

UNIFORM CIVIL CODE

Why in the News?

- The Uttarakhand Assembly is likely to pass the State's Uniform Civil Code (UCC) Bill during its four-day-long session in February.

About Uniform Civil Code (UCC):

- A Uniform Civil Code refers to a single law for the entire country, applicable to all religious communities in their personal matters such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, adoption etc.
- It is intended to replace the system of fragmented personal laws, which currently govern interpersonal relationships and related matters within different religious communities.

Constitution of India on UCC:

- **Article 44** of the Constitution lays down that the State shall endeavour to secure a Uniform Civil Code for the citizens throughout the territory of India.
- Article 44 is one of the Directive Principles mentioned in Part-IV of the Constitution.
 - These, as defined in **Article 37**, are not justiciable (not enforceable by any court) but the principles laid down therein are fundamental in governance.
 - These principles consists of all the ideals which the State should follow and keep in mind while formulating policies and enacting laws for the country.

Exception of Goa:

- Goa is, at present, the only state in India with a uniform civil code.
- The Portuguese Civil Code of 1867, which continues to be implemented after India annexed the territory in 1961, applies to all Goans, irrespective of their religious or ethnic community.

Need for a Uniform Civil Code in India:

- A Uniform Civil Code would provide equal status to all citizens irrespective of the community they belong to.

- Personal laws of different religions are widely divergent and there is no consistency in how issues like marriage, succession and adoption are treated for people belonging to different communities.
 - This is contradictory to **Article 14** of the Constitution, which guarantees Equality before the Law.
- Personal laws, because they derive from tradition and custom, also tend to give undue advantage to men.
 - This becomes evident in examples such as Muslim men being allowed to marry multiple wives, but women being forbidden from having multiple husbands.
 - Men (fathers) are also treated as ‘natural guardians’ and are given preference under the Hindu Minority and Guardianship Act.
- A UCC could lead to consistency and gender equality in India.

Criticism of UCC:

- Although it reinforces equality before the law, the idea of a UCC clashes with the Right to Freedom of Religion, provided under **Article 25** of the Constitution.
 - Separate personal laws are one of the ways in which people have exercised their right to practise their own religion, which has been particularly important for minorities.

Way Forward:

- A progressive and broadminded outlook should be encouraged among the people to understand the spirit of the UCC. For this, education, awareness and sensitisation programmes must be taken up.
- Meanwhile, discriminatory personal laws should be amended/abolished accordingly.
- The Law Commission in its report titled “**Reform of Family Law**” (2018) had suggested that the best way forward would be to preserve the diversity of personal laws while ensuring that they do not contradict fundamental rights.
- The report suggested that by codifying different personal laws, one can arrive at certain universal principles that prioritize equity rather than blanket imposition of a Uniform Civil Code.

WHAT IS WHIP?

The major political party issued a three-line whip to its Lok Sabha MPs asking them to be present in the House tomorrow as the Prime Minister of India will reply to the Motion of



Thanks on the Presidential address delivered recently.

- A whip in parliamentary parlance is a **written order** that party members be present for an **important vote**, or that they vote only in a particular way.
- The term is derived from the old British practice of “whipping in” lawmakers to follow the party line.
- The importance of a whip can be inferred from the **number of times an order is underlined**.
- **Appointment:**
 - In India, all parties can issue a **whip to their members**.
 - Parties appoint a **senior member** from among their House contingents to issue whips — this member is **called a Chief Whip**, and he/she is assisted by additional Whips.
- **Types of whips:**
 - **One-line whip:** A one-line whip, **underlined once**, is usually issued to **inform party members of a vote** & allows them to abstain in case they decide not to follow party line.
 - **Two-line whip:** A two-line whip directs them to be present during the vote.
 - **Three-line whip:** A three-line whip is the strongest, employed on important occasions such as the second reading of a Bill or a no-confidence motion, **and places an obligation on members to toe the party line**.
- **Defiance of whip**
 - In India, rebelling against a three-line whip can put a lawmaker’s membership of the House at risk.
 - The **anti-defection law** allows the Speaker/Chairperson to **disqualify such a member**; the only exception is when more than a third of legislators vote against a directive, effectively splitting the party.

DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF GST INTELLIGENCE

The Directorate General of GST Intelligence (DGGI) is investigating Mahadev Online Book, an allegedly illegal betting application, and its promoters for suspected violation of GST rules and non-payment of tax.



About Directorate General of GST Intelligence:

- The Directorate General of Central Excise Intelligence (DGCEI) is now renamed as Directorate General of GST Intelligence (DGGI).
- It is an **apex intelligence organisation** functioning under the Central Board of Indirect Taxes & Customs, Department of Revenue, **and Ministry of Finance**.
- It is entrusted with the task of **collection, collation, and dissemination** of intelligence relating to the **evsion of Goods and Services Tax (GST)** and the duties of Central Excise and Service Tax on an all-India basis.

Functions of DGGI:

- **Intelligence gathering:** It is responsible for gathering intelligence about **potential violations of the GST law**. This includes collecting information from various sources, such as GST returns, financial statements, and other documents.
- It **develops intelligence**, especially in new areas of tax evasion through its intelligence network across the country and disseminates such information, by issuing Modus Operandi Circulars and Alert Circulars to sensitise the field formations about the latest trends in duty evasion.
- **Investigation:** It has the power to conduct investigations into suspected cases of GST evasion or non-compliance. This may involve summoning persons, examining records, and carrying out searches and seizures.
- **Enforcement:** It is responsible for enforcing the provisions of the GST law. This includes taking legal action against offenders, imposing penalties, and recovering any taxes or duties due.

WHAT IS THE NATIONAL AGRICULTURE MARKET (ENAM)?



With more states facilitating the trade of agricultural commodities on the eNAM, a spurt in trading among various markets within the state as well as at the inter-state level is being witnessed.

- It is an **online trading platform for agricultural commodities** in India.
- It was launched on April 14, 2016, and is **completely funded by the Government of India**.
- The **Small Farmers Agribusiness Consortium (SFAC)** acts as the **lead agency for implementing e-Nam** under the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare.
- It aims to create better marketing opportunities **for the farmers to sell their products through a competitive and transparent price discovery system**, along with an **online payment facility for the buyers**.
- The NAM portal **networks the existing APMC** (Agriculture Produce Marketing Committee) / Regulated Marketing Committee (RMC) **market yards, sub-market yards, private markets, and other unregulated markets to unify all the nationwide agricultural markets** by creating a central online platform for agricultural commodity price discovery.
- **Features:**
 - It will **enable farmers to showcase their products** through their nearby markets and **facilitate traders from anywhere to quote prices**.
 - It provides **single-window services for all APMC-related services** and information. This includes commodity arrivals, quality and prices, buy-and-sell offers, and e-payment settlements directly into farmer's accounts, among other services.
 - Using the eNAM service, **licences for traders, buyers, and commission agents can be obtained** from state-level authorities **without any pre-condition**

of the physical presence or possession of a shop or premises in the market yard.

- **Harmonisation of quality standards** of agricultural products and **infrastructure for quality testing** are made available in every market.
- **Provision of Soil Testing Laboratories** is provided for the selected mandi (market) in order to facilitate the farmers visiting the mandi.
- e-NAM is designed and implemented to **benefit all the stakeholders: farmers, mandis, traders, buyers, Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), and exporters.**
- **The benefits to stakeholders include:**
 - Transparent **online trading** with **enhanced accessibility** to the market.
 - **Real-time price discovery** for better and more **stable price realisation** for producers.
 - **Reduced transaction costs** for buyers.
 - Availability of information on the e-NAM mobile app about commodity prices.
 - **The details of the price** of the commodity sold, along with the quantity, are **received through SMS.**
 - **Quality certification.**
 - More efficient supply chain and warehouse-based sales.
 - **Online payment directly** to the bank accounts of the farmers.

CORBETT TIGER RESERVE



Location:

- It is located on the **foothills of the Himalayas** in **Uttarakhand.**
- By and large, the reserve is spread **over the Bhabar and lower Shivalik regions** with a deep-water table.
- **Corbett was the first national park in India** and was established in 1936. It was named Hailey National Park then. In 1957, the park was rechristened Corbett National Park in memory of the late Jim Corbett, a great naturalist and eminent conservationist.

