

**CONSTITUTION AND POLITY****Cabinet approves 'The Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order (Amendment) Bill, 2018' for revision in list of Scheduled Tribes of Arunachal Pradesh**

The Union Cabinet (chaired by Prime Minister) has approved the introduction of The Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order (Amendment) Bill, 2018 in the Parliament for certain amendments in the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950 so as to modify the list of Scheduled Tribes (STs) of Arunachal Pradesh.

**Changes made in list of Scheduled Tribes of Arunachal Pradesh are:**

- Deletion of 'Abor' in serial No. 1, as it is the same as 'Adi' in Serial No. 16.
- Replace 'Tai Khamti' instead of 'Khampti' at serial No. 6.
- Inclusion of 'Mishmi-Kaman' (Miju Mishmi), Idu (Mishmi) and Taraon (Digaru Mishmi) in serial No. 8.
- Inclusion of Monpa, Memba, Sartang, Sajolong (Miji) in serial No. 9 in lieu of 'Momba'.
- Inclusion of 'Nocte', 'Tangsa', 'Tutsa', 'Wancho' in lieu of 'Any Naga Tribes' in serial No. 10 in list of Scheduled Tribes of Arunachal Pradesh.
- After the Bill becomes an Act, member of the communities newly listed will also be able to derive benefits meant for STs under the existing schemes of the Government.

**Govt introduces Aadhaar amendment Bill in Lok Sabha**

The Aadhaar and Other Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2018 has been introduced in the Lok Sabha. The Aadhaar Act provides targeted delivery of subsidies and benefits to individuals residing in India by assigning them unique identity numbers, called Aadhaar numbers.

The Bill amends the Aadhaar (Targeted Delivery of Financial and Other Subsidies, Benefits and Services) Act, 2016, the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885, and the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002.

**Key features of the Bill:**

- Offline verification of Aadhaar number holder: The Bill allows 'offline verification' of an individual's identity, without authentication, through modes specified by the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) by regulations. During offline verification, the agency must (i) obtain the consent of the individual, (ii) inform them of alternatives to sharing information, and (iii) not collect, use or store Aadhaar number or biometric information.
- Voluntary use of Aadhaar to verify identity: The Bill states that an individual may voluntarily use his Aadhaar number to establish his identity, by authentication or offline verification. Authentication of an individual's identity via Aadhaar, for the provision of any service, may be made mandatory only by a law of Parliament.
- Entities using Aadhaar: An entity may be allowed to perform authentication through Aadhaar, if the UIDAI is satisfied that it is (i) compliant with certain standards of privacy and security, or (ii) permitted by law, or (iii) seeking authentication for a purpose specified by the central government in the interest of the State.
- Aadhaar number of children: The Bill specifies that at the time of enrolling a child to obtain an Aadhaar number, the enrolling agency shall seek the consent of his parent or guardian. The agency must inform the parent or guardian of (i) the manner in which the information will be used, (ii) the recipients with whom it will be shared, and (iii) their right to access the information. After attaining eighteen years of age, the child may apply for cancellation of his Aadhaar.
- Disclosure of information in certain cases: Under the Act, restrictions on security and confidentiality of Aadhaar related information do not apply in case the disclosure is pursuant to an order of a District Court (or above). The Bill amends this to allow such disclosure only for orders by High Courts (or above). The Bill also allows disclosure of information on directions of officers not below the rank of a Secretary.
- UIDAI Fund: Under the Act, all fees and revenue collected by the UIDAI shall be credited to the Consolidated Fund of India. The Bill removes this provision, and creates the Unique Identification Authority of India Fund. All fees, grants and charges received by the UIDAI shall be credited to this fund. The fund shall be used for expenses of the UIDAI, including salaries and allowances of its employees.
- Complaints: The Bill allows the individual to register complaints in certain cases, including impersonation or disclosure of their identity. The Bill defines the Aadhaar ecosystem to include enrolling agencies, requesting agencies, and offline verification-seeking entities. It allows the UIDAI to issue directions to them if necessary for the discharge of its functions under the Act.
- Penalties: Under the Bill, the UIDAI may initiate a complaint against an entity in the Aadhaar ecosystem for failure to (i) comply with the Act or the UIDAI's directions, and (ii) furnish information required by the UIDAI. Adjudicating Officers appointed by the UIDAI shall decide such matters, and

may impose penalties up to one crore rupees on such entities. The Telecom Disputes Settlement and Appellate Tribunal shall be the appellate authority against decisions of the Adjudicating Officer.

Reason for amendments proposal: While upholding the constitutional validity of Aadhaar, the Supreme Court had struck down Section 57 of the Aadhaar Act, 2016 that permitted private entities like telecom companies or other corporate to avail of the biometric Aadhaar data. Hence to address the issues like recognising the authentication of those who provided Aadhaar as the identity proof, the amendments are brought in by the government.

#### **Hig Level committee for Assam Accord**

The Union Home Ministry will set up a high-level committee to look into the implementation of Clause 6 of the Assam Accord. The composition and terms of reference of the committee, which will also look at issues related to the Bodo community, will be announced later.

