

## ● POLITY

## ● ECONOMICS

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## POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

## Uttarakhand Makes History With Uniform Civil Code: Chief Minister Discusses Implementation And Development Initiatives

**CONTEXT:** Uttarakhand has made history by becoming the first state in independent India to enact a Uniform Civil Code (UCC) Act. President Droupadi Murmu recently gave approval to the state's UCC Bill of 2024. In an interview with The Hindu, Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami discusses the importance of the new law, aiming to win all five Lok Sabha seats in the state for the third time, and clarifies that addressing unethical activities shouldn't be seen as targeting any specific community.



### BACKGROUND

Explaining why a small state like Uttarakhand needs a UCC, Dhami refers to it as one of the BJP's earliest resolutions post-Independence. He highlights the people's support for the UCC, evident from the significant mandate received during the 2022 Assembly election.

Regarding the exclusion of tribal populations from the UCC, Dhami explains that it's due to their special status granted by the Constitution. Efforts are underway to address their concerns and potentially include them in the future.

Dhami defends the mandatory registration for live-in couples under the UCC, stating it's for their safety and to prevent incidents like domestic violence. He emphasizes that parents have the right to know about their children's living arrangements.

### What is the Uniform Civil Code (UCC)?

The Uniform Civil Code, as mentioned in Article 44 of the Indian Constitution within the Directive Principles of State Policy, aims to create a common set of laws governing civil matters for all citizens. While these principles are not legally binding, they serve as guidelines for policymaking.

Currently, Goa is the only state in India with a UCC, retaining its common family law known as the Goa Civil Code since its liberation from Portuguese rule in 1961. Other parts of India follow various personal laws based on religious or community identities, covering Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists, Parsis, and Jews.

Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami introduced the UCC Bill, which underwent deliberations before receiving approval from the House through a voice vote. Uttarakhand is on the verge of becoming the pioneer state to enact a unified law concerning marriage, divorce, land, property, and inheritance applicable to all citizens, regardless of their religious affiliations. Notably, the code excludes the Scheduled Tribes from its purview.

While Goa operates under a UCC, known as the Portuguese Civil Code, the legislative assembly has not passed any specific law on the matter. The retention of the code dates back to its preservation following liberation in 1961.

### Challenges in Implementing UCC:

- India's diverse religious and cultural landscape poses significant challenges to implementing a UCC. Each community has its own set of personal laws and customs, making it complex to find common ground.
- Resistance from religious and minority groups stems from concerns about the UCC potentially undermining religious freedom and cultural autonomy guaranteed by the Constitution.
- Lack of political consensus and will, coupled with fears of communal tensions, also hinder the implementation of a UCC.
- The practical difficulties of drafting, harmonizing, and enforcing a UCC add to the complexities.

### Benefits of UCC:

- A UCC could promote national integration and secularism by fostering a common identity and reducing conflicts arising from differing personal laws.
- It would ensure gender justice and equality by eliminating discriminatory practices against women present in some personal laws.
- Simplifying and rationalizing the legal system, modernizing outdated practices, and upholding constitutional values are additional benefits.

### Important Cases Related to UCC:

- Cases like Shah Bano Begum v. Mohammad Ahmed Khan (1985), Sarla Mudgal v. Union of India (1995), and Shayara Bano v. Union of India (2017) highlight the need for reform in personal laws and the role of UCC in addressing issues of gender equality and justice.

### CONCLUSION

Striking a balance between unity and diversity is crucial, ensuring that the UCC respects India's multiculturalism. Involving stakeholders from various communities in discussions and deliberations is essential to develop a UCC that is fair and acceptable.

to all citizens. The focus should be on achieving substantive equality and justice while respecting cultural autonomy and constitutional values.

