



STATE PCS CA

(CONSOLIDATION)

UTTARAKHAND

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Uttarakhand: Home to 2nd Largest Snow Leopard Population

Why in News?

According to the **Snow Leopards Population Assessment in India (SPAI)**, Uttarakhand has documented a notable population of **124 snow leopards**, securing the **second position after Ladakh, which boasts 477**.

Key Points

- The recently released report, titled '**Status of Snow Leopard in India**', represents the **first-ever scientific effort estimating** the presence of **718 snow leopards in the Indian Himalayan territories**.
- A team at the **Wildlife Institute of India (WII)**, conducted a comprehensive scientific assessment, highlighting **Gangotri National Park** as a pivotal area for conservation.
- According to authorities, **Nanda Devi Biosphere Reserve** has also emerged as a promising habitat for snow leopards.
- **The survey spanned six snow leopard range states** with Himachal Pradesh leading with 51 elusive cats, followed by Arunachal Pradesh (36), Sikkim (21), and Jammu and Kashmir (9), resulting in a total of 718 across these states.

Gangotri National Park

- It was **established in 1989** and is situated in Uttarkashi, Uttarakhand in the upper catchment of **Bhagirathi River**.
- **Gaumukh at Gangotri glacier**, the origin of river Ganga, is located inside the park.
- The park area forms a viable continuity between **Govind National Park and Kedarnath Wildlife Sanctuary**.
- **Flora:** The park is enveloped by dense coniferous forests that are mostly temperate. Chirpine, deodar, fir, spruce, oak and rhododendron are the common vegetation.
- **Fauna:** Various rare and endangered species like **bharal or blue sheep, black bear, brown bear, himalayan monal, himalayan snowcock, himalayan tahr, musk deer and snow leopard** are found in the park.

The Nanda Devi Biosphere Reserve

- It was **established in 1988** and was **declared a UNESCO World Heritage site 1988**. The reserve is home to a wide variety of flora and fauna, including several endangered species such as the **snow leopard, Asiatic black bear, Himalayan musk deer, and blue sheep**.

Snow Leopard

Panthera Uncia

Often referred to as the "ghost of the mountains"

HABITAT

- Mountainous regions of **Central and Southern Asia**
- **12** Range Countries
- In India:
 - **Western Himalayas:** Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh
 - **Eastern Himalayas:** Uttarakhand and Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh



MAJOR SITES

- Hemis National Park, Ladakh
 - **Snow leopard capital of the world**
- Great Himalayan National Park, Himachal Pradesh
- Gangotri National Park, Uttarakhand
- Khangchendzonga National Park, Sikkim

THREATS

- Human Snow Leopard Conflict
- Climate Change
- Loss of Prey and Habitat
- Poaching

PROTECTION STATUS

- **Vulnerable:** IUCN Red List
- **Appendix I:** CITES
- **Schedule I:** Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972

CONSERVATION EFFORTS

- Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection (GSLEP) Programme
- Himal Sanrakshak- Community Volunteer Programme
- Project Snow Leopard
- Snow Leopard Conservation Breeding Programme- Padmaja Naidu Himalayan Zoological Park, West Bengal




Note:

- The reserve is also known for its rich cultural heritage and is home to several indigenous communities such as the **Bhotiyas and the Joharis**. These communities have been living in the area for centuries and have developed a unique way of life that is closely tied to the natural environment.

Uttarakhand First Woman Chief Secretary

Why in News?

Senior **Indian Administrative Service (IAS)** officer **Radha Raturi** was appointed as the **first woman chief secretary of Uttarakhand**.

Key Points

- Raturi, an IAS officer of the **1988 batch**, replaced **Sukhbir Singh Sandhu**. She is the first woman to hold the top administrative post in Uttarakhand.
- She has worked as a bureaucrat both in undivided Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand, which came into existence in November 2000.



Uttarakhand Set to Exempt Tribals from UCC

Why in News?

The proposed **Uttarakhand Uniform Civil Code** to be introduced in the state assembly is set to **exempt the state's tribal population** fully from its provisions.

Key Points

- Tribals constitute about **2.9% of Uttarakhand's population** with the **Jaunsari, Bhotiyas, Tharu, Raji and Buksa** among the prominent ones.
 - Polyandry and polygamy are also prevalent customs among a few tribes in the hill state.
- The Uttarakhand UCC committee had also held talks with these tribal communities on a uniform code.
 - The **younger tribal population** had also given **feedback that** while polyandry/polygamy and other practices were in vogue in earlier generations, they are hardly in practice now and hence the **reform was welcomed**.
 - However, **tribal and ethnic communities** across states, especially the northeast, have **openly expressed their opposition** to the imposition of any civil code that could impact their customs and age-old ways of life.

UNIFORM CIVIL CODE

All sections of the society irrespective of their religion shall be treated equally according to a National Civil Code - the Uniform Civil Code.

THEY COVER AREAS LIKE

Marriage

Divorce

Maintenance

Inheritance

Adoption

Succession of Property

It is based on the premise that there is necessarily no connection between religion and personal law in a civilized society.

"UCC refers to a common set of laws governing civil rights of every citizen."
Article 44 of Directive Principles sets duty of state for implementing UCC.

TIMELINE

1954

Passage of Special Marriage Act provides permission of civil marriage above any religious personal law.

