

CURRENT AFFAIRS : MARCH 2024

UNIFORM CIVIL CODE (UCC)

The Uttarakhand State Legislative Assembly passed the Uniform Civil Code, Uttarakhand, 2024 Bill.

- With this, Uttarakhand became the first State in the country to pass a law on Uniform Civil Code.

- o Also, Assam and Gujarat are the other states working on the implementation of UCC.

- o Goa is the only place in India where a form of common civil code is in practice, the Portuguese Civil Code of 1867.

Key highlights of Uttarakhand UCC

- o Applicability: Applies to all residents of Uttarakhand except the tribal community those protected under Part XXI of the Constitution.

- o Marriage and Live-in Relationships: Mandates registration of all live-in relationships within one month and marriages within 60 days, applicable to all residents.

- ✓ Excludes the LGBTQIA+ community.

- ✓ Grants legal recognition to children from voidable marriages and live-in relationships.

- ✓ Criminalization of Some Marriage Practices: Bans practices like nikah-halala and triple talaq.

- ✓ Prohibition of Bigamy or Polygamy.

About 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.
- Currently, Indian personal law is complex, with each religion adhering to its specific laws.
- Personal Laws in India:
 - o Hindu Succession Act 1956 governs Hindus, Sikhs, Jains and Buddhists
 - o Muslim Personal Law governs Muslims
 - o Indian Succession Act 1925 applies to Christians, Parsis, and Jews
 - o The Special Marriage Act provides for the solemnization of interfaith marriage as well as registration by a Marriage Officer.

CITIZENSHIP (AMENDMENT) RULES, 2024

Ministry of Home Affairs has amended Citizenship Rules, 2009 and notified Citizenship (Amendment) Rules, 2024 to enforce the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), 2019.

Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), 2019

- The amendment provides that illegal migrants who fulfil four conditions will not be treated as illegal migrants under the Act. The conditions are:
 - o they are Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis or Christians
 - o they are from Afghanistan, Bangladesh or Pakistan they entered India on or before December 31, 2014
 - o they are not in certain tribal areas of Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, or Tripura included in the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution, or areas under the “Inner Line” permit, i.e., Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, and Nagaland.
- The Central Government exempted the said migrants from the adverse penal consequences of the Passport (Entry into India) Act, 1920 and the Foreigners Act, 1946 and rules or orders made thereunder.

- The period of naturalisation has been reduced from 11 years to 5 years for the above category of migrants.

MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

The Supreme Court invalidated and annulled the outcome of the mayoral elections held for the Chandigarh Municipal Corporation.

About Municipal Elections

- Municipal elections refer to the elections held to elect representatives for local urban governing bodies.
- Elections for the Municipal Corporations are held as per the Municipal Corporation Act framed by the legislature of the respective state government, whereas elections for the Municipalities and the Town Panchayats are held as per respective Municipal Act.

Constitutional Provisions related to municipalities.

- **Composition of Municipalities** (Art 243R): All the seats in a Municipality shall be filled by persons chosen by direct election from the territorial constituencies in the Municipal area.
 - o For this purpose, each Municipal area shall be divided into territorial constituencies to be known as **wards**.
- **Reservation of seats** (Art 243T): Seats are reserved for weaker sections, Scheduled Caste/Tribes, Women, and other groups as per respective municipal Acts.
- **Duration of Municipalities** (Art 243U): 5 years from the date appointed for its first meeting.
 - o Elections to constitute a municipality are required to be completed before the expiration of the duration of the municipality.
 - o If the municipality is dissolved before the expiry of 5 years, the elections for constituting a new municipality are required to be completed within a period of 6 months from the date of its dissolution.

- **State Election Commission** (Art 243ZA): The superintendence, direction and control of the preparation of electoral rolls for, and the conduct of, all elections to the Municipalities shall be vested in the SEC.

S.R. BOMMAI JUDGEMENT (1994)

S.R. Bommai's judgement (1994) of the Supreme Court (SC) completes 30 years.

About S. R. Bommai (SRB) v. Union of India (UOI), 1994 Judgment

- In 1989, the Central government dismissed SRB's government in Karnataka under Article 356 of the Constitution and President's Rule was imposed.
- A nine-judge bench of the SC interpreted Article 356 of the Constitution to define the contours of the proclamation of President's rule.

