

Weekly Current Affairs 08 August to 14 August 2024

8th AUGUST 2024

Ground-level Ozone Pollution

- **Context:** Delhi-NCR has topped the list of 10 cities for most days crossing ground-level ozone pollution levels.

Key facts

- The analysis is based on granular, real-time data (15-minute averages) from the Central Pollution Control Board.
- The report analysed metropolitan areas of Bengaluru, Chennai, Kolkata, Mumbai and Pune.
- All 10 areas studied witnessed exceedances of the national ozone standard, with Delhi being the most affected.
- Ozone levels were elevated even at night, with Mumbai recording the most instances of night-time exceedances.
- The duration of ozone exposure is concerning, lasting an average of 12-15 hours across most cities, the researchers found.
- Summer is the peak season for ozone, the problem persists year-round in many areas, particularly in sunnier southern cities.
- Ozone accumulates not only in metropolitan areas but also travels long distances, creating a regional pollutant that demands both local and regional action.

About Ground-Level Ozone (O₃) Pollution

- **There are two kinds of ozone:**
 - High-altitude ozone or the “good ozone” that is high up in the atmosphere and forms a protective barrier around the Earth from the Sun’s harmful ultraviolet rays.
 - Ground-level ozone or the “bad” ozone that forms closer to the Earth in the air we breathe. This ozone is not usually emitted directly, but rather forms from

chemical reactions between oxides of nitrogen (NO_x) and volatile organic compounds (VOCs) in sunlight. The term “ozone” is not to be confused with “smog,” another type of pollution that consists of ground-level ozone and other gaseous and particulate pollution.

QCI Surajya Recognition & Ranking Framework

- **Context:** Quality Council of India has introduced QCI Surajya Recognition & Ranking Framework to Drive Excellence in Key Sectors.

Key facts

- **This framework is categorized under four pillars:** Shiksha (Education), Swasthya (Health), Samriddhi (Prosperity), and Sushasan (Governance).
- The Surajya Recognition acknowledges the outstanding performance and commitment to quality by states and organisations in these vital areas.
- In the Shiksha Rankings, Uttar Pradesh leads with the highest number of accreditations, assessments, and ratings. Delhi, as a union territory, also ranks prominently.
- In the Swasthya category, Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, Kerala, Rajasthan, Mizoram and Manipur stand out with complete certification in the Ayushman Arogya Yojana (NABH).
- In the Samriddhi category, Gujarat, Karnataka, and Rajasthan lead with the highest number.
- **The Quality Council of India (QCI):** It is a key institution aimed at promoting and ensuring quality across various sectors in India.
 - Established in 1997, it operates as a non-profit organization under the aegis of the Government of India.

Declaration of National Disaster

- **Context:** The Kerala government has requested the Centre to declare the landslide in the Wayanad district as a national disaster.

Key facts

- There is no provision, executive or legal, to declare a natural calamity as a national calamity.
 - The existing guidelines of the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF)/ National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF), do not contemplate declaring a disaster as a 'National Calamity.'
- The 10th Finance Commission (1995-2000) examined a proposal that a disaster is termed "a national calamity of rarest severity" if it affects one-third of the population of a state.
- The panel did not define a "calamity of rare severity" but stated that a calamity of rare severity would necessarily have to be adjudged on a case-to-case basis taking into account:
 - the intensity and magnitude of the calamity
 - level of assistance needed
 - the capacity of the state to tackle the problem
 - the alternatives and flexibility were available within the plans to provide succour and relief, etc.

9th AUGUST 2024

Project PARI

- **Context:** Recently, Project PARI was initiated on the occasion of the 46th Session of the World Heritage Committee Meeting.

About Project PARI

- The Project PARI (Public Art of India) was launched by the Ministry of Culture.
- It is managed by Lalit Kala Akademi and National Gallery of Modern Art.
- **Art Forms:** Includes traditional and contemporary art such as Phad paintings, Thangka paintings, Warli art, Gond Art, Alpona art, Cheriya painting, Tanjore paintings, Kalamkari, Pithora Art, and Kerala Murals.
- **Objective:** To celebrate and enhance the public art scene by blending India's cultural heritage with contemporary themes.

International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples

- **Context:** The International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples is observed on August 9 every year.

Key facts

- The day was chosen in recognition of the first meeting of the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations held in Geneva in 1982.
- The day recognises the unique cultures, languages, and traditions of Indigenous peoples, as well as their contributions to global diversity and sustainable development.
- Moreover, the day serves as a call to action for governments, organizations, and individuals to uphold the rights of indigenous peoples, promote their empowerment, and work towards achieving justice, equality, and reconciliation.

