

## Uniform Civil Code (UCC) 2024 Bill Tabled in Uttarakhand Assembly

- Once it becomes an act, Uttarakhand will become the first state in the country after independence to adopt UCC.
  - ⊕ After its liberation in 1961, Goa retained the Portuguese Civil Code, making it only state to have a UCC for all religions.
- About Uttarakhand's UCC Bill
  - ⊕ **Constitutional Mandate:** Article 44 says that State shall endeavour to secure for citizens a uniform civil code throughout territory of India.
  - ⊕ **Objective:** Bill proposes a common law on marriage, divorce, land, property and inheritance for all citizens irrespective of their religion in Uttarakhand.
  - ⊕ **Key Features:**
    - ◆ Provisions of UCC Bill do not apply to tribal communities.
    - ◆ Bill aims to regulate live-in relationships.
    - ◆ Bill prohibits bigamy or marriages with more than one person etc.



- Need for UCC
  - ⊕ **Ensuring Equality:** Presently different communities are governed by different Personal laws.
  - ⊕ **Gender Justice:** It will promote gender justice by removing the inbuilt discriminatory provisions of personal laws.
  - ⊕ **National Integration:** UCC will separate religion from social relations and personal laws, ensuring equality and thus harmony in the society.
    - ◆ Also held by Supreme Court in Mohd. Ahmed Khan v Shah Bano Begum (1985) case.

### Challenges in Adoption of UCC

- ⊕ **Plurality and diversity:** Huge diversified customary practices make it difficult to evolve consensus on UCC.
  - ◆ In 2018, Law Commission of India opined that UCC is "neither necessary nor desirable at this stage" in the country.
- ⊕ **Concerns of Minorities:** Fear of loss of identity and marginalization.
- ⊕ **Existence of legal pluralism in civil laws.**
- ⊕ **Indian Secularism:** Which is based on diversity of religion and people.

## Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) approved amendments to various food safety and standards regulations

- To facilitate ease of doing business through the concept of 'One Nation, One Commodity, One Regulator', FSSAI approved following amendments:
  - ⊕ Making only FSSAI certification mandatory for food products.
  - ⊕ Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) or AGMARK certification will not be required for food products.
    - ◆ Presently, BIS certification is mandatory for some food products e.g. infant formula, packaged drinking water, milk powder etc.
    - ◆ AGMARK is mandatory for some products e.g. blended edible vegetable oils and fat spreads.
- FSSAI also approved a first comprehensive manual of methods of analysis for ensuring regulatory compliance of food products.
  - ⊕ Other approvals include standards of Alcoholic Ready-to-drink beverages and revision of standards of milk fat products.
- Food safety and standards regulations in India
  - ⊕ **Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006:** Overarching regulation on food safety establishing FSSAI as the primary food safety authority.
  - ⊕ **Food Safety and Standards Regulations, 2011:** Contains labeling requirements and standards for packaged food, permitted food additives, microbiological requirements etc.
  - ⊕ **Various FSSAI Food Safety Standards:** Developed by Scientific Committee and Scientific Panels, the principal arms of FSSAI in standard development process.



### Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)

- ⊕ **Established:** Under Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006.
- ⊕ **Ministry:** Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
- ⊕ **Role:** Laying down science based standards for articles of food and to regulate their manufacture, storage, distribution, sale and import.

## Massive fire broke out in a firecracker factory in Madhya Pradesh's Harda

- This raises concerns regarding **implementation of industrial fire safety regulations** by industries in India.
- **Industrial fire safety regulations in India**
  - ⊕ **The National Building Code of India** provides guidelines for fire safety measures in buildings, including industrial structures.
    - ◆ It outlines requirements for **fire-resistance components, fire detection and alarm systems, means of escape, fire-fighting equipment** etc.
  - ⊕ **Model Bill to Provide for the Maintenance of Fire and Emergency Service for the State, 2019** provides a model framework for states for maintenance of fire and emergency service.
    - ◆ **Fire service is a state subject** and has been included as a Municipal function in the Twelfth Schedule of Indian Constitution.
  - ⊕ **The Occupational Safety, Health And Working Conditions Code, 2020** provides for liability of owners of factory premises for fire prevention and protection.
  - ⊕ **Petroleum & Explosives Safety Organization (PESO)** administers responsibilities under the Explosives Act, 1984 & Petroleum Act, 1934 for **prevention of accidents**.
    - ◆ It overlooks safety in manufacture, possession, use, sale, import, export, transport & handling of **explosives, petroleum, flammable and non-flammable compressed gases** and other hazardous substances.
  - ⊕ **Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS)** has set standards specific to fire safety equipment and systems used in industries.