1956

Hindu code bill passed dividing personal laws in - Common Indian Citizen. - Muslim Community.

1986

Rajiv Gandhi government's law in Shah Bano case widens the difference in civil rights.

2003

Then President Dr. Abdul Kalam supported UCC.

2015

Supreme court asserted the need of UCC.

The dialogue for UCC was started by the Law Commission in the year 2016

Note:

- **Halala, Iddat and Khula** options on **divorce and remarriage for Muslims** will be **illegal under the new code** which will call for divorce and remarriage only by way of legal proceedings in courts of law.
- The state's code will mandate **compulsory registration of live-in relationships and seek full succession rights for children born out of such unions.**

Tribes of Uttarakhand

- Tribes of Uttarakhand **mainly comprise five major groups** namely Jaunsari tribe, Tharu tribe, Raji tribe, Buksa tribe, and Bhutia.
- The main concentration of the tribal population is in rural areas.
 - As per records, **around 94.50% of the total tribal population resides in rural areas** and the remaining percentage of the tribal population lives in urban centres.
- In terms of population, the **Tharu tribe is the largest tribal group** in the state.
- Every district of Uttarakhand has more or less a moderate percentage of the tribal population.
- These **tribes of Uttarakhand have been scheduled in the Constitution of India.**

Uttarakhand Receive Fresh Snowfall

Why in News?

Recently, **Uttarakhand received its first snowfall of the season** along with Jammu and Kashmir, and Himachal Pradesh.

Key Points

- The **India Meteorological Department (IMD)** had earlier predicted heavy rain and snowfall in the mountainous regions of the three states in the coming days due to a **western disturbance.**

India Meteorological Department (IMD)

- It was **established in 1875.** It is the National Meteorological Service of the country and the principal government agency in all matters relating to meteorology and allied subjects.
 - It works as an agency of the **Ministry of Earth Sciences of the Government of India.**

- It is **headquartered in New Delhi.**
- IMD is also one of the **six Regional Specialized Meteorological Centres of the World Meteorological Organization.**

Western Disturbances

- Western disturbances are storms that **originate in the Caspian or Mediterranean Sea**, and bring non-monsoonal rainfall to northwest India, according to the IMD.
- They are labelled as an **extra-tropical storm** originating in the Mediterranean, is an area of low pressure that brings **sudden showers, snow and fog in northwest India.**
- The meaning of WD lies in its name.
 - The **disturbance travels from the "western" to the eastern direction.**
 - These travel eastwards on **high-altitude westerly jet streams - massive ribbons** of fast winds traversing the earth from west to east.
- Disturbance means an **area of "disturbed" or reduced air pressure.**
 - Equilibrium exists in nature due to which the air in a region tries to normalise its pressure.
- In the term **"extra-tropical storm"**, storm refers to low pressure. **"Extra-tropical" means outside the tropics.** As the WD originates outside the tropical region, the word "extra-tropical" has been associated with them.

Uttarakhand Cabinet Approves UCC Draft Report

Why in News?

On 4th February 2024, Uttarakhand took one more step towards becoming the first state after independence to implement **Uniform Civil Code (UCC)**, after the state cabinet approved the UCC panel's draft report.

Key Points

- The report will be tabled in the assembly on 6th February 2024, as the ruling party has 47 seats in the 70-member house, the UCC bill is set for a smooth sailing.

Note:

- **Uniform Civil Code** is a common set of laws that will supersede customary laws across faiths and tribes, and govern issues such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, and maintenance.
- According to the Constitution of India, UCC is a part of the non-justiciable **directive principles of state policy**.
 - As per the 2011 national census, Uttarakhand has a 13.9% Muslim population, with most people from the community living in the **Terai region**.

Uniform Civil Code

- It is envisaged to **provide for one law for the entire country, applicable to all religious communities** in their personal matters such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, adoption etc.
- **Article 44** of the Constitution lays down that the state shall endeavor to secure a UCC for the citizens throughout the territory of India.
 - Article 44 is one of the **Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP)**.
 - The purpose behind Article 44 is to strengthen the object of **"secular democratic republic"** as enshrined in the Preamble of the Constitution.

Uttarakhand Approves New Film Policy

Why in News?

The Uttarakhand Cabinet under Chief Minister Pushkar Dhami has approved the **new film policy for increasing the subsidy for those making local films in the state**.

Key Points

- According to the official statement, The Uttarakhand government has **increased the subsidy eight times** for those making **Garhwali, Kumaoni and Jaunsari films** in the state.
- The subsidy for those shooting films in the state in **22 languages** included in the **Eighth Schedule** has also been doubled.
- **Film subsidies** are a form of government intervention that provides **financial support to filmmakers, production companies, and studios**.
- The most common forms of financial assistance are **transferable tax credits and sales and use tax exemptions**.

Eighth Schedule:

- It lists the official languages of the Republic of India. **Part XVII of the Indian constitution** deals with the **official languages in Articles 343 to 351**.
- The Constitutional provisions related to the Eighth Schedule are:
 - **Article 344:** Article 344(1) provides for the **constitution of a Commission by the President on the expiration of five years** from the commencement of the Constitution.
 - **Article 351:** It provides for the **spread of the Hindi language** to develop it so that it may serve as a medium of expression for all the elements of the composite culture of India.

