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News Analysis (07 Jan, 2020)

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Urban Co-operative Banks

Why in News

The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has revised the Supervisory Action Framework (SAF) for Urban Co-operative Banks (UCBs). It seeks to ensure expeditious resolution of financial stress faced by some of the UCBs.

- The move comes in the backdrop of the **alleged irregularities in the Punjab and Maharashtra Cooperative (PMC) Bank** causing distress to over 9 lakh depositors.
- The SAF is similar to the **Prompt Corrective Action (PCA)** framework which is imposed on commercial banks.

Co-operative Banks

- **Co-operative Banks**, which are **distinct from commercial banks**, were born out of the concept of co-operative credit societies where members from a community group together to extend loans to each other, at favourable terms.
- Co-operative Banks are broadly classified into **Urban and Rural co-operative banks** based on their region of operation.

Commercial Banks

- A commercial bank is a financial institution which performs the functions of accepting deposits from the general public and giving loans with the aim of earning profit.
- The RBI has specified certain **regulatory trigger points** for initiation of certain structured and discretionary actions with respect of banks hitting such trigger points.

- The trigger points are part of **the Prompt Corrective Action (PCA) Framework**, in terms of three parameters:
 - Capital Adequacy Ratio (CAR),
 - net Non-Performing Assets (NPA) and
 - Return on Assets (RoA),
- The **PCA framework** is **applicable only to commercial banks** and is not extended to co-operative banks and Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs).

Difference between UCBs and Commercial Banks

- **Regulation: Unlike commercial banks, UCBs are only partly regulated by the RBI.** Their banking operations are regulated by the RBI, which lays down their capital adequacy, risk control and lending norms. However, their management and resolution in the case of distress is regulated by the **Registrar of Co-operative Societies** either under the State or Central government.
- **Borrower can be a Shareholder:** In general for a commercial bank, there is a clear distinction between its shareholders and its borrowers whereas in a UCB, borrowers can even double up as shareholders.

Revised SAF

- UCBs will face restrictions for worsening of **three parameters**:
 - When net Non-Performing Assets (**NPA**s) **exceed 6% of net advances**,
 - When losses are incurred for two consecutive financial years or losses have accumulated on the balance sheets, and
 - If Capital Adequacy Ratio (**CAR**) **falls below 9%**.
- However, RBI can also take action if there are serious governance issues.
- **Possible Restrictions and Actions that can be taken by the RBI**
 - UCBs may be asked to submit a board-approved action plan to correct the situation like reducing net NPAs below 6%, etc.
 - The board of the UCB may be asked to review the progress under the action plan on quarterly/monthly basis and submit the post-review progress report to the RBI.
 - The RBI can impose **restrictions on declaration or payment of dividend or donation** without prior approval if any one of the above mentioned parameters is breached.
 - The RBI may also seek a board-approved proposal for **merging the UCB with another bank** or converting itself into a credit society if CAR falls below 9%.
 - The RBI may also consider issue of **show-cause notice for cancellation of banking licence** when continued normal functioning of the UCB is no longer considered to be in the interest of its depositors/public.

Shivalik Mercantile Co-operative Bank Limited To Convert Into A Small Finance Bank

- The Shivalik Mercantile Co-operative Bank Limited has become the **first Urban Co-operative Bank (UCB)** to be granted 'in-principle' permission by the RBI to convert into a **Small Finance Bank (SFB)**.
- The move comes after the RBI had announced a scheme on voluntary transition of UCBs into a SFB in September, 2018.
- **Small Finance Banks are a specific segment of banking created by RBI** under the guidance of Government of India with an objective of furthering financial inclusion by primarily undertaking basic banking activities to un-served and underserved sections including small business units, small and marginal farmers, micro and small industries and unorganized entities.
 - Like other commercial banks, these banks can undertake all basic banking activities including lending and taking deposits.
 - The RBI issued the guidelines of Small Finance Bank in November 2014.

Source: TH

ICAR to Set up Farmers' Innovation Fund

Why in News

The **Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)** is all set to start a **Farmers Innovation Fund**. ICAR will bring a system to scientifically validate, scale-up and propagate the innovations of progressive farmers.

As part of this system, **an innovation centre** will be established in **New Delhi** where the innovations will be scientifically validated and farmers will be allowed to pursue research work.

Key Points

- **Agriculture and Science:** The system intends to link farmers and farming with science and to ensure that their farm practices are science-based. It would also encourage farmers to continue their innovations.
 - **Krishi Vigyan Kendras document the innovations** of farmers.