Clause 6 Assam Accord: Clause 6 of the Assam Accord “envisaged that appropriate constitutional, legislative and administrative safeguards shall be provided to protect, preserve and promote the cultural, social, linguistic identity and heritage of the Assamese people.”

The proposed Committee is to :

- Hold discussions with all stakeholders and assess the required quantum of reservation of seats in the Assam Assembly and local bodies for Assamese people.
- Look at measures to protect Assamese and other indigenous languages of Assam, reservation in state government jobs, and other steps to protect, preserve and promote cultural, social, linguistic identity and heritage of Assamese people.
- Suggest constitutional, legislative and administrative safeguards and examine the effectiveness of actions since 1985 to implement the clause.
- Look into issues of the Bodo people, especially the measures mentioned in the Memorandum of Settlement signed between the Government of India, Assam government and the Bodo Liberation Tigers Force in 2003.

Assam Accord: The Assam Accord (1985) was a Memorandum of Settlement (MoS) signed between representatives of the Government of India and the leaders of the Assam Movement in New Delhi on 15 August 1985.

- The accord brought an end to the Assam Agitation and paved the way for the leaders of the agitation to form a political party and form a government in the state of Assam soon after.
- As per the Accord, those Bangladeshis who came between 1966 and 1971 will be barred from voting for ten years. The Accord also mentions that the international borders will be sealed and all persons who crossed over from Bangladesh after 1971 are to be deported.
- Though the accord brought an end to the agitation, some of the key clauses are yet to be implemented, which has kept some of the issues festering.

## GOVERNANCE- SCHEMES, E-GOVERNANCE, SERVICES ETC

#### **Yarn Bank Scheme**

To avoid fluctuation in yarn price, government has launched a Yarn Bank Scheme as one of the component of PowerTex India with effect from 01.04.2017 to 31.03.2020. The Scheme provides interest free corpus fund up to Rs.2.00 crore to the Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV)/Consortium formed by powerloom weavers to enable them to purchase yarn at wholesale rate and give the yarn at reasonable price to the small weavers. It aims to avoid middleman and local supplier's brokerage charge on sales of yarn.

#### **Objectives**

- To provide interest free corpus fund to Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) / Consortium to enable them to purchase yarn at wholesale rate and give the yarn at reasonable price to the small weavers.
- To avoid middle man/ local supplier's brokerage charge on sales of yarn.

#### **Eligibility Beneficiaries**

- Registered Co-operative Society.
- Trusts
- Company set-up under the Companies Act, 1956 as amended.
- Firm set-up under the Limited Liability Partnership Act, 2008 as amended.

## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS- BILATERAL, GROUPINGS, ORGANISATIONS

#### **Agreement on Prohibition of Attacks against Nuclear Installations and Facilities**

Both India and Pakistan have exchanged their list of nuclear installations. The exchange was in accordance with the Agreement on Prohibition of Attacks against Nuclear Installations and Facilities between Pakistan and India. The exchange is done each year on January 1, under the Agreement on the Prohibition of Attack against Nuclear Installations and Facilities, also referred to as the Non-Nuclear Aggression Agreement.

Agreement on the Prohibition of Attack against Nuclear Installations:

The agreement, which was signed on December 31, 1988, and entered into force on January 27, 1991, provides that the two countries inform each other of nuclear installations and facilities to be covered under the pact on the first of January of every calendar year.

Significance of the agreement:

- The need for the agreement had been felt against the backdrop of Israel's 1981 bombing of Iraq's Osirak reactor near Baghdad. The strike, carried out by Israeli fighter jets over hostile airspace, had set Iraq's nuclear weapons programme significantly.
- The agreement had also come at a time of deep anxiety for Pakistan. Islamabad had been rattled by the memory of the 1972 defeat which dismembered the country, and military developments in India, such as Operation Brasstacks in 1987, which was a wargame exercise to prepare for deep strike offensive capabilities. Pakistan had at the time responded by putting at its nuclear installations and assets on 'high alert'.

Trump Signs Asia Reassurance Initiative Act Into Law

US President Trump has signed an Act designed to counter the encroaching influence and growing threat from China and to reinvigorate US leadership in the Indo-Pacific region.

Asia Reassurance Initiative Act (ARIA)

- The ARIA aims to establish a multifaceted U.S. strategy to increase U.S. security, economic interests, and values in the Indo-Pacific region.
- ARIA draws attention to U.S. relations with China, India, the ten member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and Northeast Asian allies Japan and South Korea.
- It will authorize \$1.5 billion in spending for a range of U.S. programs in East and Southeast Asia and develop a long-term strategic vision and policy for the Indo-Pacific region.
- The ARIA includes multiple provisions of Trump which have identified the Indo-Pacific as a strategic region of particular priority.