## SOCIAL JUSTICE

# ASER 2023: Unveiling Insights Into Adolescent Education

**CONTEXT:** Since 2005, with exceptions during the COVID-19 years, the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) has been an anticipated release, garnering significant attention. In January of 2023, the report once again took center stage, particularly focusing on the foundational skills of adolescents aged 14 to 18.

## Learning outcomes lag among teens

The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2023, titled 'Beyond Basics', is based on a survey of 34,745 people between the ages of 14 and 18 in government and private institutes across 28 districts in 26 states

<p><b>School enrolment improves</b></p> <p>Of the respondents, 86.8% are enrolled in either school or college, compared to 85.6% in 2017, although the percentage drops with age.</p>		<p><b>Gender gap narrows</b></p> <p>In 2017, 16% of girls aged 14-18 were not in school/college, compared to 11.9% of the boys. In 2023, that gap has narrowed to just 0.2 percentage points.</p>
<p><b>On digital literacy</b></p> <p>Boys are more than twice as likely to own smartphones compared to girls in the same ages. Girls are also less likely to know how to use smartphones than their male counterparts.</p>		<p><b>Better at maths</b></p> <p>In 2017, 76.6% could read a Class 2 level text, while in 2023, this was 73.6%. In arithmetic, in 2017, 39.5% of youth could do a simple (class 3-4 level) division problem, while in 2023, this rose to 43.3%.</p>

## BACKGROUND

**Foundational Learning Trajectories:** The ASER 2023 Beyond Basics survey, conducted across 28 rural districts in 26 states, shed light on concerning statistics. Approximately 26% of 14-18 year olds lacked the ability to read a standard two level text in their regional language. These findings underscore the importance of early intervention in developing foundational skills, as deficiencies tend to persist into later grades.

**Challenges and Solutions:** ASER data reveals that a considerable number of adolescents lacking basic reading skills are either enrolled in lower standards or are not attending school at all. This underscores the need for targeted interventions to encourage school attendance and reading proficiency simultaneously.

**Enhancing Reading Culture:** Access to reading materials is crucial for fostering reading habits. ASER highlights the scarcity of reading materials in rural households, suggesting the need for well-managed community libraries that can nurture a culture of reading.

**Aspirations and Careers:** ASER 2023 also delves into the aspirations of adolescents regarding their education and careers. The report reveals a desire for higher education among a majority of surveyed adolescents, with differing career aspirations between genders. However, access to mentorship and information about career paths remains a challenge for many.

**Leveraging Technology:** With the increasing accessibility of smartphones among youth, there is an opportunity to harness digital technology for educational purposes. ASER suggests that

aligning digital resources with the aspirations of adolescents can equip them with foundational knowledge and connect them with relevant professionals.

## CONCLUSION

ASER data provides valuable insights for policymakers and educators to address challenges in adolescent education. It emphasizes the need for proactive measures to support foundational learning, nurture career aspirations, and leverage technology effectively.

## ENVIRONMENT CONSERVATION

# Rethinking Wildlife Rescue: Balancing Human-Wildlife Interactions

**CONTEXT:** Wildlife rescue involves saving animals from danger or difficulty, evoking feelings of hope and admiration for human responders. However, in India, escalating human-wildlife interactions require nuanced solutions beyond reactive capture and relocation. Distinguishing between true rescues and captures is crucial.



## Differentiating Rescue from Capture:

Successful wildlife rescues, involving animals like elephants and snakes, require complex operations, often involving immobilization and expert teams. True rescues involve scenarios like animals trapped in wells or tanks. However, not every interaction warrants a rescue; for instance, leopards killing livestock may not require capture.

## Ignoring Expert Advice:

Government guidelines advise against capturing animals on sight, instead advocating preventative measures and reserving capture as a last resort. However, these guidelines are often overlooked, leading to unnecessary captures with fatal consequences, as seen in recent incidents involving elephants and leopards.

## Challenges with Snake Rescues:

Interactions with snakes are common but often mishandled, resulting in poor survival prospects post-relocation. Relocation creates vacancies that could increase conflicts, highlighting the ineffectiveness of current rescue practices.



