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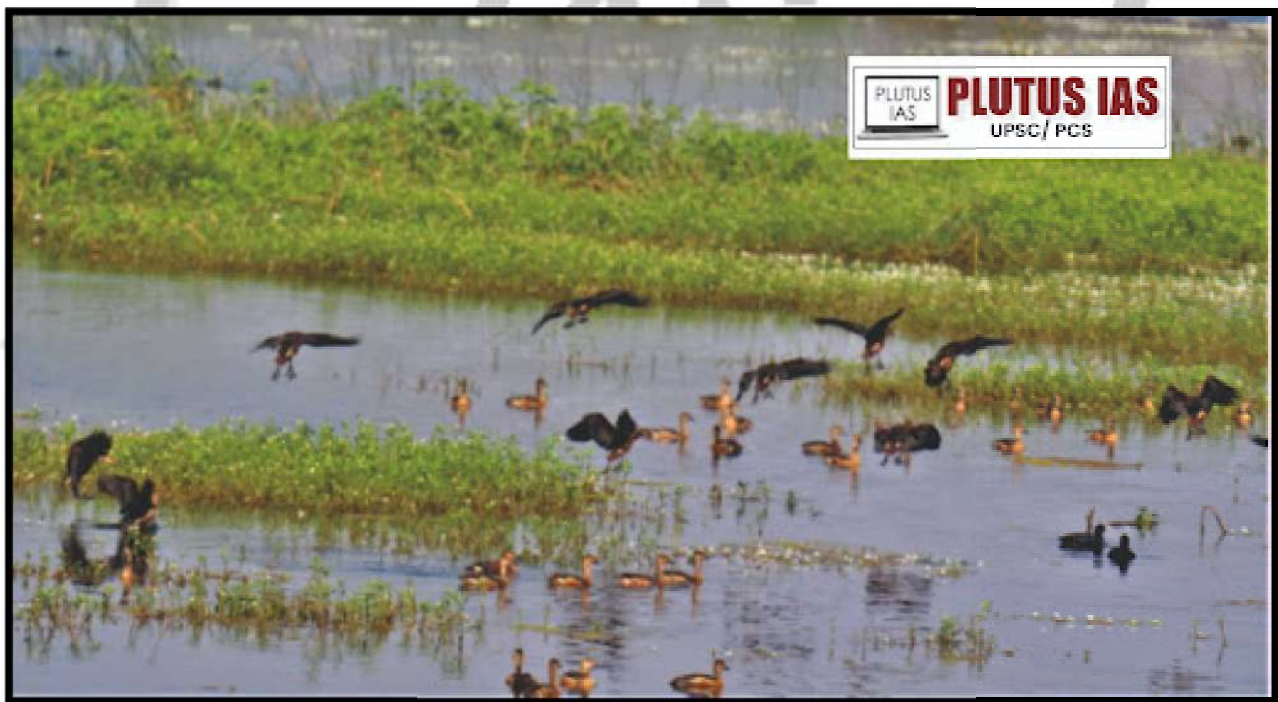
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“PRELIMS BITS: WETLAND CITY ACCREDITATION (WCA): INDORE AND UDAIPUR”

WHY IN THE NEWS?

Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently praised Indore and Udaipur for their recognition under the Wetland City Accreditation (WCA) system. Indore, known for its consistent performance as India’s cleanest city in the Swachh Survekshan rankings, has significantly advanced urban development and smart city initiatives. Meanwhile, Udaipur has been recognized for its efforts in heritage conservation, sustainable tourism, and urban beautification. These cities continue to set governance, cleanliness, and innovation benchmarks, serving as role models for urban development across the country.



WETLAND CITY ACCREDITATION (WCA)

ORIGIN OF THE WCA SYSTEM:

Nature: Voluntary accreditation system recognizing cities that value and conserve wetlands.

Approval: Adopted at COP12 of Ramsar Convention (2015) in Uruguay.

Validity: 6 years, renewable if the city meets specific criteria.

CRITERIA FOR RECOGNITION

Demonstrated conservation efforts for urban and peri-urban wetlands.