Official Languages:

- The **Eighth Schedule** to the Constitution consists of the following **22 languages**:
 - Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Konkani, Malayalam, Manipuri, Marathi, Nepali, Oriya, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu, Bodo, Santhali, Maithili and Dogri.

Uttarakhand High Court gets First Woman Chief Justice

Why in News?

On 4th February, **Justice Ritu Bahri** was sworn in as the **first woman Chief Justice of the Uttarakhand High Court**.

Key Points

- The Uttarakhand **Governor**, Lieutenant General Gurmeet Singh, administered the oath of office to Justice Bahri.
 - **Prior to her appointment** as the Chief Justice of Uttarakhand, Justice Bahri served as a **judge** in the **Punjab and Haryana High Court** from **2010**.
- She is **specialised in civil, constitutional, taxation, labor, and service matters**.
- During her 24-year legal practice, she also served as **Assistant Advocate General, Deputy Advocate General, and Senior Deputy Advocate General** for the State of Haryana.

Note:

Advocate General

- **Article 165 of Chapter 2 (The Executive) in Part VI (The States)** of the Constitution of India provides for the office of the Advocate General for the States.
- He is **appointed by the Governor of the State**, who must be a person **qualified to be appointed a judge of a High Court**.
- The Advocate General is **entitled to appear before any court of law within the State** in the performance of his official duties.
- The Advocate General has the **right to speak and to take part in the proceedings of both the Houses of the State legislature**.

Uttarakhand Weather: Mercury Dips, Hills Jammed

Why in News?

Parts of **Uttarakhand** received a fresh round of **snow and rainfall**, offering respite from the prevailing dry spell and bringing down temperatures across the region.

- The overcast conditions led to a surge in **tourist influx to Mussoorie** and its vicinity.

Key Points

- According to **India Meteorological Department's** regional meteorological centre in Dehradun, upper reaches of the **Garhwal Himalayas**, such as **Kedarnath, Badrinath, Gangotri, Yamunotri** and Harsil received substantial snowfall.
- In the foothills, sporadic rainfall has occurred which led to a **notable drop in daytime temperatures**.

India Meteorological Department (IMD)

- IMD was **established in 1875**. It is the **National Meteorological Service** of the country and the principal government agency in all matters relating to meteorology and allied subjects.
 - It works as an agency of the **Ministry of Earth Sciences** of the Government of India.
- It is **headquartered in New Delhi**.
- IMD is also one of the six Regional Specialized Meteorological Centres of the World Meteorological Organization.

Yamunotri

- Location: Uttarkashi district.
- Dedicated to: Goddess Yamuna.
- River Yamuna is the second-most sacred river in India after River Ganga.

Gangotri

- Location: Uttarkashi district.
- Dedicated to: Goddess Ganga.
- Considered the most sacred of all Indian rivers.

Kedarnath

- Location: Rudraprayag district.
- Dedicated to: Lord Shiva.
- Situated on the bank of the Mandakini River.
- One of the 12 Jyotirlingas (divine representations of Lord Shiva) in India.

Badrinath

- Location: Chamoli district.
- Home to the sacred Badrinarayan Temple.
- Dedicated to: Lord Vishnu.
- One of the holy shrines for Vaishnavites.

Key Features of Uttarakhand's Uniform Civil Code Bill

Why in News?

Recently, the **Uttarakhand state legislature** passed the **Uniform Civil Code (UCC) Bill** after a state-appointed panel submitted its final report.

- Uttarakhand is the **first State in India to implement such a legislation after Independence**.

Note: Following Uttarakhand's footsteps Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat have appointed committees to initiate the formulation of a UCC.

Key Points

- The Bill proposes a uniform law on **marriage, divorce, inheritance of property, and cohabitation for all citizens, regardless of their religious affiliation**, while excluding the tribal community from its scope.

Note:



- This stems from **Article 44** of the Constitution, which mandates that the state “shall endeavor to secure for the citizens a UCC throughout the territory of India.
 - The provision is a part of the **Directive Principles of State Policy** (Part IV of the Constitution), which although not enforceable but play a pivotal role in the country’s governance.
- The Bill aims to regulate **live-in relationships by imposing an obligation to register them**.
 - In case, couples in a **live-in relationship** do not submit their statement, they will be served a notice following which criminal prosecution can be initiated against them.
- **Section 4** says that “neither party has a spouse living at the time of the marriage”, thus prohibiting **bigamy** or **polygamy**.
- Men and women have been accorded similar rights with respect to divorce.
- **Section 28** prohibits the initiation of divorce proceedings unless one year has elapsed since the date of marriage.
 - However, an exception can be made if the petitioner has suffered “**exceptional hardship**” or if the respondent has exhibited “**exceptional depravity**”.
- Existing Muslim personal law practices governing marriage and divorce such as **nikah halala**, **iddat**, and **triple talaq** have been criminalized under the Bill without explicitly naming them.
- The Bill extends **equal property rights for sons and daughters** across all classes.
- The Bill leaves out members of the **LGBTQIA+** community from its ambit and applies only to heterosexual relationships.
- The demolition **triggered protests and clashes between two communities**, resulting in injuries to several people, including police personnel.
- The state government imposed a **curfew** and issued a **shoot-at-sight** order in **Haldwani** and other sensitive areas to prevent further violence.
- Shoot-at-sight Order:
 - It is a term that refers to an order that authorizes the police or other security forces **to shoot anyone who violates the order**, without any warning or attempt to arrest them.
 - This order is **used only in extremely rare and dangerous situations**, when authorities feel there is a grave threat to public peace and security, and when lethal force is absolutely necessary.
 - Some of the legal provisions that allow the issuance of shoot-at-sight orders are:
 - Section 46 (2) of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 (CrPC), which enables the use of force in the course of arresting a person who resists or evades the arrest.
 - Section 144 of the CrPC, which enables the use of wide powers while dealing with urgent cases of “apprehended danger” or nuisance through the issuance of orders.
 - Section 81 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860 (IPC), which says that nothing is an offense if it is done with the knowledge that it is likely to cause harm, but without any criminal intention, and in good faith for the purpose of preventing or avoiding other harm.
 - Section 76 of the IPC, which exempts such acts, if done by a person who believes himself to be bound by law to do it.