**Moving Beyond Rescue:**

Rescue efforts often villainize either animals or humans, undermining long-term conservation goals. The Karnataka Forest Department's proactive strategies, including early warning systems and public education, offer promising alternatives to mitigate conflicts.

**Ethical Considerations in Relocation:**

Relocating animals disrupts ecosystems and requires careful consideration of animal welfare. Any intervention should prioritize the welfare of both humans and animals while exploring innovative conflict resolution strategies.

**Conclusion**

Effective wildlife management requires a holistic approach that integrates humans and animals, emphasizing proactive measures over reactive rescues or captures.

**INDIAN SOCIETY, SECURITY**

## The Perilous Journey of Kerala's Fishermen: Trapped in the Conflict Zone

**CONTEXT:** Three young men from Anchuthengu, including Tinu, borrowed substantial sums from local loan sharks to secure jobs in Russia, where they were promised lucrative salaries to provide security services. However, they unwittingly found themselves embroiled in the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, with two still stationed in the combat zone, prompting anxious waits from their families back home.

**Deceptive Recruitment:**

Upon arrival in Russia, the fishermen were coerced into signing agreements in Russian, despite their reservations. They underwent rigorous military training and were eventually thrust into frontline combat roles, leading to injuries and harrowing experiences. The lack of communication with their families compounded their distress, as they faced the grim realities of war.

**A Glimmer of Hope:**

Despite the challenges, some fishermen managed to return to India with the assistance of the Indian Embassy, yet others remain

stranded in Russia. The plight of migrant workers deceived into participating in conflicts abroad underscores the desperate measures individuals take to alleviate financial burdens back home.

**CONCLUSION**

The incidents involving Kerala's fishermen are not isolated, reflecting a larger trend of voluntary migration to conflict-ridden regions in search of economic opportunities. Despite the inherent risks, individuals continue to seek employment abroad, driven by financial necessity and the hope of a better future for their families.

**SOCIAL JUSTICE**

## Struggles of the Muria Tribe: Displacement and Denied Rights

**CONTEXT:** In the Dandakaranya region of Chhattisgarh, the Muria tribe's ordeal began over a decade ago during the conflict between Left-wing extremists and the State-sponsored Salwa Judum. They fled to Andhra Pradesh and settled in the reserve forests, hoping for safety. However, despite their resilience, they face challenges accessing basic necessities like education and clean water. Now, they confront the looming threat of displacement, as detailed by T. Appala Naidu's report.

**BACKGROUND**

In the depths of the lush jungle, Chukkalapadu stands as a sanctuary for the Muria tribe, surrounded by the scent of Mahua flowers. Here, they rebuilt their lives after fleeing violence, turning forest covers into permanent homes despite multiple attempts by authorities to evict them. The settlement, comprising 34 Muria families, bears witness to their resilience in the face of adversity.

**Denied Rights and Identity Crisis**

Despite their efforts to integrate, the Murias continue to face discrimination and denial of rights. Lack of Scheduled Tribe certificates deprives them of essential benefits and access to education. The absence of caste certificates further exacerbates their plight, rendering them ineligible for social welfare pensions and educational opportunities. The Murias' identity crisis reflects a systemic failure to recognize and uplift marginalized communities.

**Education: A Distant Dream**

In Chukkalapadu, children like Ravva Suresh and his sister Irmamma are forced to forego education due to bureaucratic hurdles

and the absence of functional schools. The dream of education remains elusive for many Muria children, perpetuating cycles of poverty and marginalization.

**Minimal Healthcare and Political Neglect**

Healthcare services in Muria settlements are minimal, with sporadic visits from government nurses. Political leaders' reluctance to engage with Muria communities reflects broader neglect, leaving them marginalized and vulnerable.