- **Technology in Agriculture:** ICAR emphasises that **agriculture is a science** and application of principles of science helps in boosting agriculture.
 - **Scientific approach and use of technology** helped in the success of various agricultural and allied sectors' revolutions like- **green revolution and white revolution**.
 - ICAR has **created a link between 105 startups and farmers** to encourage the use of technology in the farm sector.
- **Organic Farming:** ICAR has developed **45 different organic farming models** suitable for different agro-climatic regions and has **validated 51 integrated farming systems** to help increase farm income.
- **Fertilisers and Pesticides:** ICAR is developing **nano fertilizers and nano pesticides** to promote organic farming and to reduce the use of pesticides and fertilizers
- **Youth and Agriculture:** A programme named **Arya** is also being implemented to **improve rural bio-economy** and **attract youth to agriculture**.

Till now over 5000 youth have been brought into this programme in which they have been **trained to be entrepreneurs and begin a start-up**. Around 104 such startups are marketing processed food items.
- **Indian Science Congress:** Its theme for the year **2020** was "**Science & Technology: Rural Development**". Also, **Farmers' Science Congress** was inaugurated for the **first time in the 107 years of history of the Indian Science Congress** highlighting the importance of farmer's innovations and their scientific validity.

Indian Council of Agricultural Resource

- It is an autonomous organisation under the **Department of Agricultural Research and Education (DARE), Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare**.
- It was established on **16 July 1929** and was formerly known as **Imperial Council of Agricultural Research**.
- It is headquartered at **New Delhi**.
- It is the apex body for coordinating, guiding and managing research and education in agriculture including horticulture, fisheries and animal sciences in the entire country.

Krishi Vigyan Kendras

- It is an integral part of the **National Agricultural Research System (NARS)**, which aims at the assessment of location-specific technology modules in agriculture and allied enterprises, through technology assessment, refinement, and demonstrations.
- KVKs have been functioning as Knowledge and Resource Centre of agricultural technology supporting initiatives of public, private and voluntary sectors for improving the agricultural economy of the district and are linking the NARS with extension system and farmers.
- These are **100% funded by the Government of India**.

- The **first KVK** was established in **1974 at Puducherry**.

Source: TH

New Satellites to Help Gaganyaan Crew

Why in News

India is planning to put up a new satellite series called the **Indian Data Relay Satellite System (IDRSS)**.

The IDRSS is planned to track and be constantly in touch with Indian satellites, mainly with those in **low-earth orbits (LEO)** having limited coverage of earth.

Key Points

- It will play a crucial role in **helping Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)** with its advanced LEO missions such as space docking, space station and distant expeditions to the Moon, Mars etc.
- It will also be useful in **monitoring launches**.
- IDRSS satellites of the 2,000 kg class would be launched on the **Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV) launcher to geostationary orbits** around 36,000 km away. A satellite in **Geosynchronous Equatorial Orbit (GEO)** covers a third of the earth and therefore three of them can provide total coverage.
- Crew members of the **Gaganyaan mission** of 2022 will be the first ones to benefit from the IDRSS by staying with mission control fully and continuously throughout the travel.
- **Background**
 - At present, in the absence of a data relay satellite system, spacecraft are not visible all the time.
 - The scientists have **already started working on two IDRSS satellites** planned initially.
 - The **first** will be sent towards the **end of 2020**. It will precede the pre-Gaganyaan experimental unmanned space flight.
 - The **second** one will follow **in 2021**.
 - Both satellites will offer near-total tracking, sending and receiving of information from the crew 24/7.

- **Global Scenario**

- The **U.S. and Russia** started their relay satellite systems in the late 1970s and 80s. They use them to monitor their respective space stations **Mir and the International Space Station** and trips to them as well as the **Hubble Space Telescope**.
- Currently, the **U.S.** is putting up its third-generation advanced fleet of **Tracking & Data Relay Satellites (TDRS)**.
- **Russia** has its **Satellite Data Relay Network**.
- **Europe** is building its own **European Data Relay System**.
- **China** is into its **second generation Tianlian II** series.

Mir: It was a space station operated by the Soviet Union and later by Russia in low Earth orbit from 1986 to 2001. Mir was the first modular space station.

Source: TH

Tulu Language

Why in News

There has been growing demand to include Tulu in the **Eighth Schedule of the Constitution**. At present, Tulu is **not an official language in India or any other country**.

Key Points

- Tulu is a **Dravidian language** whose speakers are concentrated in the region of Tulu Nadu, which comprises the districts of **Dakshina Kannada and Udupi** in **Karnataka** and the **northern part of Kasaragod district of Kerala**.
- Kasaragod district is called '**Sapta bhasha Sangama Bhumi (the confluence of seven languages)**', and Tulu is among the seven.
- The oldest available inscriptions in Tulu are from the period between **14th to 15th century AD**.