Violence in Uttarakhand’s Haldwani

Why in News?

Recently, a violence erupted in **Haldwani, Uttarakhand**, after the demolition of an **illegal madrasa**.

Key Points

- The demolition was carried out by the **municipal corporation** in accordance with a court order that declared the madrasa as an **encroachment on government land**.

Anti-Encroachment Drive Turns Violent in Uttarakhand

Why in News?

A **violent clash** erupted between **police and locals** in **Haldwani’s Banbhoolpura area** of Uttarakhand, when a team of district administration officials attempted to **demolish an ‘illegal madrasa’** in the area.

- **Shoot-at-sight orders** were issued and curfew was imposed in the town.

Note:

Key Points

- According to the officials, following court's orders, a team from the district administration had gone to conduct an **anti-encroachment drive** in the area.
 - This is when some miscreants entered into a brawl with the police which left several policemen and officials injured.
- Banbhoolpura is the same locality where hundreds of Muslim families are living in a 2 km stretch along the railway track, facing an uncertain future after the Railways served eviction notices to them, **citing that their homes were built on its land.**
- The residents, after weeks of protest against eviction ordered by the Uttarakhand High Court, later moved the Supreme Court and the matter is sub-judice.

Sub Judice

- Sub-judice is a **Latin term** that means "under judgment" or "under consideration by a court of law."
- In legal contexts, it refers to a **case or matter that is currently pending before a court** and is therefore not available for public discussion or comment.
- The **purpose of the sub judice rule** is to ensure that **the trial or hearing is fair** and impartial, and that the parties involved are not prejudiced by outside influences.

Eight National Highway Projects Established in Uttarakhand

Why in News?

Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari laid the **foundation stones of 8 National Highway projects** worth Rs 2217 crore in **Tanakpur, Uttarakhand.**

Key Points

- The road widening of Kathgodam to Nainital road with a 2-lane paved shoulder will **improve connectivity to Nainital-Manaskhand temples.**
- The 4-lane widening of Kashipur to Ramnagar road will make it easier for tourists to reach **Jim Corbett National Park** and **Manaskhand temples.**

- The 2-lane widening and rehabilitation of Kanda Marg from Udiyari Band on National Highway 309A will **facilitate access to Bagnath and Baijnath temples in Bageshwar.**
- The significant aim of establishing excellent infrastructure in Uttarakhand is not only for roads and highways but **for the safety of people, walls are being constructed on the National Highway 87 extension.**
 - The **repair work of two bridges on Saryu and Gomdi rivers in Bageshwar district** is also being done.
- The projects will not only benefit the tourists but will also make commuting easier for the local people and the **local economy will also be strengthened** without causing any harm to the environment.

India's First Helicopter Emergency Medical Service to Start in Uttarakhand

Why in News?

India is set to witness its first **Helicopter Emergency Medical Service (HEMS)** which will operate from **All India Institute for Medical Sciences (AIIMS)** in Rishikesh.

Key Points

- The new HEMS would operate under **project 'Sanjeevani'** with a coverage radius of 150 kilometers.
 - This will ensure timely transportation of accident victims and patients from hilly terrain to AIIMS.
- The emergency helicopter services will be indispensable for saving patients during the critical **'golden hour,'** soon after an accident, when expert medical care is vital.
 - This initiative will be a boon for Uttarakhand, a state that attracts tourists, pilgrims, and adventure enthusiasts annually, while also contending with **natural disasters.**
- The commencement of another project was also announced, responding to the state government's request for air connectivity from **Hindon Air Base to Pithoragarh.**

Note:

Helicopter Emergency Medical Service (HEMS)

- It is called Project Sanjeevani; a helicopter will be deployed to provide emergency medical services at AIIMS Rishikesh.
 - It **encompasses multiple initiatives** targeting various sectors such as education, environment, agriculture, and livestock healthcare.
- The helicopter will be based at the **hospital at 20-minute notice** and will have a service covering an area of 150 km radius.

30 National Highway Projects Inaugurated in Haridwar

Why in News?