**Displacement Threat and Struggle for Water**

The Murias' fight for survival faces new challenges, with the looming threat of displacement and inadequate access to clean water. Denied recognition as a village, Muria settlements struggle to secure essential resources like borewells, highlighting systemic neglect and bureaucratic hurdles. The Jal Jeevan Mission remains unfamiliar to the Muria tribe. This initiative by the Central government, initiated in 2019, aims to alleviate water scarcity in rural regions. With the goal of ensuring piped water access to every rural household by 2024, the program emphasizes the significance of safe and easily accessible drinking water.

**Conclusion**

The Muria tribe's journey underscores the urgent need for equitable policies and proactive measures to protect and uplift marginalized communities. Their resilience in the face of adversity serves as a poignant reminder of the enduring struggle for dignity and rights.

previous 12 months ending on March 31. Last year's growth was primarily driven by robust investment, while consumption remained subdued.

**Cautionary Notes:**

Despite the optimistic forecast, the ADB warns of potential risks, such as a sharp rise in oil prices or prolonged high interest rates in the West to tackle inflation. India is particularly vulnerable to higher interest rates due to the rupee's sensitivity to Western interest rates. While the government's capital expenditure has been strong, private sector project completions have not kept pace with rising announcements.

**Omissions and Concerns:**

The ADB report does not address controversies surrounding India's national income data integrity or concerns about the heavy influence of government tax receipts on final GDP. Structural reforms, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic, have been notably absent. The strong growth numbers reported by the government have raised questions, especially as economic reforms have taken a back seat.

**Consumer Spending and Recommendations:**

The ADB's assumption of a rebound in consumer spending faces risks due to stretched household savings, flagged by global country risk research firm BMI. The ADB suggests creating large-scale special economic zones with an easier policy environment to boost exports. It urges India to integrate better with global supply chains and improve logistics infrastructure amidst challenges in global merchandise trade.

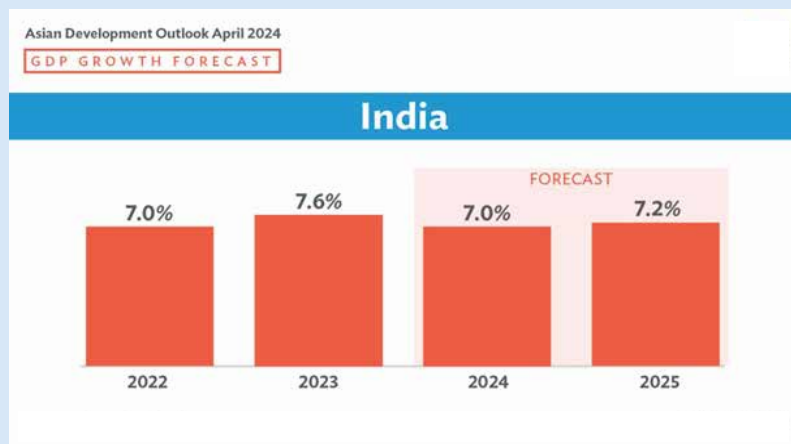
**CONCLUSION**

The report highlights the need for India to address concerns regarding data integrity, structural reforms, and the heavy influence of government tax receipts on GDP. As India navigates these challenges, it must heed the ADB's recommendations to create special economic zones, integrate better with global supply chains, and enhance logistics infrastructure to sustain and accelerate economic growth.

**ECONOMY**

**Navigating Economic Growth: Insights from the Asian Development Bank**

**CONTEXT:** The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has revised its growth forecast for India's GDP for the fiscal year ending on March 31, 2025. The ADB predicts a 7% growth rate, up from the earlier estimate of 6.7%, citing strong public and private investment and expectations of improving consumer demand as the rural economy recovers.



**Background**

The ADB now predicts India's GDP to grow by 7.2% in the fiscal year 2025-26. However, this forecast remains slower than the 7.6% pace estimated by India's National Statistical Office for the

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