Integration of wetlands in urban planning and sustainable development.

Awareness campaigns to engage and educate citizens on wetland values.

Policies for wise use of wetland resources.

Monitoring and management to ensure wetland health.

Socio-economic benefits for local communities derived from wetlands.

SIGNIFICANCE OF WCA

Promotes conservation and wise use of urban/peri-urban wetlands.

Ensures sustainable socio-economic benefits for local populations.

Encourages positive relationships between cities and Wetlands of International Importance.

Supports the Amrit Dharohar Initiative of MoEF&CC.

WETLANDS IN INDORE

SIRPUR LAKE: KEY FACTS

Basics:

Location: Situated on Indore-Dhar Road, Indore, Madhya Pradesh.

Ramsar Site Designation: Declared a Ramsar site under the Ramsar Convention on 07 January 2022.

IBA Status (Important Bird Area): Designated as one of 19 Important Bird Areas (IBAs) of Madhya Pradesh by BirdLife International in 2015.

Nature and Characteristics

Type: Human-made wetland stabilized and acquired near-natural characteristics over two centuries. Commonly known as Pakshi Vihar (Bird Sanctuary).

Lake Features: Shallow, alkaline, and nutrient-rich. Maximum depth: 2 meters during the monsoon season.

Biodiversity:

Plant and Animal Life: 175 terrestrial plant species, 6 macrophytes, 30 fish species (natural and cultured), 8 reptiles and amphibian species.

Birdlife: The area supports 130 bird species (residents and migrants), including threatened species such as the **common pochard (Aythya ferina)**, the **Egyptian vulture (Neophron percnopterus)**, and the **Indian river tern (Sterna aurantia)**.

Significance for Communities

Fisheries.

Medicinal plants.

Buffer against flooding.

Regulation of the local microclimate.

Offers benefits like spiritual enrichment, recreation, and education for local communities.

INDIAN RIVER TERN: KEY FACTS

Aspect	Details
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Aspect	Details
Scientific Name	Sterna aurantia
Family	Laridae
Habitat	Inland rivers, freshwater lakes, tanks; rarely in tidal creeks or coasts.
Distribution	From Iran to Indian Subcontinent, Myanmar, and Thailand.
Size	Medium-sized, 38–43 cm long.
Physical Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Breeding Plumage: Dark grey upperparts, white underparts, black cap, yellow bill, red legs. – Non-Breeding Plumage: Greyish-white cap with black streaks, dark mask, dusky bill tip. – Juveniles: Brown head, grey upperparts with brown markings, white underparts, yellowish bill with dark tip.
Tail	Forked with long, flexible streamers.
Wings	Long and pointed.
Breeding Season	March to May.
Nesting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Ground scrape on sandbanks, bare rock, or sand. – Lays 3 greenish-grey to buff eggs with brown blotches and streaks.
Feeding Habits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Diet: Fish, crustaceans, tadpoles, aquatic insects. – Hunting: Plunge-dives into water.
Unique Traits	Exclusively found in freshwater habitats, unlike most Sterna terns.
Conservation Status	Population declining due to habitat pollution and degradation.

WETLANDS IN UDAIPUR:

Lake	Highlights	Ecological Importance	Cultural/Recreational Significance
Lake Pichola	– Known for stunning views, especially at sunset.	– Supports a diverse aquatic ecosystem.	– Home to iconic palaces like Jag Mandir and Lake Palace.
Lake Fateh Sagar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Larger, man-made lake surrounded by Aravalli hills. – Contains Nehru Park and a solar observatory. 	– Major source of drinking water for Udaipur.	– Popular boating destination with panoramic views.
Lake Rang	– Calm waters with	– Supports birdlife	– A peaceful retreat surrounded by

Lake	Highlights	Ecological Importance	Cultural/Recreational Significance
Sagar	scenic sunrise and sunset views.	and aquatic species.	hills.
Lake Swaroop Sagar	– Smaller, tranquil lake often overlooked by tourists.	– Supports diverse flora and fauna.	– Offers insight into local life, surrounded by neighborhoods.
Lake Doodh Talai	– Primarily used as a water reservoir.	– Supports birdlife, including migratory species.	– Offers scenic greenery, a peaceful atmosphere, and recreational opportunities.

