

NEWS TODAY

Prime Minister (PM) pitched for the Uniform Civil Code (UCC)

Highlighting the views of the **Constituent Assembly**, PM stressed on the need to have a “secular civil code”, replacing the existing diverse personal laws based on religion.

Uniform Civil Code (UCC)

- ▶ **About:** Refers to a **set of laws** that govern **personal matters**, including marriage, divorce, etc. for all citizens regardless of religion.
 - ⊕ **Article 44 (Directive Principles of State Policy):** Provides that **State shall endeavour** to secure for the citizens a UCC throughout the territory of India.
- ▶ **Enforcement:** Recently, **Uttarakhand** became the first state to implement UCC (2024). Besides, **Goa through Portuguese Civil Code, 1867** has similar provisions.

Need for UCC

- ▶ **Foster unity and integrity of nation:** Renouncing practices that are in conflict with Fundamental Rights.
- ▶ **Reform India's Social system:** Eliminate injustice and practices that discriminate against women.
- ▶ **Promote Uniformity:** Like the criminal laws, that apply equally irrespective of religion.

Challenges in Implementing UCC

- ▶ **Against the protective provisions of the Constitution:** 5th and 6th Schedule contains distinct provisions for Scheduled and Tribal Areas to preserve their customary practices.
- ▶ **Doctrinal Differences:** Objections to UCC may emerge on the belief that it compromises the traditions and religious freedom of communities.

Conclusion

Supreme Court in **Shah Bano Begum (1985)**, **Sarla Mudgal (1995)**, etc. called for UCC to deal with the problems of personal laws. However, in the views of **Dr. B.R. Ambedkar**, it must **reconcile** to the sentiments of different communities.

Some Views favoring UCC

- ▶ **K. M. Munshi:** UCC was important for upholding the secular credentials of the Constitution.
- ▶ **Alladi Krishnaswami Aiyar:** UCC would create amity among communities.

Sri Lankan President Reaches Delhi on Maiden Foreign Tour After Taking Office

Key highlights of the Meet

- ▶ **Debt Restructuring:** Sri Lanka **acknowledged India's crucial assistance** in its **debt restructuring process** through emergency financing worth **USD 4 billion** & also as a co-chair of the **Official Creditors' Committee (OCC)**.
 - ⊕ **OCC:** In 2023, **17 countries** formed OCC, co-chaired by **India, Japan and France**, to discuss the **Sri Lankan authorities'** request for a **debt treatment**.
 - ⊕ The committee includes **Paris Club creditors** as well as other **official bilateral creditors**.
- ▶ **Trade and Investment Cooperation:** Both appreciated the **India-Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement (ISFTA)**, signed in **1998**.
 - ⊕ **Merchandise trade** between them reached **USD 5.5 billion** in **FY 2023-24**. **India is trade surplus**.
 - ⊕ Both agreed that a **strategic shift** from **debt-driven models** towards **investment led partnerships**.
- ▶ **Strategic & Defence Cooperation:** Both committed to counter traditional and non-traditional threats, ensuring **free, open, and secure maritime environment**.
 - ⊕ Sri Lanka, as **India's closest maritime neighbour**, has committed to **prevent any territorial actions** that is **inimical to India's security or regional stability**.
 - ⊕ Sri Lanka acknowledged India for establishment of **the Maritime Rescue and Coordination Centre in Sri Lanka** to enhance maritime domain awareness.
- ▶ **Regional and Multilateral Cooperation:** India supports **Colombo Security Conclave**, backing Sri Lanka's regional security initiatives.

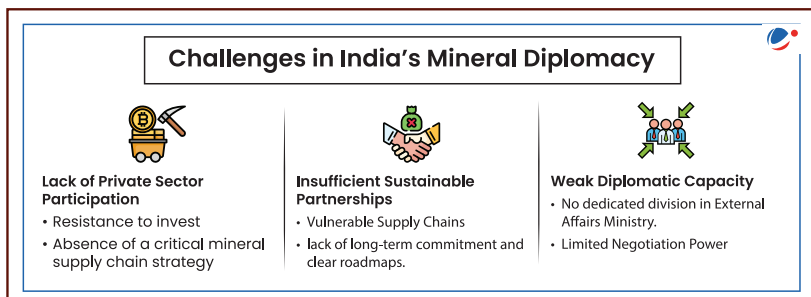
Addressing the fisheries Issues.

