

Uniform Civil Code

The union Home minister recently reaffirmed government commitment to implementing a [Uniform Civil Code \(UCC\)](#) nationwide, citing its successful implementation in Uttarakhand.

What is UCC?

The Uniform Civil Code aims to replace personal laws based on customs and religious scriptures with a unified legal framework applicable to all citizens, regardless of religion. It seeks to address areas such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, and adoption under a common legal structure, promoting equality and secularism.

Key Features of UCC:

1. **Uniformity in Laws:** Establishes a common set of laws governing civil matters across all religions.
2. **Gender Equality:** Removes discriminatory practices in personal laws, especially concerning women's rights.
3. **Secular Legal System:** Delinks civil law from religion, ensuring laws are religion-neutral.
4. **National Integration:** Promotes social harmony by creating a common legal identity.
5. **Simplification of Legal Processes:** Streamlines legal complexities arising from diverse personal laws.

Legal Framework and Articles Governing UCC:

- **Article 44:** Directive Principle of State Policy that mandates the State to endeavour to secure a Uniform Civil Code for all citizens.
- **Article 14:** Guarantees equality before the law and equal protection of the laws.
- **Article 25:** Protects religious freedom, raising questions about balancing religious practices with legal uniformity.
- **Entry 5 of the Concurrent List in the Seventh Schedule,** which specifically addresses various aspects including marriage, divorce, adoption, and succession, among others, allowing for legislation concerning personal laws.

Need for [UCC](#) in India:

1. **Gender Equality:** Eliminates discriminatory practices in personal laws.
E.g. Reforms in Hindu Succession Act provided daughters equal inheritance rights but excluded Muslim women from similar benefits.
2. **Curbing Misuse of Personal Laws:** Ensures fairness across religions by addressing legal loopholes.
E.g. Instances of misuse of triple talaq before its criminalization.

3. Promotes National Unity: Unifies diverse communities under one legal framework.
E.g. Persistent communal tensions highlight the need for legal uniformity.
4. Simplifies Legal Processes: Reduces conflicts arising from varying personal laws.
E.g. Disputes over inheritance rights between communities in states like Kerala and Tamil Nadu.
5. Protects Marginalized Communities: Provides equitable legal protection for minorities.
E.g. Tribal communities often face inequities under existing customary practices.

Best practices:

- - Goa's UCC Practice: Rooted in the Portuguese Civil Code of 1867, mandates compulsory registration of marriages and provides equal property rights for sons and daughters, promoting gender equality and legal uniformity among all residents.
 - [Uttarakhand's UCC](#): Uttarakhand became the first Indian state to enact a Uniform Civil Code (UCC), establishing uniform laws on marriage, divorce, inheritance, and live-in relationships for all residents, irrespective of religion, while exempting Scheduled Tribes.

Leaders' Views on UCC:

1. B.R. Ambedkar: Emphasized the State's power to legislate for social reforms, including personal laws.
2. K.M. Munshi: Linked UCC with national unity and highlighted its role in modernizing societal practices.
3. Supreme Court: 2019 Jose Paulo Coutinho v. Maria Luiza Valentina Pereira case, the Court lauded Goa's implementation of a uniform civil code and urged for its nationwide adoption.
4. The 21st Law Commission, led by Justice Balbir Singh Chauhan in 2018, stated that a uniform civil code wasn't necessary or desirable at that stage, emphasizing the coexistence of secularism with the country's plurality.

Challenges to UCC:

1. Religious Opposition: Concerns over UCC infringing on religious practices.
E.g. Strong resistance from sections of the Muslim community over personal law reforms.
2. Diverse Customs: India's pluralistic society makes implementing a uniform code complex.
E.g. Regional differences in property rights among Hindu communities in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.
3. Political Sensitivities: Accusations of UCC being used for vote-bank politics.
E.g. Allegations of political motives behind UCC discussions during elections.
4. Legal Ambiguity: Lack of clarity on how UCC would be harmonized with existing laws.
E.g. Debates on how to integrate tribal and customary laws.

