



Daily Current Affairs

Posted at: 09/01/2019

Bridging the Urban-Rural Gap in Agriculture

Why in news?

Recently Minister of State for Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare provided information about initiatives taken by Government of India regarding Bridging the Urban-Rural Gap in Agriculture.

Highlights:

- The Government is implementing several programmes that aim at bringing about overall improvement in the quality of life of the rural people and bridging the urban rural gap through: creation of employment opportunities; strengthening of livelihood opportunities; creation of rural infrastructure; provision of other basic amenities; etc.
- These programmes include: Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act for wage employment, Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihoods Mission for livelihoods promotion through self-employment, Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana for rural housing, National Rural Mission to stimulate local economic development, enhance basic services, and create well planned Rural clusters, Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme to generate self-employment opportunities through establishment of micro-enterprises in the non-farm sector by helping traditional artisans and unemployed youth, National Social Assistance Programme for enhancing the incomes of rural poor and Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana for rural roads.
- The focus of the Government on agricultural sector with programmes for irrigation, insurance, soil health, market, credit and farm infrastructure together with its announced policy on Minimum

Support Price is also likely to boost farm and rural incomes.

- The shift of approach in policy planning from production centric to income centric and the launch of various schemes accordingly.
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Interest Subvention for Farmers

Why in news?

Recently Minister of State for Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare provides information about Interest Subvention for Farmers in Lok Sabha.

Highlights:

- With a view to ensuring availability of agriculture credit {including loans taken against Kisan Credit Card (KCC)} at a reasonable cost/at a reduced rate of 7% per annum to farmers, the Government of India, is implementing an interest subvention scheme of 2% for short term crop loans up to Rs.3.00 lakh.
- The scheme is implemented through public sector banks and private sector banks {reimbursement through Reserve Bank of India (RBI)}, Regional Rural Banks and Cooperatives {reimbursement through National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD)}.
- Currently, besides 2% interest subvention, the farmers, on prompt repayment of crop loans on or before the due date, are also provided 3% additional interest subvention.
- Thus, in case of prompt payee farmers the short term crop loans are provided at an effective interest rate of 4% per annum.
- The benefit of interest subvention is extended for a period of up to six months (post-harvest) to small and marginal farmers having KCC on loan against negotiable warehouse receipts with the purpose of preventing distress sale of produce.

Interest subvention for short term crop loans

- The Central Government provide farmers under the interest subvention scheme to all farmers for short term crop loan upto one year for loan upto Rs. 3 lakhs borrowed by them during the year 2017-18
- Under this scheme, the farmers can avail concessional crop loans of upto Rs.3 lakh at 7 per cent rate of interest. It also provides for an additional subvention of 3 per cent for prompt repayment within a period of one year from the date of advance. The scheme for 2017-18 will help farmers to avail of short term crop loans up to Rs. 3 lakh payable within one year at only 4 per cent per annum. In case farmers do not repay the short term crop loan in time they would be eligible for interest subvention of 2% as against 5% available above.
- The amount of subvention is to be calculated on the amount of crop loan from the date of disbursement up to the date of repayment.

Interest subvention for post harvest loans

- As a measure to check distress sale, post-harvest loans for storage in accredited warehouses against Negotiable Warehouse Receipts (NWRs) are available for upto 6 months for KCC holding small & marginal farmers. The Interest Subvention Scheme will continue for one year and it will be implemented by NABARD and RBI.
- In order to give relief to small and marginal farmers who would have to borrow at 9% for the post harvest storage of their produce, the Central Government has approved an interest subvention of 2% i.e an effective interest rate of 7% for loans upto 6 months.

Pradhan Mantri Jan DhanYojana (PMJDY)

Why in news?

As apprised by banks, there are 33.66 crore Accounts Opened under Pradhan Mantri Jan DhanYojana (PMJDY) as on 26.12.2018.

About Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana:

- Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY), is financial inclusion program of Government of India which is applicable to 18 to 65 years age group ,that aims to expand and make affordable access to financial services such as bank accounts, remittances, credit, insurance and pensions.
- This financial inclusion campaign was launched by the Prime Minister of India on 15 August 2014.
- Run by Department of Financial Services, Ministry of Finance, under this scheme 1.5 Crore (15 million) bank accounts were opened on inauguration day.
- PMJDY accounts are “Basic Savings Bank Deposit Account” (BSBDA) in nature and as per extant guidelines, there is no requirement for maintaining minimum balance in such accounts. Accordingly, no penalty is imposed on PMJDY accounts for non-maintenance of minimum balance.