- ▶ **Issue:** The prolonged dispute over fishing rights **around Kachchatheevu Island in Palk Bay** has been a source of tension between India and Sri Lanka.
- ▶ **A Humanitarian Approach:** Both sides factoring the livelihood concerns agreed on the need to continue to address the issue in a **humanitarian manner**.
- ▶ **India's Initiatives in Sri Lanka:** Development of Point Pedro Fishing Harbour, rehabilitation of Karainagar Boatyard and cooperation in Aquaculture through Indian assistance.

India's Growing Focus on Strengthening Mineral Diplomacy

India's technological growth is critically constrained by its **dependence on imported critical minerals**, with the Union Defence Minister recently warning about **China's strategic weaponization** of these resources.

- China controls **60% of rare earth production, 60% of critical minerals production and 80% of the processing worldwide.**
- Hence, to mitigate India's **strategic vulnerabilities** and **ensure mineral security**, it has launched proactive efforts in **mineral diplomacy**.



Mineral Diplomacy: Refers to a country's efforts to **secure critical minerals** for **economic and national security**, aiming to reduce **supply disruption risks** and **dependence on geopolitical competitors**.

Pillars of India's Mineral Diplomacy

- **Establishing Joint Ventures**
 - ⊕ **KABIL's (Khanij Bidesh India Ltd.) International Partnerships:** Secured agreements with mineral-rich countries like **Australia & Argentina**; also, acquired strategic critical mineral assets in **Bolivia and Chile**.
 - ⊕ **India-Central Asia Collaboration: India and Kazakhstan** formed a joint venture to produce **titanium slag**.
 - ◆ India also proposed an **India-Central Asia Rare Earths Forum** to tap region's critical mineral resources.
- **Ensuring Cooperative Engagements:** By forging partnerships with minilateral and multilateral initiatives related to mineral security, such as:
 - ⊕ **Quad** (Australia, Japan, India, the United States), **Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF)**, **Mineral Security Partnership (MSP)** and the **G-7**, for cooperation in the critical mineral supply chain.

"Waste to Worth: Managing India's Urban Water Crisis through Wastewater Reuse" report released

Released jointly by the **Centre for Science and Environment (CSE)** and **National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG)**, it highlights the potential of wastewater treatment for water circularity and sustainability.

Key Highlights of the Report

- **Decline in India's annual per capita freshwater availability:** Currently below 1,700 cubic metres.
- **Huge amount of untreated wastewater:** Nearly 72% of India's wastewater ends up in nearby rivers, lakes, etc.
- **Potential in India:** India presents a strong case for circular economy in water, as:
 - ⊕ 20% of groundwater blocks are in critical condition or overexploited.
 - ⊕ 55% of households have open or no drains.

Policy Initiatives for Wastewater Treatment in India

- **Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) 2.0:** Recommends the utilization of used water.
- **Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) 2.0:** Mandates cities with population more than 0.01 million to recycle their used water.
- **National Framework on Safe Reuse of Treated Wastewater:** By NMCG.

Challenges of Wastewater Treatment in India

- **Low Operational Capacity of Sewage Treatment Plants (STPs):** Stands at around 26,000 million litre per day compared to installed capacity of 31,000.
- **Others:** Mixing up of all kinds of wastewater, lack of sewage networks, not prioritizing wastewater management, etc.

Key Recommendations

- **Governance Reforms:** Policies to be backed by bye-laws at the district/city-level with effective monitoring.
 - ⊕ **E.g., Karnataka, Urban Local Bodies (ULBs)** has defined responsibilities including coordination with the Waste Water Reuse Resource Centre.
- **Equity and Justice in water reuse:** Especially for underprivileged residents of unplanned and informal settlements.
- **Decentralized STPs at city-level:** Bangalore's district has been split into three zones based on its natural topography to serve needs of a specific area.