Regional Perspective

- North Korea: The act aims to justify the termination of U.S. support for any UNSC resolutions sanctioning North Korea or the lifting of any unilateral U.S. sanctions on North Korea.
- Taiwan: The ARIA encourages the travel of high level US officials to Taiwan, in accordance with the Taiwan Travel Act which was made law in 2018.
- South China Sea: ARIA calls on the US to support the ASEAN nations as they adopt a code of conduct in the South China Sea with China.

Impact on ties with India

- ARIA allocates a budget of \$1.5 billion over a five-year period to enhance cooperation with America's strategic regional allies in the region.
- Stressing the designation of India as a major defense partner, which is unique to India, the new law elevates defense trade and technology cooperation.
- The new law cites China's illegal construction and militarization of artificial features in the South China Sea and coercive economic practices.

**INDIAN ECONOMY**RBI to bring technology based solution to read denomination of notes

In a bid to help the visually challenged, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is scouting for a digital solution that can identify and read out the denomination of Indian currency notes to users. Coming in the backdrop of issuance of new currency notes, the plan is aimed at developing or authenticating a technology-based solution to achieve the task in a few seconds, according to a source familiar with the development. The solution could be a device, software or a combination of both, to help not just the visually challenged, but also those who cannot read in poor lighting, the source said.

Following up on an announcement in June, the RBI recently called for an expression of interest (EoI) from entities for a mechanism or device that can detect and read out the denomination. The reason behind the RBI scouting for such solutions is because of the blurring of physical dimensions of the notes that thus far served as the main differentiator. In other words, unlike in the past, the size of the note need not be indicative of denomination. There are also certain Intaglio (raised) printing-based identification marks in currency notes of Rs. 100 and above.

Noting that technological progress had opened up new vistas for making banknotes more recognisable for the visually challenged, the bank had announced its decision to explore the feasibility of developing a suitable device or mechanism for aiding them in the identification.

Apart from inviting EoIs, the RBI has formed a panel to go into different aspects, including solutions in practice abroad, which include an app used in the U.S. and a credit card-sized solution in a few other countries.

### **Revenue Shortfalls – GST**

Revenue collections from GST still remain below the target set under the Budget 2018.

- In Budget 2018, the government had set the GST revenue target for the financial year 2018-19 at Rs 12 lakh crore, i.e a monthly average of Rs 1.07 lakh crore. The total collection by the government between May to October 2018 has been Rs 5.75 lakh crore, averaging Rs 95,870 crore.
- However, revenue collections from GST declined for the second consecutive month in December to Rs. 94,726 crores from Rs. 97,637 crores in November and Rs. 1,00,710 crores in October. Thus, in order to achieve the year-end target, GST collections over the next three months will have to reach an average of Rs. 1,34,900 crores.
- But the GST Council has so far taken more than 190 items out of the highest tax rate of 28% into lower slabs. Hence, the pressure on GST revenues will persist and the government is likely to miss the revenue target.
- The Council is also considering a relaxation in the GST norms for micro, small and medium enterprises.
- It has planned to raise the annual sales threshold for compulsory GST registration from Rs. 20 lakhs to over Rs. 50 lakhs. Such relaxations will also further reduce the tax revenue.
- Even the other possible revenue alternatives for the government, including direct tax or disinvestment receipts, are unlikely to compensate the GST shortfall.

### **Concerns:**

- States' revenue collections under the GST regime have been uneven and a GST Council panel is examining inter-State variations.
- The Centre is also bound to compensate States for revenue shortfalls for the first five years of the GST regime.
- Thus the Centre should either decide to drop its fiscal deficit goals or should reduce its planned capital expenditure to compensate for revenue shortfalls from GST.
- Also, revenue collections of GST in the month of November 2018 fell, despite the total number of returns filed that month hit a high of 72 lakhs from 55 lakhs at the beginning of the fiscal.

Thus, the higher compliance of taxpayers didn't necessarily translate into higher collections from GST.

Despite these concerns, GST collections seems inevitable for a consumption-led investment and to take the economy to an 8% growth pathrevival

## SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY- SPACE, NUCLEAR, DEFENCE ETC

### **A paper sensor that can detect freshness of milk**

Scientists at Indian Institute of Technology, Guwahati, have developed a simple paper kit that can test freshness of milk and tell how well it has been pasteurized. Aided with a smart phone app, the kit can help ensure that milk is consumed before it turns too sour.

#### **How it works?**

- A milk enzyme, Alkaline Phosphatase or ALP, is considered an indicator of milk quality because its presence even after pasteurization indicates presence of microbes that may not have been rendered inactive with pasteurization.
- Researchers used ordinary filter paper to prepare the detector. The filter paper was cut into small discs and impregnated with chemical probes that preferentially react with ALP. The 'probes' used are antibodies that specifically bind to ALP. When ALP comes into contact with the probe, it turns white paper disc into a coloured one.
- The colour change on paper discs is then photographed by a smartphone camera and images processed to obtain corresponding colour values. These values are then compared with standard data stored in the phone. Thus not only the presence of ALP could be detected but the amount of it in milk could also be measured.