Recently, the Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari inaugurated and laid foundation stones of **30 National Highway projects worth Rs 4,755 crore in Haridwar.**

Key Points

- The projects inaugurated include widening of **2-lane paved shoulder from Lameri to Karnaprayag in Rudraprayag and Chamoli and Dudhdhari elevated flyover in Haridwar.**
- These projects will not only ease transportation but will also provide better connectivity from **Rishikesh to the India-China border.**
- The flyover will provide relief from traffic jams in religious city Haridwar and it will be easier to reach other religious places.
- Uttarakhand will achieve a faster pace of development with the construction of these projects. The journey of devotees on **Chardham routes will be facilitated.**
- Connectivity of Uttarakhand with other states will increase, accelerating economic and social development .

Uttarakhand to Levy Green Cess

Why in News?

The Uttarakhand government is all set to implement a **green cess** on vehicles entering the state from other states.

- A Green cess is a **form of tax** levied by the government with the **purpose of environment conservation.**

Key Points

- The cess would be collected at **toll plazas through FASTag,** with amounts ranging from **Rs 20 to Rs 80. Electric vehicles and cars fuelled by Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) will be exempted.**
- It will be collected by the concessionaires of **National Highways Authority of India (NHAI).**
- According to the transport department, **three-wheelers and four-wheelers (Light Motor Vehicles)** will be subject to **Rs 20 and Rs 40** respectively as green cess, while **medium and heavy motor vehicles** will have to pay **Rs 60 and Rs 80** respectively.
 - **Two-wheelers, government vehicles, fire tenders and ambulances, Army vehicles and vehicles used for farming** will be **exempted from the green cess.**
- Vehicles from other states will have the option for one-time entry by paying the prescribed rate for a day.
 - Alternatively, they can opt to pay 20 times the standard rate for a three-month period or 60 times the green cess rate for the entire year.

FASTag

- It is a device that employs **Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technology** for making toll payments directly while the vehicle is in motion.
- **NHAI launched two mobile Apps – MyFASTag and FASTag Partner** to facilitate the availability of FASTags.
- The **tag is valid for 5 years** from the date of issuance and comes in seven different color codes.

National Highways Authority of India (NHAI)

- NHAI was **constituted by an Act of Parliament in 1988** under the administrative control of the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways as a Central Authority to develop, maintain and manage the National Highways entrusted to it by the Government of India.
 - The authority, however, **became operational in February, 1995.**
- The Authority consists of a full time Chairman, and **not more than five full time Members and four part time Members** who are appointed by the Central Government.

Note:

Nazool Land

Why in News?

Recently, in **Haldwani city of Nainital District**, Uttarakhand violence erupted due to a Demolition Drive conducted by the city administration to remove **Encroachment at the site of a mosque and madrasa**, allegedly on **Nazool Land**.

- As per the administration, the property where the two structures are situated is registered as the **Municipal Council's Nazool land**.

Key Points

- Nazool land is owned by the government but most often not directly administered as state property.
 - The state generally allots such land to any entity **on lease for a fixed period**, generally between **15 and 99 years**.
- In case the lease term is expiring, one can approach the authority to renew the lease by submitting a **written application to the Revenue Department** of the local development authority.
 - The government is free to either **renew the lease or cancel it** — taking back Nazool land.
- The government generally uses Nazool land for public purposes like building schools, hospitals, Gram Panchayat buildings, etc.

Encroachment

- It is the unauthorised use or occupation of someone else's property.
- This can **occur on abandoned or unused spaces** if the legal owner is not actively involved in its upkeep.
- It is important for property owners to be aware of the legal steps to take and their rights in such cases.
- This could include illegal construction, squatting, or any other form of occupation without proper permission or legal rights.
- Land encroachment, as **defined by Section 441 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), 1860**, is the act of unlawfully entering someone else's property without permission to commit an offence, threaten possession of the property, or stay on the land uninvited.

Chevening Scholarship

Why in News?

Uttarakhand government has announced its initiative to **support ten outstanding students from the state** in pursuing a **one-year Master's programme in the United Kingdom (UK)** through the prestigious **Chevening scholarship**. The state will cover 50% of the expenses, while Chevening India will fund the remaining expenses.

Key Points

- The scholarship covers various expenses including academic fees, travel, accommodation, and visa charges, providing a holistic support system for the beneficiaries.
- **Graduates with two years of work experience** will qualify for the scholarship, enabling them to pursue higher education or research at any British university. Initially, five women and five men will be chosen for the programme.
- A **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** will be signed between the government and Chevening India. This partnership **marks the first of its kind for Uttarakhand**.
 - It was **done earlier in Jharkhand** as well.

The Chevening Scholarship

- It is an international scholarship, **funded by the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office**, that lets foreign students with leadership qualities study at universities in the UK.
- The stated objective of the scheme is to build a network of friends of the UK, who will be future leaders in their countries.

Transit Hostels for Home Guards in Uttarakhand

Why in News?

The **Home Guard department in Uttarakhand** is set to provide **residential facilities for its Home Guards** especially in Udham Singh Nagar and other key districts.

Key Points

- Preparations to **construct hotels in 8 districts** are underway with a budget approval of Rs 13.50 crore received from the government.

Note:

- The identified districts span both the Garhwal and Kumaon division. With **Haridwar securing the most extensive plot—approximately 50 bighas of land.**
- The departmental sources revealed that the **Detailed Project Report (DPR)** has been prepared for the construction of hostels in different cities of eight districts, including **Udham Singh Nagar district headquarters, Rudrapur, Nainital, and Haridwar.**
 - As part of the next phase, DPRs for the remaining five districts will be prepared and submitted to the government, ensuring the extension of this initiative across the state.