Credit Guarantee Scheme for e-NWR based Pledge Financing (CGS-NPF) Launched

It allows farmers to **avail loans** against **electronic Negotiable Warehouse Receipts (e-NWRs)** after depositing their commodities in **Warehousing Development and Regulatory Authority (WDRA)** accredited warehouses.

About e-NWRs

- It is a **digital version** of the traditional warehouse receipt, governed by the **Warehousing (Development and Regulation) Act of 2007**.
- It allows goods deposited in a registered warehouse to be transferred or sold through endorsement.
- Since 2019, WDRA has made the issuance of **NWR mandatorily** in electronic form.

Key Features of the Scheme

- Ministry:** Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution
- Total Corpus:** Rs 1,000-crore for post-harvest finance
- Coverage:** Loans up to Rs. 75 lakhs for agricultural purpose and up to Rs. 200 Lakhs for non-agricultural purpose.
- Eligible Institutions:** All scheduled banks and cooperative banks.
- Eligible Borrowers:** Small and marginal farmers, women, SC/ST/PwD farmers, MSMEs, traders, FPOs, and farmer cooperatives.
- Risks Covered:** Credit and warehouseman risks.
- Guarantee Coverage:** 85% for loans up to Rs. 3 lakh and 80% for loan between 3 to 75 lakhs for small and marginal farmers/women/SC/ST/PwD.
 - 75% for other borrowers.

Significance of the Scheme

- Minimise distress selling by farmers:** Ensuring availability and accessibility of finances for the targeted beneficiaries.
- Instill confidence in bankers:** Addressing the default arising out of both credit and warehouseman risk.

About WDRA

- About:** **Statutory body** under **Warehousing (Development & Regulation) Act, 2007**.
- Objective:** Introduce the NWR system, allowing farmers to store their produce in nearby, and scientifically managed warehouses.
- Key Functions:** Regulating warehouses, promoting scientific storage, boosting supply chain efficiency, etc.

Combating Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV) in Digital Age

Economist Intelligence Unit study reveals **38% of adult women** have personally encountered technology-facilitated gender-based violence.

Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV)

- TFGBV** is any action carried out using the internet and/or mobile technology that harms others based on their sexual or gender identity or by enforcing harmful gender norms.
- TFGBV takes many harmful forms.** E.g., cyberstalking, online trolling, & non-consensual sharing of intimate images; also, impersonation and fraud through fake profiles, voyeurism, etc.

Characteristics of TFGBV

- Perpetrated anonymously, across geographical locations:** Making it very difficult to identify and stop perpetrators or hold them accountable.
- Easily perpetrated using low-cost technology** and with limited skill, time, and effort.
- Perpetrated with impunity:** Abusers and perpetrators often escape any form of punishment or accountability.
- Persistence of abuse:** Digital content's viral nature enables persistent abuse, causing repeated psychological trauma for victims.

Way Forward for Combating TFGBV

- Implement Global Digital Compact's (adopted by India, at the UN Summit of the Future) recommendations** to counter technology-enabled sexual and gender-based violence.
- Expand digital literacy programs**, particularly in rural areas.
- Collaborate with tech industry** to enhance **AI-driven content moderation & user-friendly reporting mechanisms**.
- Develop robust survivor support systems** like **TechSakhi**, offering counselling, legal aid, and rehabilitation.



Also In News



Henderson Doctrine

In a recent case, the Supreme Court explained the **Henderson doctrine**.

Henderson Doctrine

- Origin:** Propounded in the English case of **Henderson vs Henderson, 1843**.
- About:** It suggests that all issues arising in the litigation out of the same subject matter must be addressed in a **single suit**.
 - It is not a rigid rule but a flexible principle.
- Significance:** Conducts judicial litigation in **good faith**; prevent parties from engaging in tactics that fragment or undermine litigations.



Santa Ana Winds

Recent wildfires from Malibu, California have been attributed to "Santa Ana" winds and climate change.