- Today, after the addition of areas to the originally declared National Park, the total area of Tiger Reserve extends to 1288.31 sq. km.
 - **Vegetation:** In general, the vegetation comprises **sal and mixed forests, interspersed with grasslands and riparian vegetation.**
 - The **terrain is undulating, with several valleys.** The rivers **Ramganga, Pallaen, and Sonanadi** flow through the valleys.
 - The habitat is characterised by **open meadows (chaurs)** interspersed with sal and moist, mixed deciduous forests.
 - The **grasslands are locally known as ‘Chaur’,** which are an **outcome of abandoned settlements** or past clearings.
 - **Flora:** It consists of **evergreen Sal** and its combined trees, the Sheesham, and the Kanju found extensively **on the ridges.**
 - **Fauna:** **Tiger and elephant** are the charismatic mammals, besides a large array of co-predators (leopard, small carnivores), ungulates (**sambar, hog deer, spotted deer**), birds, reptiles (**gharial, crocodile**) and fishes.
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HIGH COURT DIRECTS ASSAM GOVERNMENT TO HALT UNAUTHORISED BUFFALO FIGHTS

Why in news?

- The Guwahati High Court directed the Assam government to stop any further buffalo fights from taking place in the state of Assam.
- This decision came in response to PETA India's application for interim relief against traditional Buffalo fights competition which was allowed this year by Assam Government.
- With this, the Assam government's attempt to revive traditional practices of buffalo and bulbul (songbird) fighting during **Magh Bihu** has come up against a legal challenge.

Magh Bihu

- Magh Bihu, also known as Bhogali Bihu or Maghor Bihu, is a harvesting festival celebrated in Assam.
- The festival has its roots in the agricultural traditions of Assam and falls in the month of Magh, which falls in January. It marks the end of the harvesting season.
- **History**
 - Bihu's history dates back to ancient times (3500 BC) when people offered fire sacrifices to improve their harvest.
 - The **Dimasa Kacharis tribe** is known to be the festival's first-known ancestors.
- **Rituals**
 - Magh Bihu is celebrated over two days.
 - The first day is known as Uruka or Bihu eve.
 - On this day, Meiji (bonfire) is burnt with people singing Bihu songs, beating Dhol, and celebrating with their loved ones.
 - The main Magh Bihu is observed the next day.
 - People take a bath early in the morning and play traditional Assamese games like Tekeli Bonga (pot-breaking) and buffalo fighting.
- **Significance**
 - Magh Bihu holds agricultural and social significance as it is time to celebrate new yield and renew ties of friendship and brotherhood.
 - The festival emphasises sharing meals with the community.
 - The agricultural significance of the festival marks the end of the harvesting season, celebration of new yield, and thanking the ancestors and the Gods for a bountiful harvest.
 - The social significance is that during this time communities come together for celebrations.

An age-old tradition

- These fights are part of the folk culture associated with the Assamese winter harvest festival of Magh Bihu.

- Buffalo fights are held in different parts of Assam during Magh Bihu, with Ahatguri in Nagaon district being the biggest centre.
 - Bulbul fights, on the other hand, are an attraction at the Hayagriv Madhab Mandir in Hajo, around 30 km from Gauhati.
 - **PETA's challenge**
 - PETA India has now filed two linked petitions before the Guwahati High Court seeking the prohibition of both activities.
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WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION

- It is an international institution that **oversees the rules for global trade among nations.**
- **WTO has 164 member countries [with Liberia and Afghanistan the most recent members, having joined in 2016] and 25 observer countries and governments.**
- It **officially began operations on January 1, 1995, in accordance with the 1994 Marrakesh Agreement**, thus replacing the 1948 General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT).

Organisational Structure of WTO

- The **highest authority of the WTO is the Ministerial Conference**, which is composed of all member states and usually convenes biennially (every two years) and **consensus is emphasised in all its decisions.**
 - The **daily work is handled by three bodies (whose membership is the same):**
 - The General Council
 - **The Dispute Settlement Body (DSB)**
 - The Trade Policy Review Body
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