Home Guard

- On **6th December, 1946**, the first Home Guards Unit was conceived and raised in the erstwhile Bombay Presidency .
- During the turmoil period of civil disorders and communal riots, as a **civilian voluntary force** in aid of administration as an auxiliary to police, **under the stewardship of Morarji Desai**, former Prime Minister.
- It was **reorganised** in India in **1966 after the Sino-Indian War.**

Upgradation of 108 Roads in Uttarakhand

Why in News?

Recently, the Centre has approved the upgradation of 108 roads in Uttarakhand under the **Pradhan Mantri Gramin Sadak Yojana (PMGSY).**

Key Points

- **108 roads** covering a **total length of 1,197.207 km** in Uttarakhand will be upgraded at an **estimated cost of Rs 967.73 crore** under PMGSY -III.
- Out of the **total Rs 967.73 crore**, the **Centre will give Rs 803.85 crore** and the **remaining Rs 163.88 crore** will be borne **by the state government.**
- The approval is being given in acknowledgement of the fact that the hilly areas are hit by **natural disasters** every year and people in the hills have to face various hardships.

Pradhan Mantri Gramin Sadak Yojana (PMGSY)

- It was launched on 25th December, 2000 with an objective to provide connectivity, by way of an all-weather road to unconnected habitations.

- PMGSY - Phase III
 - Phase III was approved by the Cabinet during July 2019.
 - It gives priorities to facilities like:
 - Gramin Agricultural Markets (GrAMs)
- GrAMs are retail agricultural markets in close proximity to the farm gate that promote and service a more efficient transaction of the farmers' produce.
 - Higher Secondary Schools and
 - Hospitals.
 - Under the PMGSY-III Scheme, it is proposed to consolidate 1,25,000 Km road length in the States. The duration of the scheme is 2019-20 to 2024-25.

Uttarakhand to Table 90,000 Crore Budget

Why in News?

Recently, the Uttarakhand cabinet approved a proposal to table an **annual budget of Rs 90,000 crore** in the assembly session.

Key Points

- The amendments that would be tabled in the state assembly are:
 - The cabinet has decided to include **child labour, fake currency and human trafficking** under the **ambit of the Gangster Act, 1986.**
 - The **Jamrani Dam and Song Dam project** have been **approved** and boring in catchment areas of rivers from where drinking water is being used has been prohibited.
 - **Mobile lab vans** approved for students in all 13 districts.
 - A proposal to purchase **equipment for hospitals at Kedarnath and Badrinath.**
- Two amendments were approved in the Real Estate:
 - **Regulation and Development Act 2016** under the housing department. And the construction of **Economically Weaker Section(EWS) housing projects.**
- Under the education department the cabinet also gave nod to:

Note:

- A proposal stating that if the post of **vice chancellor (VC)** in a university **becomes vacant**, additional charge can be given to the **VC of another university for a term of six months**.
- **BEd** has been made **mandatory for arts teachers** in the education department and the **duration of Sangeet Prabhakar degree for music teachers** has been **increased from five to six years**.

Uttarakhand Public and Private Property Damage Recovery Bill

Why in News?

Uttarakhand is set to bring a Bill on the lines of **recovery of damages to property bills** brought by **Uttar Pradesh and Haryana**.

Key Points

- Under this legislation, **losses to public and government properties** incurred during protests and strikes will be recovered from the **accused involved in the disturbance**.
- A **tribunal**, headed by a retired judge, would **investigate the charges against the identified accused**, after the State's complaint.
 - The assessment and orders for damage recovery would be issued by the tribunal after detailed discussions with the affected parties, both government and otherwise.
- The decision to have a Bill to recover damages to public property came after the **violence in Haldwani** in Uttarakhand.
- Violence ensued after the district administration and civic body demolished a mosque and madrasa built on **nazool (government) land** in an **anti-encroachment** drive.

Encroachment

- It is the unauthorised use or occupation of someone else's property.
- This can **occur on abandoned or unused spaces** if the legal owner is not actively involved in its upkeep.
- It is important for property owners to be aware of the legal steps to take and their rights in such cases.

- This could include illegal construction, squatting, or any other form of occupation without proper permission or legal rights.
- Land encroachment, as **defined by Section 441 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), 1860**, is the act of unlawfully entering someone else's property without permission to commit an offence, threaten possession of the property, or stay on the land uninvited.

Nazool land

- It is owned by the government but most often not directly administered as state property.
 - The state generally allots such land to any entity **on lease for a fixed period**, generally between **15 and 99 years**.
- In case the lease term is expiring, one can approach the authority to renew the lease by submitting a **written application to the Revenue Department** of the local development authority.
 - The government is free to either **renew the lease or cancel it** — taking back Nazool land.
- The government generally uses Nazool land for public purposes like building schools, hospitals, Gram Panchayat buildings, etc.

NGT Deprecates Uttarakhand Pollution Control Board

Why in News?

Recently, the **National Green Tribunal (NGT)** has deprecated the **Uttarakhand Pollution Control Board** for remaining a 'silent spectator' and not taking proper action to prevent the discharge of **untreated sewage into the Ganga**.