Santa Ana Winds

- About:** These winds blow due to the **pressure difference** between **Great Basin** – the area between the Rocky Mountains and Sierra Nevada in USA (high pressure) and California's coast (low pressure).
- Relation with Wildfires:** As it comes down the mountains, it compresses and heats up leading to drop in humidity making vegetation dry and prone to burning.
- Duration:** Usually occur from October to January



Face Recognition Using Drone

Recently, **Centre for Development of Telematics (C-DOT)** under **Department of Telecommunications (DoT)**, has entered into partnership to develop "Face Recognition Using Drone".

- ☉ Agreement has been signed under the **Telecom Technology Development Fund** program of **Universal Service Obligation Fund**.

Facial Recognition using Drones

- **About:** It recognizes the face of person using **drone** equipped with **long-range cameras** optimized for **facial recognition, high-accuracy edge processing, and real-time data transmission**.
- **Significance:** **Leverage cutting-edge computer vision** and AI technologies to address challenges like camera and target movement, low-light conditions, etc.
- **Applications:** Traffic management, emergency response, defense, and environmental monitoring, etc.

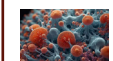


Science and Heritage Research Initiative (SHRI) Programme

A Union Minister underscored the transformative potential of blending India's ancient wisdom with contemporary scientific innovations at the celebration of five years of the **SHRI Programme**.

About SHRI Programme

- It engages experts from diverse fields for data capture and analysis, to form new collaborations, and provide viable technology to address cultural heritage related issues.
- **key initiatives under SHRI:** Non-invasive techniques for heritage preservation, digitalizing the Ajanta caves, and artifact restoration, etc.
- **Ministry / Department:** Department of Science & Technology.



Mirror Bacteria

Mirror Bacteria are **synthetic bacteria** whose **building blocks are enantiomers** of their **natural counterparts**.

- An **enantiomer** is defined as **one of two chemically identical molecular species** that are non-superposable mirror images of each other.

Threat posed by Mirror Bacteria

- **Immune Evasion:** Could bypass human immune responses.
- **Environmental Impact:** Might disrupt ecosystems if introduced, competing with native microbes.
- **Biosecurity Risks:** Potential for misuse in biological warfare.



Miyawaki Plantations

Recently, a number of innovative techniques like **Miyawaki Plantation** in addition to traditional methods of plantation have been undertaken to increase green cover.

About Miyawaki Plantation

- **Origin:** Pioneered in the 70s by Japanese botanist **Mr. Akira Miyawaki**.
- **Technique:** It involves **planting native trees, shrubs and groundcover plants** within every square metre.
 - ☉ It is ideal for **small parcels of land** and deals with creating **mini forests in urban areas**.
 - ☉ Plant species chosen for this are those that **do not require a lot of maintenance** and can **survive harsh weather and water-scarce conditions**.



Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs)

Scientists studying North Atlantic orcas found high levels of toxic POPs in their blubber, despite living far from human settlements.

About POPs

- POPs are **chemical substances (carbon based)** that persist in the environment. They are pesticides, industrial chemicals, or unwanted by-products of industrial processes.
 - ☉ Resist photolytic, biological and chemical degradation. **E.g. Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs)** etc.

Key physical and chemical properties

- **Highly lipid soluble** (this facilitates bio-accumulation in living organisms).
- **Semi-Volatile in nature** (enabling them to move long distances in the atmosphere before deposition occurs).

International legally binding agreement on POPs: Stockholm Convention.



Place in news

Georgia (Capital: Tbilisi)

Eleven Indians have died in Georgia due to carbon monoxide poisoning.

Political Features

- It is situated in the **Eastern European region** of the **South Caucasus**.
- **Boundaries:** **Russia** (North and Northeast); **Azerbaijan** (East and Southeast); **Armenia and Turkiye** (South)
- **Sea boundary:** Black Sea (West).

Geographical Features

- **Mountain Ranges:** Greater Caucasus range.
- **Biodiversity:** located in the WWF's (World Wide Fund for Nature) priority **Black Sea basin**. It is part of **two biodiversity hotspots** identified by **Conservation International:** the **Caucasus and Iran-Anatolian**.
- **Conflict regions:** Abkhazia, South Ossetia & Ajaria.