### Major causes for industrial fire disasters

- ⊕ **Structural irregularities** such as dilapidated buildings, weak fire prevention and containment systems etc.
- ⊕ **Fault in electrical systems** such as faulty wiring, overloaded circuits, failure in electrical equipment, short-circuits etc.
- ⊕ **Chemical storage and handling risks** such as improper segregation and handling of explosive materials, lack of ventilation etc.
- ⊕ **Human Error** such as negligent actions like overcharging electrical appliances, lack of material handling knowledge, use of flammable materials etc.

## Petronet LNG and QatarEnergy extend Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) supply deal for another 20 years beyond 2028

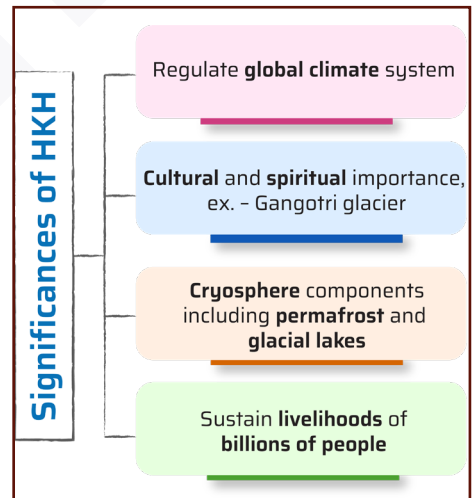
- New agreement between **India and Qatar, inked during ongoing India Energy Week 2024 in Goa**, is pursuant to extension of an existing long-term contract for LNG supply, signed in 1999 for supplies till 2028.
  - ⊕ Under new agreement, LNG supply of **7.5 million metric tonnes per annum** will be commencing from 2028 till 2048.
  - ⊕ Indian companies also have **term contracts for LNG in Australia and UAE**.
- **Significance of agreement**
  - ⊕ **Promote Gas Based Economy** by increasing the share of gas in energy mix from 6% to 15% by 2030.
  - ⊕ **Ensure continued supplies of regasified LNG** to major consuming sectors like fertilisers, city gas distribution, refineries, power generation etc.
  - ⊕ **Reduce import bills** as Natural gas is **cheaper and cleaner fuel** than crude oil. Thus, it is a more **affordable alternative** to imported crude oil.
- LNG is a **clear, colourless, non-toxic liquid** which forms when natural gas is cooled to a liquid state, at about **-260° Fahrenheit (-162° Celsius)**, for shipping and storage.
- **Initiatives taken to promote Natural Gas**
  - ⊕ **LNG terminals** at Dahej, Hazira and Mundra (Gujarat), Dhabol (Maharashtra), Kochi (Kerala) and Ennore (Tamil Nadu).
  - ⊕ **One Nation One Gas Grid Project** to increase availability of natural gas across country.
  - ⊕ **Gas4India campaign**.

### Petronet LNG Limited

- ⊕ It is **one of the fastest growing world-class Public Limited Company** in Indian energy sector.
- ⊕ It is a **joint venture** of Oil and Natural Gas Corporation, Indian Oil Corporation Limited, GAIL (India) Limited, and Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited.

## Scientists Declare Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH) a Biosphere on Brink of Collapse

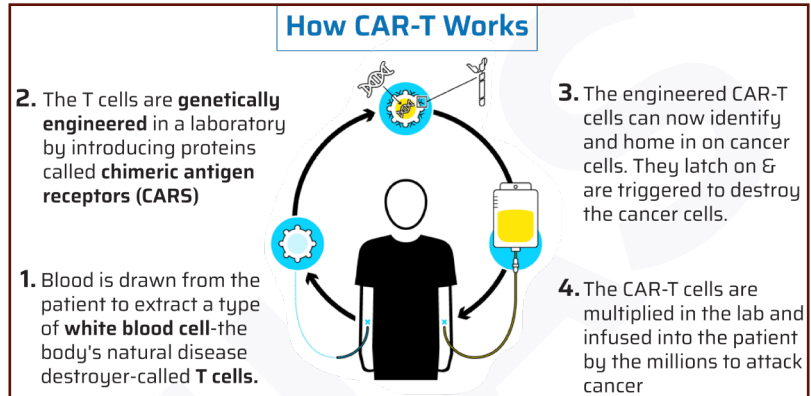
- Researchers at **International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD)** describe **speed and scale of losses** in nature and habitat in HKH region as catastrophic.
- **About Hindu Kush Himalaya Region**