About the Indigenous Peoples

- Indigenous Peoples are inheritors and practitioners of unique cultures and ways of relating to people and the environment.
- They reside in remote forests rich in natural resources in Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, India, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Peru and Venezuela.
- There are an estimated 476 million Indigenous Peoples in the world living across 90 countries. They make up less than 6 percent of the world's population, but account for at least 15 percent of the poorest.

10th AUGUST 2024

Indian-Named Structures in Ocean

- **Context:** Three underwater geographical structures located in the Indian Ocean have been awarded names proposed by India. All three names were proposed by India and approved by the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) and UNESCO's IOC.

Key facts

- **Location and Discovery:** The structures are located along the Southwest Indian Ridge in the Indian Ocean.
 - Discovered by oceanographers from the National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR), Goa.
 - Discovery occurred during an international survey exploration programme.
- **Names:**
 - **Ashoka Seamount (named after rulers of the Mauryan dynasty):** Discovered in 2012 by the Russian vessel Akademik Nikolay Strakhov, covering 180 sq km.
 - **Chandragupt Ridge (named after rulers of the Mauryan dynasty):** Discovered in 2020 by the Indian vessel MGS Sagar, covering 675 sq km.
 - **Kalpataru Ridge (third structure):** Also discovered in 2012 by the same Russian vessel, covering 430 sq km.

Creamy Layer Principle

- **Context:** The Union Cabinet categorically asserted that the principle of creamy layer does not apply to reservations for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs).

Key facts

- **SC Judgement:** Recently, a seven-judge Bench of the Supreme Court had ruled in a 6:1 majority judgment that State governments were permitted to sub-classify communities within the SC list based on empirical data, to grant quotas within the reserved category to uplift those who belong to the more underprivileged castes.
 - A separate but concurring judgment Justice B.R. Gavai said that States must evolve a policy for identifying the 'creamy layer' even among the SC and ST categories and deny them the benefit of reservations.
- **Government's Response:** Law Minister told the Lok Sabha that the 'creamy layer' principle was not part

of the Supreme Court's recent judgement on sub-categorisation within the SC quota.

Kakori Train Action Centenary

- **Context:** Recently, the Uttar Pradesh government has inaugurated the 'Kakori Train Action' Centenary Festival in Lucknow marking the 100th anniversary of the Kakori Train Action and to educate youths and schoolchildren.

About Kakori Train Action

- The train robbery at Kakori, near Lucknow was the Hindustan Republican Association (HRA's) first major action, in August 1925.
- The Number 8 Down Train, chugging between Shahjahanpur and Lucknow, carried more than just passengers. It bore treasury bags, laden with taxes collected from Indians, destined for the British government's coffers.
- It was led by Ram Prasad Bismil and Ashfaqullah Khan, who decided to intercept this moving symbol of colonial exploitation.
- As the train approached Kakori, one of the revolutionaries, Rajendra Lahiri, pulled the emergency chain, halting the locomotive, and looted only what they believed rightfully belonged to their compatriots—about 8000.

No-confidence Motion against Vice-President

- **Context:** 50 Opposition MPs have signed a resolution for a no-confidence motion against Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar. The Opposition accuses the Chairman of making personal remarks against members, violating Rule 238(2) of the Rajya Sabha, which prohibits personal charges against members.

Key facts

- The resolution is being pursued under Article 67(B) of the Indian Constitution.

- Article 67(B) of the Indian Constitution allows the removal of the Vice-President by a Rajya Sabha resolution passed by an effective majority, and agreed upon by the Lok Sabha with a simple majority.
- Article 67(B) requires at least fourteen days' notice before moving the resolution.
- If successful, this motion will be a historic first in Indian parliamentary history.
 - The no-confidence motion against a sitting Vice President represents an extraordinary step, reflecting the depth of the current political discord.
 - Historically, such motions have been rare and usually pertain to the Prime Minister or other high-ranking officials.

About No-confidence motion

- It is a parliamentary motion that signifies that the elected government no longer has the confidence of the majority of the members of the Lok Sabha, the lower house of India's Parliament.
- The primary purpose of a no-confidence motion is to test the strength and stability of the ruling government.
 - If the motion is passed, it indicates that the government has lost the support of the majority and must resign.
- They have been a part of India's parliamentary history since independence.
 - They serve as a crucial mechanism for ensuring accountability and transparency in governance¹.
- **Procedure:** Any member of the Lok Sabha can introduce a no-confidence motion. It requires the support of at least 50 members to be admitted for discussion

11th AUGUST 2024

Land Ports Authority of India (LPAI)

- **Context:** The Union government of India constituted a high-level committee, which constituted a member from the Land Ports Authority of India, to monitor the situation along the Indo-Bangladesh border.

