of a Uniform Civil Code applicable to all its residents, regardless of religion.

United Nations Security Council

Recently, the United Nations Security Council countries have called for increased diplomatic efforts to prevent a broader Middle East conflict after the assassination of Hamas political chief Ismail Haniyeh in the Iranian capital Tehran.

About the United Nations Security Council:

- The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is **an organ of the United Nations** (UN) and is **responsible for maintaining international peace and security**.
- It was **established by the UN Charter in 1945** and is one of the six principal organs of the United Nations.
- It **can make decisions** that member states are required to implement, such as **establishing peacekeeping operations**, enacting international sanctions and **authorizing military action.**
- Besides the UNSC, the United Nations has five other principal organs, which are the **General Assembly** (UNGA), the **Trusteeship Council**, the **Economic and Social Council**, the **International Court of Justice and the Secretariat**.
- The UNSC **consists of 15 members** including **five permanent members** (P5) and **ten non-permanent members** elected for **two-year terms** and **each member has one vote.**
- The five permanent members are **China**, **France**, **Russian Federation**, **the United Kingdom** and the **United States** and **they have veto power**.
- Its headquarter is in **New York, USA.**

Place in News

Lebanon

Recently, the Indian Embassy in Beirut has issued an advisory for Indian Nationals living in the country to avoid non-essential travel to Lebanon due to regional escalations.

Lebanon (Capital: Beirut)

Location: Lebanon is a country located in the Levant region of **West Asia**.

Boundaries: Lebanon shares its borders with **Syria** (East & North), the **Mediterranean Sea** (West) and **Israel** (South).

Physical Features:

- The highest point in Lebanon is **Qurnat as Sawda**.
- The Litani River is the longest river in Lebanon.
- Lebanon has a **Mediterranean climate**.
- Lebanon's mineral resources include **limestone**, **iron ore**, **gypsum**, salt, **silica** and **basalt**.
- The **Bekaa Valley**, **nestled** between the **Mount Lebanon** and **Anti-Lebanon** mountain ranges, is a significant valley in the country.

Membership: Lebanon is a member of international organizations such as the **United Nations**, **Arab League**, **World Trade Organization** and the **Organization of Islamic Cooperation**.

POINTS TO PONDER

- Recently, who has been sworn in as the 18th Governor of Sikkim? **– Om Prakash Mathur**
- Lieutenant-General Sadhna Saxena Nair has become the first woman to assume which position in the Indian Army? **– Director General, Medical Services (Army)**
- According to the Travel and Tourism Development Index 2024 report published by the World Economic Forum, what is India's ranking among 119 countries? **– 39th**
- Which technology have researchers from South Korea used to successfully control specific brain regions in mice using magnetic fields? **– Nano-Magnetogenetic Interface for Neuro Dynamics (Nano-MIND)**
- Which dance form will feature 8,000 tea tribe artists in the upcoming grand performance organized by the Assam government? **– Jhumur (The event will be held on November 20, 2024, at Sarusajai Stadium in Guwahati)**