5. **Public Awareness:** Limited understanding of UCC's implications among the masses. *E.g.* Protests in Manipur against UCC reveal misconceptions about its purpose.

Way Ahead:

1. **Inclusive Dialogue:** Engage stakeholders across religions and communities to build consensus.
2. **Phased Implementation:** Begin with common areas like marriage, inheritance, and adoption.
3. **Public Awareness Campaigns:** Educate citizens on UCC's benefits to counter misinformation.
4. **Balancing Religious Freedom:** Ensure the UCC does not undermine constitutional rights under Article 25.
5. **Strengthening Legal Frameworks:** Build robust mechanisms to address potential conflicts and ambiguities.

Conclusion:

As Dr. B.R. Ambedkar stated, "We are having liberty to reform our social system, which is full of inequities and inequalities." The Uniform Civil Code is a step toward a more equitable and secular India. Its implementation requires sensitivity, dialogue, and commitment to upholding constitutional values while respecting the nation's diversity.

Kisan Kavach

Union Minister launched Kisan Kavach, India's first-of-its-kind anti-pesticide bodysuit, aimed at safeguarding farmers from the harmful effects of pesticide exposure.

About Kisan Kavach:

- What it is: A washable and reusable anti-pesticide bodysuit designed to protect farmers from pesticide toxicity.
- Developed by: [Biotechnology](#) Research and Innovation Council ([BRIC-inStem](#)), Bangalore, in collaboration with Sepio Health Pvt. Ltd.
- Aim: To ensure farmer safety, promote sustainable agriculture, and prevent health complications caused by pesticides.
- Features:
- Washable, reusable, and durable for up to a year.
- Advanced fabric technology deactivates pesticides upon contact through nucleophilic hydrolysis.
- Priced at ₹4,000, with potential for increased affordability as production scales up.
- How it works: Employs nucleophile attachment on cotton fabric, which deactivates harmful pesticides upon contact, preventing toxicity and health risks like breathing disorders and vision loss.

Arctic Tundra Emissions

The Arctic tundra, once a carbon sink, is now emitting CO₂ and methane (CH₄) due to rising temperatures and wildfires, as noted in 2024 Arctic Report Card.

About Arctic Tundra:

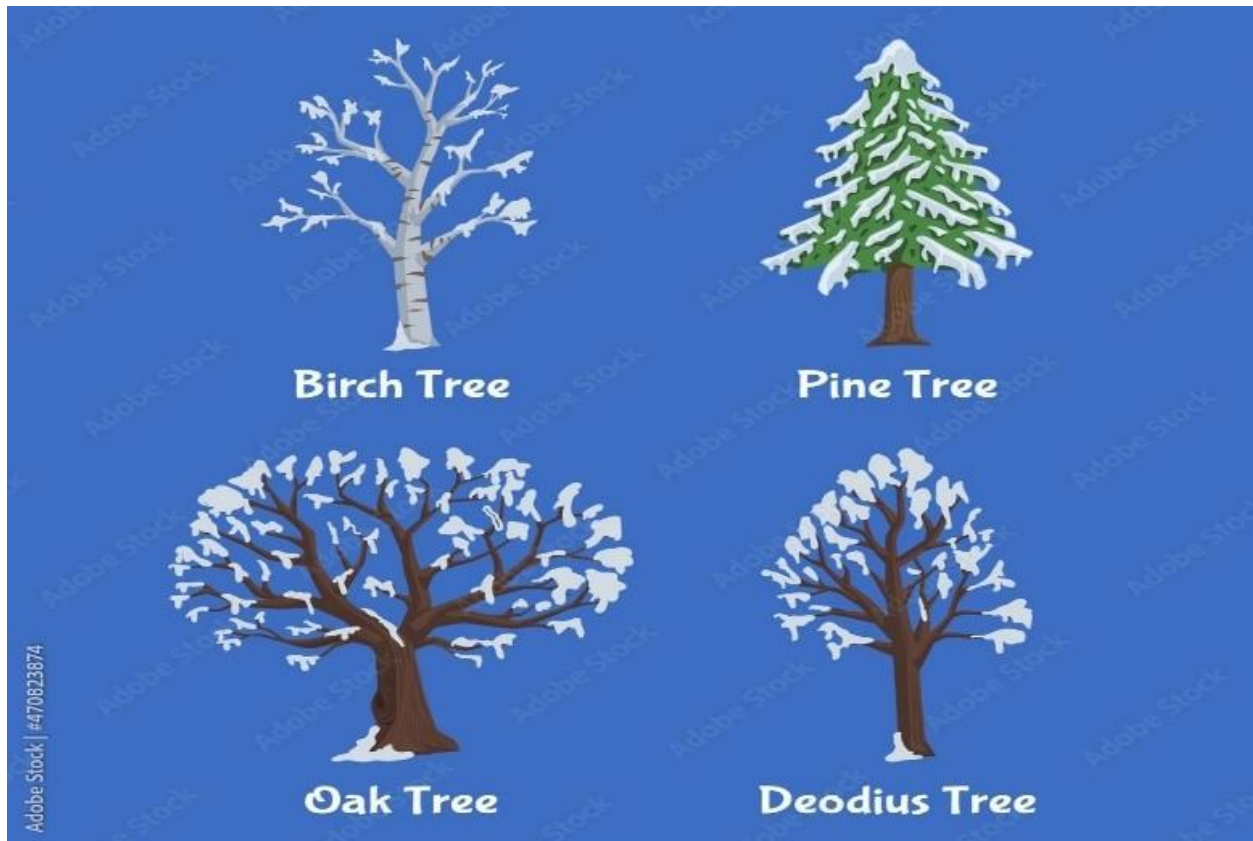
- What is [Tundra](#) Vegetation?
 - Tundra vegetation refers to the sparse plant life found in cold, treeless regions like the Arctic and Alpine tundra.
 - It includes mosses, lichens, grasses, sedges, and small shrubs, all adapted to harsh conditions.
- Latitude Found: The Arctic tundra lies between 66.5°N to 75°N, stretching across regions in Alaska, Canada, Greenland, Scandinavia, and Russia.
- Features: Characterized by permafrost, low temperatures, short growing seasons, and limited vegetation like mosses, lichens, and small shrubs.
- Habitat: Home to species such as Arctic foxes, caribou, polar bears, and migratory birds, adapted to harsh climates.
- Significance:
- Carbon Storage: Stores more than 6 trillion metric tonnes of carbon in permafrost soils.
- Climate Regulation: Acts as a cooling agent for the planet by reflecting solar radiation with its ice-covered surfaces.

Arctic tundra is emitting more carbon because:

- Thawing Permafrost: Rising temperatures (warming four times the global rate) activate microbes, breaking down organic matter and releasing CO₂ and CH₄.
- Increased Wildfires: The frequency and intensity of wildfires have surged, emitting GHGs and accelerating permafrost thaw.
- Temperature Records: 2024 recorded the second-highest [Arctic](#) surface air temperatures since 1900, further exacerbating emissions.
- GHG Feedback Loop: Released GHGs from thawing permafrost amplify global warming, perpetuating a cycle of higher emissions.

Himalayan Birch Tree

Climate change is shifting the **tree line** landscape in the central Himalayas, where Himalayan birch trees (*Betula utilis*) are being replaced by fir trees (*Abies spectabilis*).



About Fir Trees (*Abies spectabilis*):

- What it is: A slow-growing evergreen conifer commonly found in mountainous regions.
- Features:
 - Needle-like leaves and conical shape.
 - Adapted to colder climates with moderate moisture.
 - Retains foliage year-round, contributing to high water-use efficiency.
- Found in:
 - Mid to high altitudes of the Himalayas (2,500–3,700 meters).
 - Prefers cooler and less moisture-stressed environments.

About Himalayan Birch (*Betula utilis*):

- What it is: A deciduous broadleaved tree species native to the Himalayan region.
- Features:

- Known for peeling bark and bright green leaves.
- Requires abundant water and cooler climates for survival.
- Sheds leaves in winter, contributing to nutrient cycling.
- Found in:
 - Upper altitudes of the Himalayas (2,900–4,500 meters).
 - Thrives in wetter, snow-fed environments.