PRELIMS QUESTIONS:

Q. With reference to the Indian River Tern, Consider the following statement:

1. Indian River Tern is a type of fish
2. Indian River Tern almost found in the freshwater lakes
3. Indian River Tern is aligned with the summer season in India
4. Indian River Tern is under the critically endangered category of the IUCN.

How many of the above-given statements are correct?

- (a). Only one
- (b). Only two
- (c). Only three
- (d). All four

ANSWER: B

Munde Dhananjay Navnath

UNIFORM CIVIL CODE: STRIVING FOR EQUALITY AND JUSTICE

WHY IN THE NEWS?

Uttarakhand has become the first state in India to implement the Uniform Civil Code (UCC), bringing uniform laws across all religions on marriage, inheritance, and civil matters. Key reforms include banning polygamy, granting equal property rights to daughters, and mandating the registration of live-in relationships with equal property rights for children born from them. The law also sets a uniform marriage age—21 for men and 18 for women. These changes are seen as a major step towards gender equality and social reform, potentially inspiring other states to follow suit.

WHAT IS THE UNIFORM CIVIL CODE (UCC)?

The Uniform Civil Code (UCC) refers to a set of common laws governing personal matters—such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, maintenance, adoption, and property succession—that apply to all citizens, regardless of their religion, community, or gender. In India, personal laws currently differ across religious communities,

meaning that Muslims, Hindus, Christians, and others are governed by their respective religious personal laws. The UCC aims to replace these diverse laws with a single, unified legal framework. The main objectives of the UCC are:

- 1. Equality and Justice:** Ensuring equal rights for all citizens, especially women, by removing discrimination present in some religious laws (e.g., inheritance laws, polygamy).
- 2. Secularism:** Establishing a secular legal system where civil matters are not influenced by religious beliefs.
- 3. National Integration:** Promoting national unity by creating common laws that unify citizens irrespective of their religion. While Article 44 of the Indian Constitution encourages the state to implement a UCC, it has not been fully adopted across the country due to concerns about religious freedom, diversity, and the potential impact on cultural and personal beliefs. Some states, like Goa, already have a form of UCC in practice, while Uttarakhand adopted it in 2024.



WHY DID UTTARAKHAND TAKE IT AS A DECISION?

- 1. Promoting Gender Equality:** One of the primary goals of the UCC in Uttarakhand is to ensure equal rights for all citizens, particularly women. By abolishing practices like polygamy and ensuring equal inheritance rights for daughters across all communities, the UCC aims to address gender imbalances that exist under some religious personal laws.
- 2. National Integration and Secularism:** The UCC seeks to promote national integration by unifying personal laws, ensuring that all citizens, regardless of their religion, are governed by the same set of laws. This strengthens the concept of secularism, where the state does not favour any religion in personal matters.
- 3. Fulfilling Constitutional Mandates:** Article 44 of the Indian Constitution urges the state to take steps toward securing a UCC. By implementing it, Uttarakhand is fulfilling this constitutional directive, aiming to bring about uniformity in civil matters like marriage, inheritance, and divorce.
- 4. Reforming Outdated Practices:** The implementation of the UCC helps to address outdated and discriminatory practices in certain communities, such as polygamy (permitted under Muslim personal law)

and the practice of talaq-e-biddat (instant divorce under Muslim law), which the Supreme Court has already deemed arbitrary in some cases.

5. Modernizing the Legal System: The UCC provides a standardized, modernized approach to personal laws, making legal processes more efficient and equitable. It helps align the legal system with contemporary values of equality, human rights, and social justice.

6. Boosting Legal Efficiency: A uniform set of laws simplifies the legal process by removing confusion and fragmentation in the application of personal laws, resulting in more efficient and accessible justice for all citizens, regardless of their background.

KEY PROVISION OF THE UNIFORM CIVIL CODE (UCC) IN UTTARAKHAND:

1. Ban on Polygamy: Prohibits polygamy for all citizens, ensuring gender equality.

2. Equal Property Rights for Daughters: Grants daughters equal inheritance and property rights across all religions.

3. Live-in Relationships: Requires registration of live-in relationships, with children born in them having equal property rights.