Case for Inclusion in the Eighth Schedule

- **Global Efforts:** The **Yuelu Proclamation made by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) at Changsha, China, in 2018** plays a central role in guiding the efforts of countries and regions around the world to **protect linguistic resources and diversity**.
The **United Nations General Assembly** has proclaimed **2019 as the International Year of Indigenous Languages (IYIL)**. The IYIL 2019 strives to preserve, support and promote indigenous languages at the national, regional and international levels.
- **Constitutional Safeguard: Article 29** of the Indian Constitution deals with the "**Protection of interests of minorities**". It states that any section of the citizens residing in any part of India having a **distinct language, script or culture of its own**, shall have the right to conserve the same.
- **Number of Speakers:** According to Census-2011, there are more than 18 lakh native speakers of Tulu in India. The Tulu-speaking people are larger in number than speakers of Manipuri and Sanskrit, which have the Eighth Schedule status.
- **Literary Recognition:** Robert Caldwell (1814-1891), in his book, A Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian or South-Indian Family of Languages, called Tulu as "**one of the most highly developed languages of the Dravidian family**".

Yuelu Proclamation

- Yuelu Proclamation was adopted at the first international conference on language resources protection in **Changsha, Central China's Hunan province in 2018** by UNESCO. It is a document on protection and promotion of the world's linguistic diversity.
- It calls upon the international community, states, governments and non-governmental organizations, among others, to reach a consensus on the protection and promotion of linguistic diversity in the world.

Advantages of Recognition in Eighth Schedule

If included in the Eighth Schedule, Tulu would get the **following benefits:**

- Recognition from the **Sahitya Akademi**.
- **Translation of Tulu literary works** into other languages.
- Members of Parliament (MP) and Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) could **speak Tulu in Parliament and State Assemblies**, respectively.
- Option to take **competitive exams in Tulu including all-India competitive examinations like the Civil Services exam**.
- **Special funds** from the Central government.
- **Teaching of Tulu** in primary and high school.

Way Forward

- India has a lot to learn from the **Yuelu Proclamation**. Placing of all the deserving languages on equal footing will promote social inclusion and national solidarity.
- It will **reduce inequalities within the country to a great extent**. So, Tulu, along with other deserving languages, should be included in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution in order to **substantially materialise the promise of equality of status and opportunity mentioned in the Preamble**.

Source: TH

Children Excluded from Assam NRC

Why in News

The **Supreme Court** has ordered that children excluded from the **National Register of Citizens (NRC)** for Assam but whose parents/guardians/caregivers are part of the final list, should not be sent to detention camps or separated from their loved ones at any cost.

The Supreme Court's order is in response to an application which stated that the unreasonable manner in which children have been excluded from the NRC final list even when their parents are included is in **direct contravention with constitutional as well as the legal safeguards**.

Assam NRC

- The National Register of Citizens (NRC) is the register containing names of Indian Citizens. The only time that an NRC was prepared was in 1951.
After the conduct of the Census of 1951, the NRC was prepared by recording particulars of all the persons enumerated during that Census.
- The NRC in Assam is basically a list of Indian citizens living in the state. The citizens' register sets out to identify foreign nationals in the state.
- The process to update the register began following a Supreme Court order in 2013, with the state's nearly 33 million people having to prove that they were Indian nationals prior to 24th March, 1971.
- The updated final NRC was released on 31st August, 2019 with over 1.9 million applicants failing to make it to the list.

Related Constitutional Provisions

- **Article 15 (1)** provides that the State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of **religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth**. However, under **Article 15 (3)** of the Constitution, the State is allowed to make any **special provision** for women and children.
- **Article 39(e)**: The State shall, in particular, direct its policy towards securing that the health and strength of workers, men and women, and **the tender age of children are not abused** and that citizens are not forced by economic necessity to enter occupations unsuited to their age or strength.
- **Article 39 (f)**: The State shall, in particular, direct its policy towards securing that **children are given opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner** and in conditions of freedom and dignity and that childhood and youth are protected against exploitation and against moral and material abandonment.
- **Article 45**: The state shall endeavour to provide **early childhood care and education** for all children **until they complete the age of six years**.
- **Article 47** directs the State to raise the level of nutrition and the standard of living and to improve public health.

The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015

- The JJ Act, 2015 provides for strengthened provisions for both children in need of care and protection and children in conflict with the law.
- The State Government shall constitute for every district, one or more Child Welfare Committees for exercising the powers and discharge the duties conferred on such Committees in relation to children in need of care and protection under this Act.

Source: TH

State can Regulate Minority Institutions: SC

Why in News

Recently, the Supreme Court held that the **state has the rights to introduce a regulatory regime** in the national interest to provide minority educational institutions with well-qualified teachers so that they can achieve excellence in education.