About Article 356

- State Emergency is also known as **President's Rule or Constitutional Emergency**. The Constitution does not use the word 'emergency' for this situation.
- **Article 356 finds inspiration in Section 93 of the Government of India Act 1935.**
- **Ground to declare: Based on the report from the Governor of a State or otherwise, if the President is satisfied that a situation has arisen in which the government of a State cannot be carried on in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution.**
- **Validity:** The President's Rule is valid for two months unless Parliament extends it for up to six months.
 - Extensions beyond a year are only permitted in a national security emergency or if the Election Commission certifies that holding assembly elections is difficult.
 - Even then, the limit for the President's Rule is three years.

Bommai judgement and Key Principles laid down:

- **Judicial Review:** SC declared, presidential proclamation under Article 356 is subject to judicial review on substantial grounds.
 - No restriction on the court from examining the material based on which the President formed his satisfaction.
 - SC or HC can strike down the Proclamation if it is mala fide or based on wholly irrelevant or extraneous grounds.
- **Limits of the President's powers:** The verdict concluded that the power of the President to dismiss a state government is not absolute. The president should exercise the power only after his proclamation is approved by both Houses of Parliament.

o Till then the President can only suspend the Legislative Assembly by suspending the provisions of the Constitution relating to the Legislative Assembly.

SIXTH SCHEDULE

The people of Ladakh are protesting for Ladakh to be recognized as a tribal area under the Sixth Schedule.

About Sixth Schedule

- The Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, under Article 244(2) and Article 275(1) of the Constitution, is provided for the administration of tribal areas in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram.






Provisions of the Sixth schedule

- It empowers the Governor to create Autonomous District Councils (ADCs) and Autonomous Regional Councils (ARCs) in these four states.

o Composition of ADCs: ADCs consist of not more than thirty members, out of which four are nominated by the Governor while the rest are elected. (Bodoland Territorial Council is an exception; it can have up to forty-six members).

Power	Subject
Legislative Power	To make rules <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in respect of lands, management of forest (other than the Reserved Forest), shifting cultivation, Chiefs or Headmen appointment. • In respect to inheritance of property, marriage and divorce and social practice. • Regulations and control of moneylending or trading by any person other than Scheduled Tribe residents in that Scheduled District.
Executive Power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Power to establish or manage primary schools, dispensaries, markets, cattle ponds, fisheries, roads, road transport and waterways in the districts. • The Councils are also authorized to prescribe the language and manner of instruction in the primary schools.
Judicial Powers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empowered to constitute Village and District Council Courts. • No other courts except the High Courts and the Supreme Court has the jurisdiction over such suits or cases of the Council Courts • However, these Council Courts are not given the power to decide cases involving offences punishable by death or imprisonment for five or more years.
Financial Powers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empowered to prepare a budget for their respective Council. • Empowered to assess and collect land revenue and impose taxes on professions, trades etc. • given the power to grant licenses or leases for extraction of minerals within their jurisdiction.

Fifth and Sixth Schedule

Feature	Fifth Schedule	Sixth Schedule
 Applicability	Applies to certain tribal areas in any states of India. (Currently in 10 states)	Applies to the tribal areas in the four northeastern states of India.
 Administration	Tribes Advisory Councils (TAC)	District Councils or Regional Councils
 Administrative power	TAC being the creation of the Legislative Assembly of the States has limited powers which are mostly executive.	Extensive powers, including executive, legislative and judicial powers, all derived from the Constitution.
 Emphasizes	More on protection of tribal rights	More on self-governance.
 PESA Act 1996	Applicable	Not applicable

NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION (NATO)

Recently, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) marked 75 years of its formation and Sweden has joined NATO as its 32nd member.

About NATO

- Genesis: Founded in 1949, with the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty or Washington Treaty, with the aim of acting as a deterrent to the threat of Soviet expansion in Europe after World War II.
- Headquarters: Brussels (Belgium)
- Nature: NATO is a political and military alliance of 32 countries from Europe and North America.

o It is founded on the principle of collective defence (**Article 5** of the Treaty), meaning that if one NATO Ally is attacked, then all NATO Allies are attacked.

- o So far, Article 5 has been invoked once – in response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks.