- ⊕ HKH Region extends about **3,500 km** from Afghanistan in the west to Myanmar in the east.
- ⊕ Home to **largest ice reserves outside Polar Regions**, feeds **10 major rivers** including Ganga.
- ⊕ Known as **greater Himalayan region or the roof of the world**.
- **Concerns**
  - ⊕ **As per Asian Development Bank**, HKH region is **warming faster** than global average and if **global temperature rises hit 3°C**, 75% of glaciers in Bhutan and Nepal could melt by end of century.
  - ⊕ **70% of the original biodiversity** has been lost over last century.
- **Initiatives to protect HKH**
  - ⊕ **ICIMOD** is an **intergovernmental institution** (Headquartered at Kathmandu) working towards **climate resilient HKH**.
    - ◆ **Regional member countries of ICIMOD** are Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan.
  - ⊕ **Hindu Kush Himalayan Monitoring and Assessment Programme (HIMAP)** coordinated by ICIMOD.
  - ⊕ **National Mission on Sustaining the Himalayan Ecosystem**, launched by India as part of **National Action Plan on Climate Change**.

## Cancer remission achieved after commercial use of NexCAR19, India's first indigenous CAR-T cell therapy

- NexCAR19 has been developed by ImmunoAct, a company incubated under IIT Bombay, and Tata Memorial Hospital.
  - ⊖ NexCAR19 was granted market authorization by Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) in 2023.
- CAR-T cell therapy is a **new approach in immunotherapy**, where the patient's **immune system is strengthened** to attack cancer cells.
  - ⊖ It restores the **ability of the T-cells** to recognise the cancer cells and kill them.
    - ◆ T-cells are **white blood cells** that recognize and fight infections and cancerous growths.
    - ◆ In advanced stages, cancer cells can **inactivate T-cells** or modify themselves so that T-cells **cannot detect** them.
  - ⊖ Therapy involves **genetic engineering of T-cells** by introducing **Chimeric Antigen Receptors (CARs)**, to produce **CAR T-cells**.
    - ◆ CARs are proteins that **assist T-cells to recognise** and attach to a specific protein, or antigen, present on cancer cells.



- **Significance of CAR-T cell therapy:**
  - ⊖ Very effective against some types of cancer e.g. **Leukemia, Lymphoma**.
  - ⊖ **Short treatment time and more rapid recovery** as unlike chemotherapy, it is **administered only once** to a patient.
  - ⊖ Useful for cancers **not responding to combinations of chemotherapy** or other immunotherapy approaches.
  - ⊖ CAR T-cells are known as **living drugs** as T-cells persist in the body for long-term and can benefit for many years.

## Also in News

### South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation (SASEC)

- Prime Minister laid the foundation stone of **multiple road upgradation** as part of the **SASEC corridor connectivity**.
- **About SASEC**
  - ⊖ **Genesis:** Established in 2001.
  - ⊖ **Secretariat :** Asian Development Bank
  - ⊖ **Members:** Bangladesh, Bhutan, **India**, Nepal, Maldives, Sri Lanka, Myanmar
  - ⊖ **Objective:** It is a **project-based partnership** to promote **regional prosperity** by improving,
    - ◆ **Cross-border connectivity**
    - ◆ **Boosting trade** among member countries and
    - ◆ **Strengthening regional economic cooperation**
  - ⊖ **Four Main SASEC Sectors:** Transport, Trade facilitation, Energy, and Economic corridor development.

### Nagoya Protocol

- **Cameroon**, a central African country, has adopted the Nagoya Protocol on **Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization**.
- **About Nagoya Protocol**
  - ⊖ Adopted in 2010 in **Nagoya, Japan**, it is a **supplementary agreement to the Convention on Biological Diversity**.
    - ◆ India is a **party to the Nagoya Protocol**.
  - ⊖ It aims at **sharing the benefits** arising from the utilization of **genetic resources** in a fair and equitable way.
  - ⊖ It establishes a clear framework on how researchers and companies can obtain **access to genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge**.