Key Points

- The tribunal has taken up a matter regarding pollution of the river in **Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal**.
- An estimated **sewage generation** in all 13 districts of Uttarakhand is estimated to be **700 million liters per day (MLD)** and even 50% is not properly treated.
 - The laying of sewers and connectivity of households is an unresolved issue and the **influx of tourists and pilgrims** during the season **adds to sewage generation**.

Note:



- In every district and concerned local body, sewage is being discharged in River Ganga directly or through its tributaries and, thereby, causing pollution.
- The installation and establishment of **Sewage Treatment Plants (STPs)** are not being done with due diligence, expediency and earnestness.
- The **National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG)**, which has been exclusively assigned with the mandate of rejuvenation of Ganga, has perhaps not gone into aspects of intricacies of sewage and **solid waste management** for hilly terrain.
- The tribunal directed the Uttarakhand Pollution Control Board to take punitive action against responsible government officers and heads of departments by initiating criminal proceedings against them.

The National Green Tribunal (NGT)

- It is a specialised body set up under the National Green Tribunal Act, 2010 for effective and expeditious disposal of cases relating to environmental protection and conservation of forests and other natural resources.
- With the establishment of the NGT, **India became the third country in the world to set up a specialised environmental tribunal**, only after Australia and New Zealand, and the first developing country to do so.
- NGT is mandated to make disposal of applications or appeals finally within 6 months of filing the same.
- **The NGT has five places of sittings**, New Delhi is the Principal place of sitting and Bhopal, Pune, Kolkata and Chennai are the other four.

National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG)

- On 12th August 2011, the NMCG was listed as a **society** under the **Societies Registration Act, 1860**.
- It acted as the implementation arm of the **National Ganga River Basin Authority (NGRBA)** which was constituted under the provisions of the **Environment (Protection) Act (EPA), 1986**.
 - **NGRBA** was dissolved in 2016 and **replaced by the National Council for Rejuvenation, Protection, and Management of River Ganga**.
- The objective of the NMCG is to **reduce pollution and ensure the rejuvenation** of the Ganga River.
 - **Namami Gange** is one of the Coveted Programmes of NMCG to clean Ganga.

Uttarakhand Pollution Control Board (UKPCB)

- It is a **statutory organisation** established under the provisions of the **Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974**, and the **Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981**.
- The UKPCB is responsible for the prevention, control, and abatement of pollution in the state of Uttarakhand, India.
- It is **headquartered in Dehradun**, Uttarakhand.

Uttarakhand Unveils Rs 89,000 Crore Budget

Why in News?

- Recently, the Uttarakhand government unveiled its **budget** for the fiscal year **2024-25 in the Assembly**.
- Uttarakhand's **economic growth rate stood at 7.63% in 2022-23**, surpassing the national average.

Key Points

- Allocating Rs 89,000 crore for a range of initiatives with significant emphasis on addressing **poverty, disaster management, infrastructure development**, and improving air connectivity.
- The budget emphasised a dedication to the **“four pillars” of a developed India**– welfare of the poor, youth empowerment, **agricultural initiatives**, and **women's empowerment**.
- Provisions made for each pillar are:
 - **Rs 5,658 crore** has been earmarked for the **welfare of the poor**, encompassing housing initiatives, food grain distribution, and free gas refill schemes.
 - The budget allocates **Rs 1,679 crore** towards **youth welfare, technical and higher education**, and organising **national games**.
 - Provisions have also been made for schemes promoting the merit of minority girls and fostering employment opportunities.
 - **Rs 2,415 crore** has been allocated for various **farmer-centric schemes**, including cooperative initiatives, apple cultivation, farmer pensions, and **fisheries development**.
 - The budget sets aside approximately **Rs 14,538 crore for gender-specific initiatives**.
 - These encompass schemes aimed at maternal and child welfare, and enhancing women's economic participation.

Note:

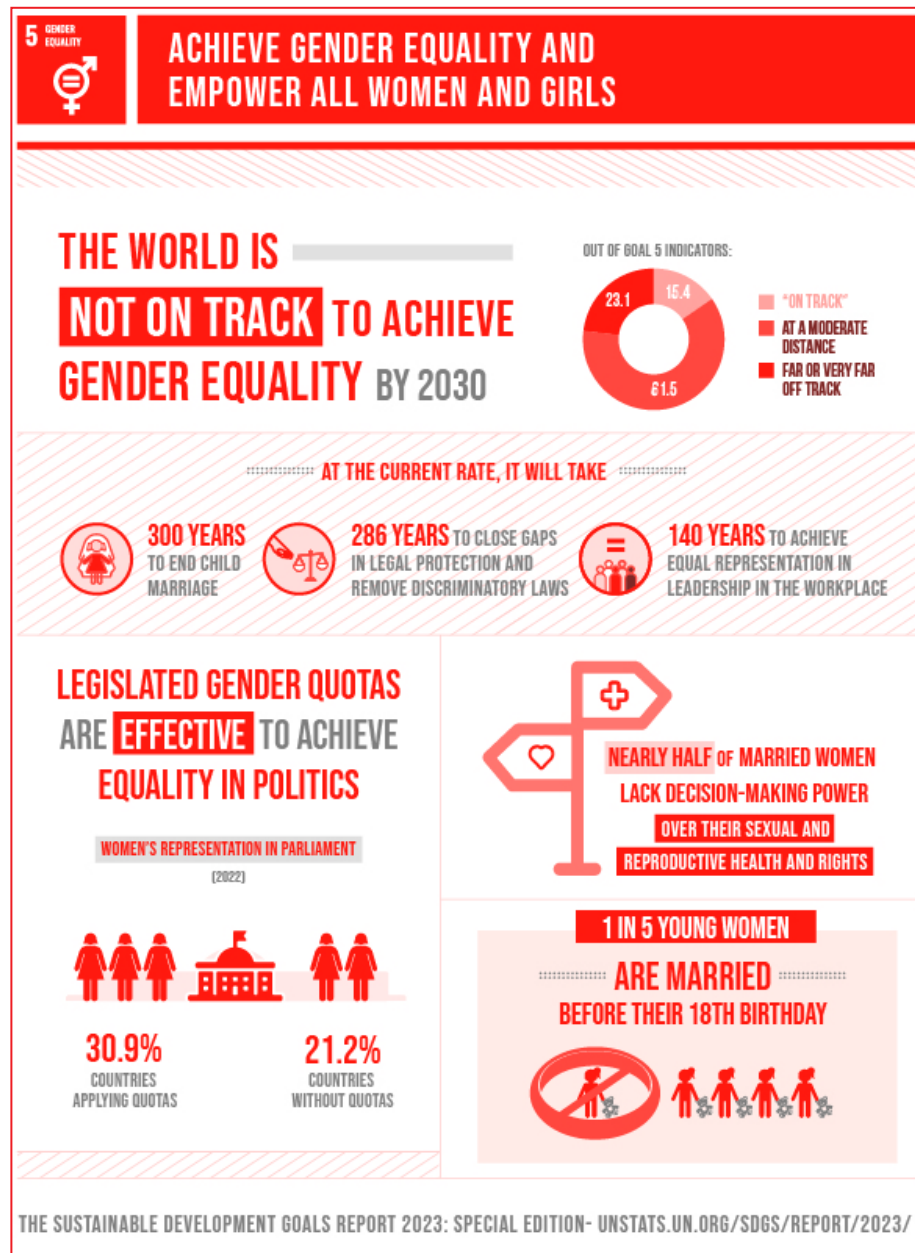
Legal Victory for Gender Equality

Why in News?

The **Uttarakhand High Court (HC)** ruled that women **cannot be refused employment based on pregnancy**. It overturned a regulation prohibiting pregnant women from being eligible for government positions.

Key Points

- This landmark ruling was inspired by the case of Misha Upadhyay, who was denied a nursing officer position due to her pregnancy.
- The High Court invalidated the state government's regulation **labeling women pregnant for 12 weeks or more as "temporarily unfit" for employment**.
 - It also mandated a medical examination by a registered practitioner six weeks post-delivery, along with a fitness certificate requirement.
- The court deemed the state's action "highly discriminatory against women" and emphasized on the violation of **Articles 14, 16, and 21 of the Constitution**.
 - **Article 14** stipulates that within India's territory, the State cannot deprive any individual of equality before the law or equal protection under the laws based on religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth.
 - **Article 16** forbids discrimination in employment within any government office.
 - **Article 21** stipulates that no individual shall be deprived of their life or personal liberty except in accordance with procedures established by law.
- It underscores the importance of fostering workplaces that respect and accommodate women's reproductive choices, aligning with broader global efforts towards **gender equality**, including the **Sustainable Development Goal 5**.



Note:

Early Bloom of Uttarakhand's State Tree Points to Climate Crisis

Why in News?

Buransh, Uttarakhand's state tree, has blossomed earlier than expected, raising concerns among scientists and environmentalists.

Key Points

- The tree, **scientifically known as Rhododendron**, is known for its vibrant display of red flowers that dominate Uttarakhand hills as it bursts out from the woody bushes of the tree.
- According to scientists at **ICAR-Central Soil Salinity Research Institute**, this is pseudo-flowering or forced flowering due to climatic shifts.
 - Normally, these flowers are seen to **blossom during March and April** across the mid-altitude terrain.
- The untimely blossoming has raised concerns regarding potential reductions in the **medicinal potency** of the flower.
 - Renowned for its abundance of **potassium, calcium, iron, and vitamin C**, this flower is also ingested as an **appetizer to alleviate mountain sickness and seasonal ailments**.
 - It is recognised for its effectiveness in **mitigating excessive bleeding during menstruation** in women.
 - The flower possesses medicinal properties **beneficial for the heart, liver, skin allergies, and antiviral purposes**.
- According to the **Meteorologists** **global warming** is changing the usual weather patterns, causing unusual temperatures and less rain.
- The usual winter disturbances that bring cold weather here have been weak, happening less often and not as strong.
 - Due to this, there was not enough rain in December and January in the hilly areas. Both the highest and lowest temperatures were higher than usual.
 - As the world warms, scientists are concerned that **more such changes in the flora and fauna are expected**.



The Central Soil Salinity Research Institute (CSSRI)

- It is an autonomous institute of higher learning, established under the umbrella of **Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)** by the Ministry of Agriculture, for advanced research in the field of soil sciences.
- The institute is located in **Karnal, Haryana**. It was established in **1969**.

Note:



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Key Points

Details

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Summary

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