KACCHATHEEVU

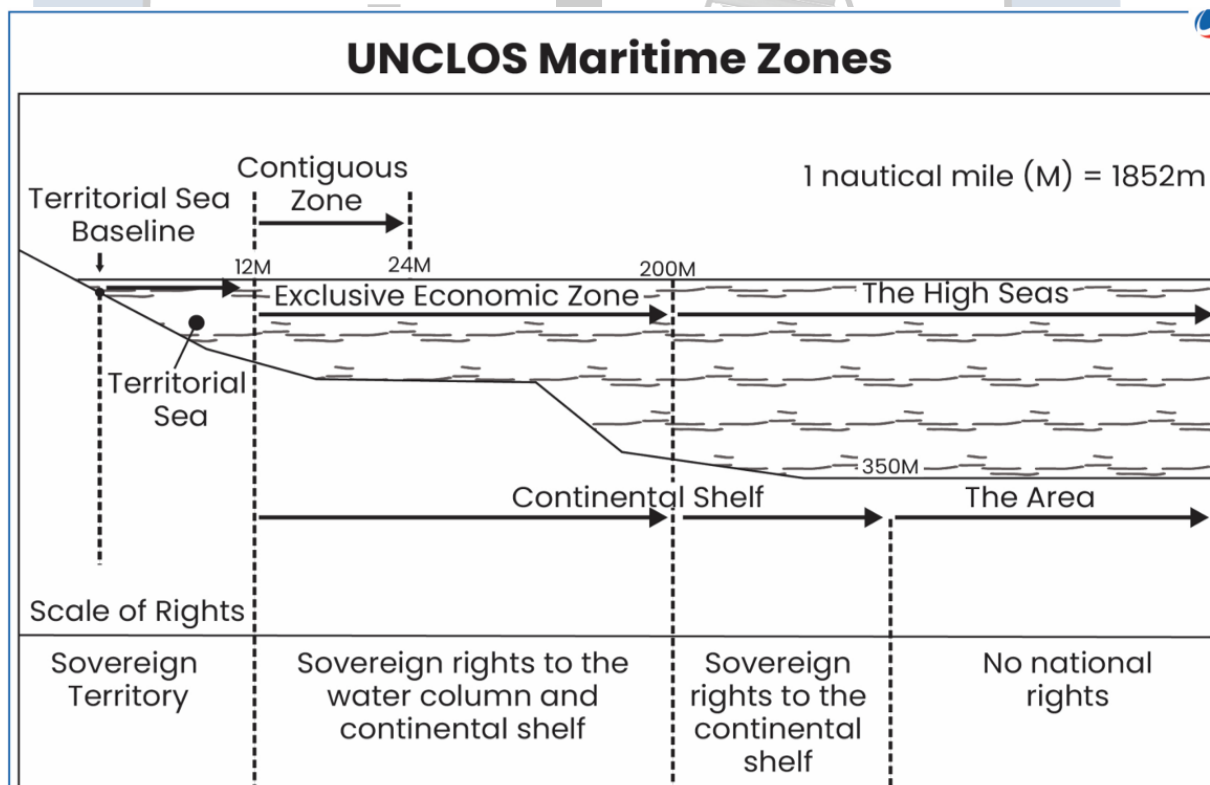
Sri Lankan fishermen protested against their Indian counterparts for their alleged poaching in the Sri Lankan waters by sailing to the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL).

- The problem has three interrelated facets: disagreements over Kachchatheevu island; poaching by Indian fishermen in Sri Lankan waters; and their use of trawlers that causes environmental damage.
- While Indian fishermen believe they are simply fishing in their traditional grounds, particularly around Katchatheevu, Sri Lanka accuses them of trespassing into its territorial seas.
- Indian fishermen claim that climate change and depletion of fish stocks on the Indian side of the IMBL have driven them to sail farther out to sea.

- In 2023, 240 Indian fishermen were arrested for alleged poaching in Sri Lankan waters, followed by the seizure of 35 trawlers.

About International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL)

- The India-Sri Lanka IMBL was delineated by the 1974 Maritime boundary agreement demarcating it in the Palk Strait.
- It was determined based on principles under United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).
- According to UNCLOS, Maritime boundaries are often defined by the equidistance principle, which asserts that a nation's marine boundary should follow a medial line equidistant from the coastal areas of two neighbouring countries.
- This boundary is established to define each country's exclusive economic zones, territorial waters, and other maritime zones, helping to prevent disputes and conflicts over maritime jurisdiction.



INDUS WATER TREATY

India has marked the completion of the **Shahpur Kandi Barrage** on the Ravi River, stopping the water flow to Pakistan.