### Prime Minister's Science, Technology & Innovation Advisory Council (PM-STIAC)

- **Principal Scientific Adviser (PSA)** to the Government of India has convened the 24th PM-STIAC meeting.
- **PM-STIAC:**
  - ⊖ **Constituted in 2018**, PM-STIAC **advises the Prime Minister** on all matters related to Science, Technology and Innovation.
    - ◆ Council works **under the office of PSA** and PSA acts as **its chairperson**.
  - ⊖ **Objectives:**
    - ◆ **Synergizing Science & Technology collaborative research** with various stakeholders.
    - ◆ **Fostering effective public-private linkages** for driving research
    - ◆ **Formulating and coordinating major inter-ministerial Science & Technology missions**.
  - ⊖ PM-STIAC shaped several missions such as **Deep Ocean Exploration Mission, One Health Mission, National Quantum Mission**, etc.

### Bharat Brand

- **Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution** launched 'Bharat Rice' at a subsidized rate.
  - ⊖ In the first phase, it will be offered to consumers through **three central cooperative agencies** - Kendriya Bhandar, National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Ltd (Nafed), and National Cooperative Consumers' Federation of India (NCCF).
- Earlier, the government has started retailing **subsidized Wheat flour and Chana dal** under the '**Bharat Brand**'.
  - ⊖ It aims to **stabilize prices, curb food inflation, and augment domestic availability** of these food items.



### Rajya Sabha Passes Bills to Modify SC, ST list in States

- Bill add four Particularly Tribal Vulnerable Groups (Bondo, Mankidia, etc.) to ST list of Odisha.
- Article 366 (24) prescribes that Scheduled Caste (SC) means such castes, races or tribes as are deemed under article 341 of constitution.
- Article 366 (25) prescribes that Schedule Tribes (ST) means such tribes or tribal communities as are deemed under Article 342 of the Constitution.
- President may with respect to any State or Union territory, after consultation with governor can notify castes, races or tribes which will deemed to be SC/ST.
  - ⊕ Parliament may by law modify the list of SC/ST specified in notification issued.



### Bannerghatta National Park (BNP)

- Environmental activists protested against potential adverse impacts of a proposed six-lane elevated highway in BNP.



- Bannerghatta National Park
  - ⊕ Location: Near Bangalore, Karnataka.
  - ⊕ Bannerghatta Biological Park, an integral part of BNP, also hosts India's first butterfly park.
  - ⊕ Vegetation: Scrub type with mixed dry deciduous patches.
  - ⊕ Fauna: Panther, elephant, tiger, sloth bear, spotted deer, grey langur, bonnet macaque etc.
  - ⊕ Suvarnamukhi stream, originating at Suvarnamukhi hills, runs through the center of the park.
  - ⊕ Four wildlife ranges: Anekal, Bannerghatta, Harohalli and Kodihalli.



### Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF)

- Recently, provisions of the ANRF Act have been brought into force.
  - ⊕ ANRF Act repealed Science and Engineering Research Board Act, 2008.
- About ANRF
  - ⊕ Operationalized by Department of Science and Technology.
  - ⊕ Governing Board headed by Prime Minister of India.
  - ⊕ Functions: To provide strategic direction for research, innovation, and entrepreneurship in the fields of
    - ◆ Natural sciences including mathematics
    - ◆ Engineering and technology
    - ◆ Scientific and technological interfaces of humanities and social sciences etc.



### Davis Cup

- India's Davis Cup team defeated Pakistan to secure its place in World Group I.
  - ⊕ This was the first time in 60 years when an Indian tennis team travelled to Pakistan to play a Davis Cup tie.
- Davis cup is an annual international team event for men's tennis.
- Davis cup is run by International Tennis Federation (ITF) and is competed by teams from 155 nations (2023) in a knock-out format.
- Davis cup originally began as the International Lawn Tennis Challenge in 1900 A.D. between the USA and Great Britain.



## Places in News



### Suriname (Capital: Paramaribo)

- A Parliamentary delegation from the Republic of Suriname, called on the President of India.
- Political Features
  - ⊕ Located on northern coast of South America.
  - ⊕ Boundaries: Atlantic Ocean to the north, French Guiana to the east, Brazil to the south, and Guyana to the west.
- Geographical Features
  - ⊕ Tropical rainforest covers southern part of the country.
  - ⊕ Economically, dependent on extensive supply of natural resources, most notably Bauxite.
  - ⊕ Major Rivers: Maroni, Courantyne, Coppename, Suriname River etc.
  - ⊕ Highest Peak: Juliana Top