Minority institutions have the fundamental right under **Article 30** of the Constitution **to establish and administer their educational institutions according to their choice**. However, they **cannot ignore the regulations recommended by the state**.

Key Points from the Judgement

- The judgment held that the **regulatory law should be a balance** of the **dual objectives** of **ensuring the standard of excellence** as well as **preserving the right of minorities to establish and administer** their educational institutions.
- For this, the **court broadly divided education into two categories**:
 - Secular education.
 - Education “directly aimed at or dealing with preservation and protection of the heritage, culture, script and special characteristics of a religious or a linguistic minority.”
- When it comes to education related to minorities, the court advocated **“maximum latitude”** to be given to the **management to appoint teachers**.
 - Teachers who believe in the religious ideology or in the special characteristics of the concerned minority would alone be able to imbibe in the students admitted in such educational institutions, what the minorities would like to preserve, profess and propagate.
 - However, secular minority institutions should focus on imparting education by availing the best possible teachers.

Background

- The judgment came after the validity of the **West Bengal Madrasah Service Commission Act of 2008** was challenged.
 - This Act **mandated that the process of appointment of teachers in aided madrasahs would be done by a Commission**, whose decision would be binding.
 - **Madrasahs are recognised as minority institutions.**
- The SC **upheld the validity of the 2008 Act** and said that the Commission is composed of people who have **profound knowledge in Islamic Culture and Islamic Theology**.
 - It added that the Act was not violative of the rights of the minority educational institutions on any count.
 - The provisions of the Act were **specially designed for madrasahs and the madrasah education system in West Bengal.**

- SC referred to the **TMA Pai Foundation case, 2002** and said that **Article 30(1) (Right of minorities to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice)** was neither absolute nor above the law. As per the laws laid in the case-
 - A regulation framed in the national interest **must necessarily apply to all institutions** regardless of whether they are run by majority or minority as the essence of Article 30(1) is to ensure equal treatment between the majority and minority institutions.
 - If an **unfavourable treatment** is given out to an educational institution established and administered by a minority, an **objection can be raised**.
 - It becomes a different matter if a regulatory regime ensures excellence in educational institutions and the teacher selection method is designed to achieve excellence in institutions.

Article 30 of the Indian Constitution: Right of minorities to establish and administer educational institutions.

(1) All minorities, whether based on religion or language, shall have the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice.

(1A) In making any law providing for the compulsory acquisition of any property of an educational institution established and administered by a minority, referred to in clause (1), the State shall ensure that the amount fixed by or determined under such law for the acquisition of such property is such as would not restrict or abrogate the right guaranteed under that clause.

(2) The state shall not, in granting aid to educational institutions, discriminate against any educational institution on the ground that it is under the management of a minority, whether based on religion or language.

Source: TH

DigiLocker

Why in News

The **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)** has been asked by the Delhi High Court to give its stand on a petition against the rules pertaining to the operation of DigiLocker.

- The petition seeks striking down of the **Information Technology (Preservation and Retention of Information by Intermediaries Providing Digital Locker Facilities) Rules 2016** because DigiLocker does not provide a nomination facility under this rule.

- Because of this rule, all the documents would not be accessible by the family or friends and automatically get passed on to the government on the user's death.

HOW DOES DIGILOCKER WORK?

Key Points

- To Sign-up for the DigiLocker you need to have an Aadhaar and **mobile number registered with Aadhaar.**
- Type your Aadhaar number and the **captcha code.**
- After clicking signup button, an OTP (**One Time Password**) will be sent to the registered mobile number and email-id.
- Enter OTP and click on “Validate OTP” **button to complete the sign up and login.**

- DigiLocker is a **flagship initiative** of MeitY under '**Digital India**' programme.
- This is government's effort to create an **electronic version of documents**, which can be easily verified and stored in printable format.
- The users can **store their documents** such as insurance, medical reports, PAN card, passport, marriage certificate, school certificate and other documents in the digital format.
- The locker **can be accessed by individuals, using their mobile number.**
- Technology companies such as **Google and Dropbox offer storage space** for users to store documents.
- Apart from e-documents, DigiLocker can store a **Uniform Resource Identifier (URI) link** of e-documents issued by various issuer departments.

Source: TH

The Great Indian Bustard

The Great Indian Bustard is one of the heaviest flying birds in the world.



- **Scientific Name:** *Ardeotis nigriceps*
 - **Habitat:** Dry grasslands and scrublands on the Indian subcontinent; its largest populations are found in the Indian state of Rajasthan.
 - **Protection Status**
 - **Critically Endangered** on the IUCN Red List
 - **In Appendix I** of CITES,
 - **In Schedule I** of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
-