- India has exclusive rights to the water of the Ravi River under the Indus Water Treaty.
- At present, some of the water of the River Ravi is going waste through the Madhopur Headworks downstream to Pakistan.
- Now, with the Shahpur Kandi Dam project, India will redirect 1,150 cusecs of water towards J&K, Punjab, and Rajasthan, bolstering agricultural and hydropower prospects in the region.
- The Shahpur Kandi Barrage is a dam on the Ravi River in Pathankot district, Punjab. It is part of a multi-purpose river valley project, featuring two hydel power projects with a total installed capacity of 206 MW.

About Indus Waters Treaty (IWT)

- **Genesis:** IWT was signed in 1960, between India and Pakistan and brokered by the World Bank (which was also a signatory).
- **Provisions** for water usage rights:
 - o IWT allows India unrestricted use of three eastern rivers Ravi, Beas, and Sutlej.
 - o Pakistan has control over three western rivers Indus, Jhelum, and Chenab.
 - ✓ Can be used by India with certain restrictions (for irrigation, transport and power generation).
- **Implementation:** The treaty required the creation of a Permanent Indus Commission, with a commissioner from each country, to maintain a channel for communication and is required to meet at least once every year.
- **Mechanism for resolving disputes:** IWT provides 3 Step Dispute Resolution Mechanism viz.
 - o **Step 1: Permanent Indus Commission-** to resolve questions about implementation of the treaty.

- o **Step 2: Neutral Expert**- Appointed by World Bank to deal with unresolved differences on water sharing and involves rendering a binding decision.
- o **Step 3: Court of Arbitration (CoA)**- If a neutral expert fails, the dispute goes to CoA. It is a seven-member arbitral tribunal, determines its own procedures and decisions by majority vote.

Indus River System



DARIEN GAP

- Darien Gap has emerged as one of the world's most dangerous and fastest-growing border crossings for illegal immigration.
 - o This route is taken when people migrate from South America to North America.
- **About Darien Gap**
 - o Connects northern Colombia and southern Panama.
 - o Part of the Isthmus of Panama.
 - ✓ Isthmus is a narrow piece of land, with water on each side, that joins two larger pieces of land.
 - o It is a hot, humid area marked by tropical rainforests, mangrove swamps, and low mountain ranges with cloud forest vegetation (tropical mountainous regions).

PATENTS

Patents (Amendment) Rules, 2024 have been notified by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

Regulation of Patents

Global

- World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) regulates the Patent and other IPR.
 - o WIPO administers conventions and Treaties related to patents
- Under Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS), an agreement of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) was signed in 1994.
 - o It is the most comprehensive multilateral agreement on IP.
 - o It plays a central role in facilitating trade in knowledge and creativity, in resolving trade disputes over IP.

India

- Regulated by the Patents Act, 1970. It repealed the Indian Patents and Designs Act, 1911.
 - o It has been amended thrice, in 1999, 2002, and 2005.
 - o The Amendment of 2005 ensured compliance of the Patents Act, 1970 with the WTO TRIPS Agreement.
- ✓ Amendment extended the product patent protection to the areas of pharmaceuticals and agricultural chemicals.
- As per the Act, the time Period of patent will be 20 years.
- Also, as per the Act, there are certain things which cannot be patented in India such as plants and animals in whole or any part including seeds, varieties and species and essentially biological processes for production or propagation of plants and animals etc.



World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)



Genesis: Established in 1967 through the **WIPO Convention**.



About: It is a self-funding agency of the United Nations. It is the global forum for intellectual property (IP) services, policy, information and cooperation.



Membership: 193 member states (including India)



Key information:

- Governs treaties related to IPR such as **Berne Convention** for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works.
- It releases the **Global Innovation Index (GII)** along with **Cornell University** and **INSEAD**
- It releases reports like **World Intellectual Property Report**.

SABROOM LAND PORT (SLP)

- PM inaugurated Sabroom Landport in Tripura located along India-Bangladesh international border.

About SLP

- o It is connected to Chittagong port of Bangladesh through Maitree Bridge on River Feni.
- o It will facilitate movement of passengers and cargo between India and Bangladesh.

Land Ports

o These are areas on international border including portions of national highways, State highways, etc., notified as land customs station or immigration check post, with facilities for clearance and transport of passengers and goods across the borders.

o Currently, there are 11 Land Ports operational in India.

SELA TUNNEL

- Prime Minister inaugurated strategically important Sela tunnel in Arunachal Pradesh.