Comparison: [Fir Tree](#) vs. Himalayan Birch

Feature	Fir Tree (<i>Abies spectabilis</i>)	Himalayan Birch (<i>Betula utilis</i>)
Type	Evergreen conifer	Deciduous broadleaf
Preferred Altitude	2,500–3,700 meters	2,900–4,500 meters
Water Needs	Moderate	High
Climate Adaptation	Thrives in warmer conditions	Struggles with warming and dryness
Growth	Slower, but more drought-tolerant	Faster, but water-dependent

Cold Wave

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has issued forecasts for cold wave conditions in northern states like Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, and Rajasthan, along with dense fog in parts of Assam and Rajasthan.

About Cold Wave:

- Definition: A cold wave is a condition of extreme cooling over a region, with temperatures dropping significantly below normal levels for that time of year.
- Criteria to Declare Cold Wave:
 - When minimum temperatures fall below 10°C in plains and are 5°C to 6.4°C below normal.
 - Severe cold wave: When temperatures are 5°C or more below normal.
 - For hills: Temperatures below 0°C are a marker.
- Geographic Reasons Behind [Cold Wave](#) in India:
 - Western Disturbances: Weak or no western disturbances allow cold air from the north to penetrate deeply into India.
 - Snowfall in Himalayas: Leads to cold winds sweeping across northern plains.
 - Clear Skies: Enable radiative cooling during nights.
- Is Cold Wave a Declared Disaster in India?
 - Yes, the National Policy on [Disaster](#) Management (NPDM) includes cold waves under its disaster classification, enabling relief measures.
- Impacts on India:
 - Human Health: Increased cases of hypothermia and respiratory issues, especially among vulnerable populations.
 - Agriculture: Damage to standing crops like wheat and mustard due to frost.
 - Energy Demand: Higher energy consumption for heating, stressing power supply systems.
 - Livelihoods: Adverse effects on outdoor workers, particularly farmers and labourers.
 - - Transportation: Disruption due to dense fog, impacting air, road, and rail traffic.

Sugar Production

Erratic monsoon rainfall and warmer winter temperatures have negatively impacted sugar production in India, resulting in an estimated 12% decrease this season.

Sugar Production in India:

- India's Global Ranking:
- India ranks second globally in sugar production, behind Brazil, as of October 2024.
- State-Wise Sugar Production:

Characteristics of [Sugarcane](#) in India:

- Climatic Requirements: Thrives in tropical and subtropical regions; requires 75-150 cm rainfall annually and temperatures between 20°C–40°C.
- Soil Preference: Grows best in deep, fertile loam soils with good drainage.
- Seasonality: Harvested primarily in October-March in tropical states and February-May in subtropical regions.
- Water Demand: Highly water-intensive crop, often grown with irrigation.
- Uses: Apart from sugar production, widely used for [ethanol](#) production and as fodder.

Golan Heights

The Israeli government recently announced plans to double its population in the Golan Heights, a region it occupied during the 1967 Six-Day War.

About Golan Heights:

- **Location:** The [Golan Heights](#) is a hilly region overlooking the upper Jordan River Valley in the west.
- **Neighbours:** It shares borders with Israel to the west, Syria to the east, and Jordan to the south.
- **Geographic Features:**
- Enclosed by the Jordan River, Sea of Galilee, Mount Hermon, Wadi Al-Ruqqād, and Yarmūk River.
- Covers a total area of 1,150 sq. km and features fertile soil and key water resources.
- **History:**
- Captured by Israel from Syria in the 1967 Six-Day War and annexed in 1981, an act not internationally recognized.
- In 2019, the U.S, recognized Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights.
- **Significance of the Region:**
- **Strategic Security:** Serves as a buffer zone between [Israel](#) and Syria.
- **Water Resources:** Includes critical aquifers and supplies to the Jordan River and Sea of Galilee.
- **Agricultural Importance:** Fertile soil supports vineyards, orchards, and grazing lands.
- **Tourism and Settlements:** Home to Israeli settlements and the Druze community, contributing to local economies.