About Land Ports Authority of India (LPAI)

- It is a statutory body established under the Land Ports Authority of India Act, 2010 and working under the Ministry of Home Affairs.
- LPAI is entrusted with the task of building land ports on India's borders and providing state of the art infrastructure facilities to facilitate seamless and efficient movement of cargo and passengers.

Landslide Early Warning Systems (LEWS) in India

- **Context:** India launched its first regional early warning system for rain-induced landslides

About LEWS

- It is developed by the Geological Survey of India (GSI), and is designed to predict the likelihood of landslides based on rainfall data.
- The National Landslide Forecasting Centre started by the GSI.
- **Current Coverage:** Daily forecasts are provided for Kalimpong, Darjeeling, and the Nilgiris. It will Extend coverage to other areas by 2030.

Function

- **Prediction:** Assess likelihood of landslides.
- **Dissemination:** Share information to mitigate impacts.
- **Response:** Enable timely action based on forecasts.

12th AUGUST 2024

Clean Plant Programme

- **Context:** The Union Cabinet has approved the Clean Plant Programme (CPP). It aims to enhance the quality and productivity of fruit crops across the country.

About Clean Plant Programme (CPP)

- CPP is designed to address critical issues in horticulture by providing access to high-quality, virus-free planting material.

- The programme is poised to deliver numerous benefits across various stakeholders, from farmers to consumers, and bolster India's position in the global fruit market.
- **Clean Plant Centers (CPCs):** Nine advanced CPCs will be established across India, each focusing on specific fruit types.
 - These centers will be equipped with modern diagnostic and therapeutic facilities, including tissue culture labs.
- **Regulatory Measures:** A robust certification system will be implemented under the Seeds Act of 1966, ensuring accountability and traceability in the production and sale of planting material.
- **Enhanced Infrastructure:** Large-scale nurseries will receive support for developing infrastructure to facilitate the efficient multiplication of clean planting material.
- **Integration with Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture:** The CPP complements the ongoing Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH).
 - It is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme initiated in 2014-15 aimed at the holistic growth of the horticulture sector.
 - MIDH covers a wide range of crops including fruits, vegetables, root and tuber crops, mushrooms, spices, flowers, aromatic plants, coconut, cashew, bamboo, and cocoa.
- **Implementation:** The programme will be implemented by the National Horticulture Board in collaboration with the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR).

Mount Kilimanjaro

- **Context:** An expedition team from the Ministry of Defence, led by 'Divyang' Uday Kumar, made history by hoisting the largest Indian flag atop Mount Kilimanjaro.

About Mount Kilimanjaro

- It is a dormant volcano situated in Tanzania, East Africa.

- It holds the title of the highest peak (5,895 meters) in Africa.
- The mountain is also the world's tallest freestanding mountain, meaning it is not part of a mountain range.
- **Kilimanjaro is composed of three distinct volcanic cones:** Shira, Kibo, and Mawenzi. Kibo is the highest and houses the summit, Uhuru Peak.
- It is a part of UNESCO's World Heritage Site 'Kilimanjaro National Park'.

13th AUGUST 2024

National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) 2024

- **Context:** The Ministry of Education Monday announced the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) 2024.

Key Highlights of India Rankings 2024

- Indian Institute of Technology, Madras retains its 1st position in Overall Category for the sixth consecutive year, and in Engineering for 9th consecutive year.
- Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru tops the Universities Category for ninth consecutive year. It stood first in the Research Institutions Category for the fourth consecutive year.
- IIM Ahmedabad tops in Management subject retaining its first position for fifth consecutive year.
- All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi occupies the top slot in Medical for the seventh consecutive year.
- Hindu College secured the 1st position amongst colleges for the first-time replacing Miranda House which retained its 1st position for seven consecutive years.

About National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF)

- NIRF was launched in 2015 by the Ministry of Education, to rank institutions of higher education in India.

- Five broad categories of parameters identified in the NIRF;
 - Teaching, Learning & Resources
 - Research and Professional Practice
 - Graduation Outcome
 - Outreach and Inclusivity
 - Perception
- Each of these five parameters have 2 to 5 sub-parameters and a total number of 18 parameters are used for ranking of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).
 - The overall score is computed based on the weightage allotted to each parameter and sub-parameter.