About Sela tunnel

- o Constructed on road connecting Tezpur in Assam to Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh by Border Road Organization'.
- o Constructed using New Austrian Tunnelling Method (NATM).
- o World's longest bi-lane tunnel (~1.5 kms) to provide all-weather connectivity at an altitude above 13,000 ft.

SUDARSHAN SETU

- Prime Minister has inaugurated Sudarshan Setu in Gulf of Kutch.

About Sudarshan Setu (Signature Bridge)

- o India's longest cable-stayed bridge with solar panels installed on upper portions of the footpath, generating one megawatt of electricity.
- o Four-lane bridge connects Okha mainland and Beyt Dwarka island in Gujarat.
- o It will ease transportation and reduce time of devotees travelling between Dwarka and BeytDwarka.
- o It features a footpath adorned with verses from Bhagavad Gita and images of Lord Krishna on both sides.

HUMAN GENOME SEQUENCING

Department of Biotechnology (DBT) announced the completion of GenomeIndia project.

About GenomeIndia Project:

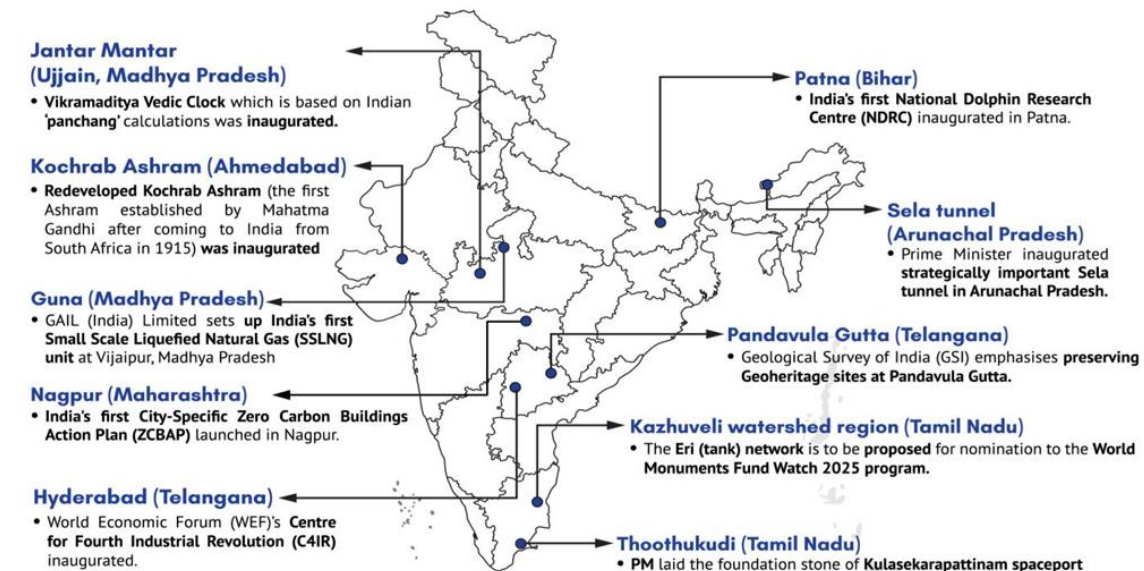
- Launched: by DBT under Ministry of Science and Technology (2020).
 - o India had announced its first complete human genome in 2009.
- Aim: To collect 10,000 genetic samples from citizens across India and create a Reference Genome for Indian Population.
 - o Human genome reference sequence is an accepted representation of the human genome sequence, made up of a combination of several people's DNA.

GENDER INEQUALITY INDEX (GII) 2022 RELEASED

- GII 2022 released by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).
- Index is Released by UNDP in their report Human Development Report 2023/2024; Breaking the gridlock Reimagining cooperation in a polarized world.
- Key Highlights:
 - o Topped by Denmark, followed by Norway and Switzerland.
 - o India has been ranked at 108 out of 193 countries with a score of 0.437.
 - o India's neighbouring nations such as Bhutan (80); Sri Lanka (90); and Maldives (76) have performed better.
- GII is a composite measure, reflecting inequality in achievements between women and men in three dimensions:
 - o **Reproductive Health:** Use indicators namely the maternal mortality ratio and the adolescent fertility rate.
 - o **Empowerment:** Measured by the share of parliamentary seats held and at least secondary attainment level by both gender.
 - o **Labour market:** Measured by labour force participation rates by both gender.

- GII score varies between 0 (when women and men fare equally) and 1 (when men or women fare poorly compared to the other in all dimensions).

Places in News: India



Places in News: World

