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1. Uttarakhand adopts Uniform Civil Code

Introduction



Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami officially rolled out the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) for all residents of the State, except the Scheduled Tribes and natives who have migrated out of the State. With this, Uttarakhand has become the first Indian State to implement the UCC post-Independence.

About UCC in Uttarakhand

The UCC Bill, passed by the State Assembly last February, bans practices such as halala, iddat, and talaq (customs related to marriage

and divorce in Muslim Personal Law). It also ensures that women are given equal rights in matters related to property and inheritance.

The UCC mandates online registration of marriages, divorce and live-in relationships. A government portal — ucc.uk.gov.in — has been formed for the purpose. People can access records, register complaints and also upload their will on the portal.

Uniform Civil Code

The Uniform Civil Code is a proposal in India to formulate and implement personal laws of citizens which apply on all citizens equally regardless of their religion. Currently, personal laws of various communities are governed by their religious scriptures. Personal laws cover marriage, divorce, inheritance, adoption and maintenance. While articles 25-28 of the Indian Constitution guarantee religious freedom to Indian citizens and allow religious groups to maintain their own affairs, article 44 expects the Indian state to apply directive principles and common law for all Indian citizens while formulating national policies.

Position in India

Personal laws were first framed during the British Raj, mainly for Hindu and Muslim subjects. The British feared opposition from community leaders and refrained from further interfering within this domestic sphere. The Indian state of Goa was separated from British India during the colonial rule in the erstwhile Portuguese Goa and Daman, retained a common family law known as the Goa civil code and thus was the only state in India with a uniform civil code prior to 2024.

Following India's independence, Hindu code bills were introduced which largely codified and reformed personal laws in various sects among Indian religions like Buddhists, Hindus, Jains and Sikhs but they exempted Christians, Jews, Muslims and Parsis.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

Source: The Hindu

2. India, China to resume direct flights, issue visas, Mansarovar Pilgrimage

Introduction



India and China, three months after resolving the military standoff at the Line of Actual Control (LAC), have agreed to resume direct flights, visa issuance, people-to-people exchanges, and the Mansarovar Pilgrimage for the summer of 2025. Both nations have also decided to resume discussions on trans-border rivers and share hydrological data, which China has withheld for years.

As part of the 75th year of diplomatic relations, both sides committed to organizing celebratory events. The decisions were finalized during a meeting between Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri and Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Sun Weidong in Beijing.

Modi-Xi Agreement

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) stated that during the Modi-Xi meeting in Kazan in October, both leaders had agreed to stabilize and rebuild bilateral ties through people-centric measures. These include resuming direct flights, facilitating the Mansarovar Pilgrimage, and restarting dialogues on hydrological cooperation via the India-China Expert Level Mechanism.

Economic and Trade Discussions

Discussions also touched on resolving economic and trade restrictions. India and China, despite record trade levels, have imposed mutual restrictions, with India raising concerns about withheld pharmaceutical ingredients and high-tech exports. On the other hand, China has called for a "level playing field" concerning India's restrictions on Chinese investments and visa denials.

Resumption of Dialogue Mechanisms

Mr. Misri's visit signified the revival of bilateral dialogue at the Foreign Secretary-Vice Foreign Minister level, which had been suspended amidst the LAC tensions. This visit follows earlier

engagements between leaders, Foreign Ministers, and Defence Ministers, indicating the resumption of regular diplomatic discourse.

Future Summits and Cooperation

Officials did not confirm plans for an informal summit between Mr. Modi and Mr. Xi, similar to the ones held in Wuhan (2018) and Mamallapuram (2020). However, during his visit, Mr. Misri offered India's support for China's 2025 chairmanship of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), which Mr. Modi is expected to attend in June.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Bilateral Relations

Source: Indian Express

3. Is the Guillain-Barré Syndrome life-threatening?

Introduction

Following a reported outbreak of Guillain-Barré Syndrome, a rare neurological disorder, in Pune, with 73 cases so far, the Union Health Ministry has now sent a team to the city to assess the situation. A total of 47 men and 26 women have been affected, with 14 on ventilator support, the State Health Department has said, as of January 25, 2025.



What is Guillain-Barré Syndrome?

Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) is an autoimmune neurological disorder in which a person's immune system attacks their peripheral nerves, leading to muscle weakness that can progress to paralysis. People of any age can be affected, but it is more common in adults and males. The condition is rare, with an estimated incidence of 1/2 per 1,00,000 population.

While the causes of GBS are still not fully understood, in most cases, it occurs after a viral or bacterial infection.

How does it affect the body?

In autoimmune conditions, the body's immune system begins to attack its own cells. In GBS, the immune system destroys the myelin sheath — a fatty layer wrapped around nerve cells. This impacts the nerves' ability to send signals to the brain, which causes weakness in the muscles. GBS affects the peripheral nervous system — the part of the nervous system outside the brain and spinal cord — that controls the movement of muscles, temperature, touch and pain sensations.

The first signs of GBS are usually tingling and weakness that start in the feet and legs before spreading to the upper body, arms and face. Symptoms include a pins and needles feeling in the toes, fingers, ankles or wrists, back pain, pain in the legs, not being able to walk or climb

stairs, trouble with facial movements and double vision. For some people this can lead to paralysis of the legs, arms or face. The severity of the symptoms can range from mild to severe. In approximately one-third of people, the chest muscles are affected, making it hard to breathe, the WHO says. The ability to speak and swallow can become affected in severe cases. GBS can lead to life-threatening complications when it affects the autonomic nervous system which controls your blood pressure and heart rate.

How is it treated?

There is no known cure for GBS. However, there are some treatments that aid in recovery. Most people can make a nearly full recovery. The treatments primarily include plasma exchange and intravenous immunoglobulin therapy. In plasma exchange or plasmapheresis, the plasma (liquid part of the blood) is removed, treated and then returned to the body. This removes the antibodies from the plasma that are attacking the nerves. Intravenous immunoglobulin therapy involves injecting the body with immunoglobulins, which are proteins that the body makes to identify and neutralise pathogens. This helps decrease the immune system's attack on the nerves. Supportive treatment is also given and rehabilitation including physical and occupational therapy may be required. Recovery can take a long time.

The WHO says Guillain-Barré syndrome is potentially life-threatening. People with Guillain-Barré syndrome should be treated and monitored as quickly as possible and some may need intensive care. If you experience sudden muscle that gets worse over some days, see a doctor immediately.

Relevance: GS Prelims; Science & Technology

Source: Indian Express