UN Convention Against Cybercrime

- **Context:** The member states of the United Nations have finalized a new international convention against cybercrime.

Key facts

- The draft convention is expected to be adopted by the General Assembly later this year, thus becoming the first global legally binding instrument on cybercrime.
- **Background:** The road to this convention began more than five years ago when the United Nations recognized the new challenges to international security and criminal law.
 - The Ad Hoc Committee was established in 2019 and the draft convention was finally finalized in August 2024.

About the Convention

- **Aim:** To strengthen international cooperation in the fight against cybercrime, coordinate law enforcement efforts, and promote technical assistance and capacity building in member states.
- **Tools:** It provides states with a range of tools to effectively combat crimes such as terrorism, drug trafficking, human trafficking, arms smuggling,

and other criminal activities facilitated by modern information technologies. It is supporting developing countries through technical assistance and capacity building.

- The key objective is to improve the capabilities of national authorities in the prevention, detection, investigation, and prosecution of cybercrime.
- Convention includes the definition of criminal offenses such as illegal access to information systems, illegal interception, data manipulation, and system interference.
- It deals with the criminal liability of legal persons, the seizure and confiscation of the proceeds of crime, and international cooperation in criminal prosecution and the preservation of evidence.

Biofortified Crops

- **Context:** Recently, the Prime Minister of India released 109 high yielding, climate resilient and biofortified varieties of crops at India Agricultural Research Institute, New Delhi.

About the Biofortified Crops

- It is the process and an agricultural approach of enhancing the nutrient content of crops through conventional breeding or genetic modification.
- It aimed at developing and disseminating crops that are naturally rich in essential micronutrients, containing higher levels of vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients.
- These crops are important for Malnutrition Mitigation, Targeting Vulnerable Populations, and Climate Resilience etc.

India's Biofortification Efforts

- India has been actively involved in biofortification initiatives. Under the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), several biofortified crop varieties have been developed since 2014.
- Recently, the 109 varieties of 61 crops released by the Prime Minister included 34 field crops and 27 horticultural crops.

- Among the field crops, seeds of various cereals including millets, forage crops, oilseeds, pulses, sugarcane, cotton, fibre and other potential crops were released.
- Among the horticultural crops, different varieties of fruits, vegetable crops, plantation crops, tuber crops, spices, flowers and medicinal crops were released.

14th AUGUST 2024

UNESCO Kalinga Prize for Popularisation of Science

- **Context:** The Ministry of Science and Technology (DST) has withdrawn its annual contribution to the UNESCO Kalinga Prize.

About the UNESCO Kalinga Prize for Popularisation of Science

- It was established in 1951 following a donation from Mr. Bijoyanand Patnaik, Founder and President of the Kalinga Foundation Trust.
- It is UNESCO's oldest prize.
- The prize winner is selected by UNESCO's Director-General on the recommendation of a five-member jury.
- The award is presented during the World Science Day celebrations in Budapest, alternating with India.
- **Eligibility:** Individuals, institutions, NGOs, or entities making significant contributions to science and technology communication.
- **Donors:** Kalinga Foundation Trust, Government of the State of Odisha, Government of India (Department of Science and Technology).
- **Award:** Cash prize of US\$40,000 and a Kalinga Chair with an additional US\$5,000, UNESCO-Albert Einstein silver medal.
- **Objectives:** It rewards contributions to the popularization of science and technology.

- It aims to bridge the gap between science and society.
- Includes various forms of media communication in science popularization.

National Geospatial Data Repository

- **Context:** The Science and Technology Minister has proposed a National Geospatial Data Repository and Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model.

Key highlights

- It aims to create a unified Geospatial interface for utilisation of industry and Startup ecosystem in order to create innovative and indigenous products for the welfare of farmers, rural artisans and others.
- He emphasized the need for seamless Geo-ICT infrastructure integration and a sustainable ecosystem built on pooling knowledge and resources through PPP collaborations.

GAURAV: Long Range Glide Bomb (LRGB)

- **Context:** The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) conducted the maiden flight test of the Long-Range Glide Bomb (LRGB), named GAURAV.

About GAURAV

- The test was carried out from a Su-30 MK-I aircraft of the Indian Air Force (IAF) off the coast of Odisha.
- GAURAV is a 1,000 kg class air-launched glide bomb.
- It is designed for long-distance targeting.
- It uses a hybrid navigation system combining Inertial Navigation System (INS) and GPS for accurate targeting.
- It is a significant milestone in developing indigenous defence technologies.