4. Minimum Marriage Age: Set the marriage age at 21 for men and 18 for women to prevent child marriages.

5. Prohibition on Second Marriage: Bars remarriage while a spouse is alive, preventing bigamy.

6. Codification of Personal Laws: Standardizes personal laws for transparency and equality.

7. Secular Approach: Ensures personal laws are not influenced by religious practices, promoting a unified legal framework.

SIGNIFICANCE OF UNIFORM CIVIL CODE (UCC) IN INDIA:

1. Promotes Equality: The UCC aims to ensure gender equality, particularly by granting women equal rights in areas like inheritance, marriage, and divorce, addressing discriminatory practices in various religious personal laws.

2. Secularism: It helps uphold India's secular constitution by ensuring that civil laws governing personal matters like marriage, divorce, and inheritance are not influenced by religious beliefs, fostering a unified legal framework.

3. National Integration: The UCC promotes national integration by applying the same set of laws to all citizens, regardless of their religion, fostering a sense of unity and reducing legal disparities across different communities.

4. Social Justice: By standardizing laws across religions, the UCC can eliminate outdated and discriminatory practices, such as polygamy and child marriage, which persist in some religious personal laws.

5. Simplification of Legal Processes: A common set of laws would streamline legal procedures, making them more efficient, transparent, and accessible for all citizens, regardless of their religion or community.

6. Modernization: The UCC aligns the legal system with evolving social norms, helping adapt laws to modern times and promoting individual freedoms, inclusivity, and progressive values.

7. Fulfilling Constitutional Mandates: The UCC aligns with Article 44 of the Indian Constitution, which directs the state to work towards securing a common set of laws for all citizens, thereby fulfilling an important constitutional objective.

CHALLENGES IN ITS IMPLEMENTATION :

1. Religious and Cultural Diversity: India is a nation with diverse religious and cultural traditions. Each community has its own personal laws governing marriage, divorce, inheritance, and other family matters.

Imposing a single code could infringe upon the religious autonomy and cultural practices of these communities.

2. Lack of Consensus: There is no consensus among various communities, political parties, and even within the legal and academic circles regarding the need for and the contours of a UCC. Many religious groups view it as an infringement on their religious freedom.

3. Potential for Social Unrest: Implementing a UCC without adequate consultation and consensus-building could lead to social unrest and communal tensions, particularly if it is perceived as an imposition by the majority community.

4. Practical Difficulties: Drafting and implementing a UCC that is fair, just, and applicable to all communities in a diverse country like India is a complex and challenging task. It requires careful consideration of various religious, cultural, and social factors.

5. Constitutional Concerns: Some argue that a UCC could potentially infringe upon the fundamental right to freedom of religion guaranteed by the Indian Constitution.

CONCLUSION

Uttarakhand's implementation of the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) is a significant step toward gender equality, national integration, and a secular legal framework. Key provisions like banning polygamy, granting equal property rights to daughters, and setting a uniform marriage age aim to create a unified legal system that applies to all citizens, regardless of religion. Challenges such as religious diversity, lack of consensus, and the potential for social unrest remain. The complex task of creating a fair and inclusive UCC requires careful consultation and consideration of constitutional rights. Uttarakhand's move could inspire other states to adopt similar reforms, fostering a more equitable and progressive society.

PRELIMS QUESTION:

Q. With reference to the Uniform Civil Code (UCC), consider the following statements:

1. The UCC aims to implement a common legal framework for personal laws in India.
2. UCC is only applicable to Hindus and not to other religious groups in India.
3. The UCC is mandated by Article 44 of the Indian Constitution.

How many of the above-given statements are correct?

- A. Only one
- B. Only two
- C. All three
- D. None

Answer: A

MAINS QUESTION:

Q. Uttarakhand's decision to implement the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) marks a significant step towards gender equality and social reform in India." Discuss the key provisions of the UCC and analyze the challenges in its implementation. (250 words, 15 marks)

Ritik singh

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