Slogan of the Scheme: "Mera Khatha, Bhagya Vidhatha ("My account brings me good fortune").

Benefits:

1. Opening of no-frills accounts: The Bank account open under PMJDY does not require minimum balance. And Overdraft facility up-to 10000 is also available after six months. Interest is on deposit. Free RuPay debit card for account.
2. Relaxation on know-your-customer (KYC) norms: Person don't have valid identification document can also open bank account. This type of account call "Small Account" , can regularised within one year.
3. Engaging business correspondents (BCs): Account opening and bank translations are through business correspondent. Usually business corespondent appointed in remote rural area where bank branches not present.
4. Use of technology: Bio-metric based account opening and transaction are available through business correspondent. This helps illiterate people also do banking.
5. Direct Benefit Transfer: The government subsidies are directly transferred to the beneficiary. This reduces delay and leakage to get service.
6. Insurance: Accidental insurance cover of .2.00 lac. provide life cover of ₹. 30,000/- payable on death of the beneficiary.

National Anti-Profiteering Authority

Why in news?

Recently Minister of State for Finance has provides information about functioning of National Anti-Profiteering Authority.

About National Anti-Profiteering Authority

- The National Anti-Profiteering Authority (NAA) has been constituted under Section 171 of the Central Goods and Services Tax Act, 2017 to ensure that the reduction in rate of tax or the benefit of input tax credit is passed on to the recipient by way of commensurate reduction in prices.
- The Government has approved the constitution of a National Anti-Profiteering Authority (NAA) – the institutional mechanism under the GST law to check the unfair profit-making activities by the trading community.

Functions of the Authority

- The relevance of the National Anti-Profiteering Authority (NAA) is simply out of the launch of the GST.
- The Authority's core function is to ensure that the benefits of the reduction in GST rates on goods or services made by the GST Council is passed on to the ultimate consumers by way of a reduction in prices by traders.
- Decision about the formation the NAA comes in the background of rate reduction of large number of items by the GST Council in its 22nd meeting at Guwahati.
- At the meeting, the Council reduced rates of more than 200 items including goods and services. This has made tremendous price reduction effect and the consumers will be benefited only if the traders are making quick reduction of the prices of respective items.
- There is a concern that traders are reluctant to make price cut so that they can make profit.

Utility of the authority

- The Authority's main function is to ensure that traders are not realizing unfair profit by charging high price from the consumers in the name of GST.
- Traders may charge high price from the consumers by naming the GST factor. Similarly, they may not make quick and corresponding price reduction when the GST Council makes tax cut.
- All these constitute profiteering. The responsibility of the NAA is to examine and check such profiteering activities and recommend punitive actions including cancellation of licenses.

What is profiteering?

- Profiteering means unfair profit realized by traders by manipulating prices, tax rate adjustment etc. In the context of the newly launched GST, profiteering means that traders are not reducing the prices of the commodities when the GST Council reduces the tax rates of commodities and services.
 - Conventionally, several traders will have a strong tendency to quickly increase the price of a commodity whose tax rate has been increased.
 - But on the opposite side, they may delay the price reduction of a commodity whose tax rate has been cut by the government. A delayed or postponed price reduction helps business firms to make higher profit. The losers here are the consumers.
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Cyber Crime Prevention against Women and Children (CCPWC) Scheme

Why in news?

Recently Minister of State for Home Affairs provides information about initiative such as Cyber Crime prevention against Women and Children.

Cyber Crime Prevention against Women and Children (CCPWC) Scheme

- The main objective of Cyber Crime Prevention against Women and Children (CCPWC) Scheme is to have an effective mechanism to handle cybercrimes against women and children in the country.
 - The scheme has a total estimated outlay of Rs. 223.198 crores and main features of the scheme are given below:
 1. Online cybercrime reporting platform
 2. One national level cyber forensic laboratory
 3. Training of Police officers, judges & prosecutors
 4. Cybercrime awareness activities
 5. Research & Development
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The DNA Technology (Use and Application) Regulation Bill - 2019

Why in news?

In a landmark decision, the Lok Sabha today passed “The DNA Technology (Use and Application) Regulation Bill - 2019”.

Highlights:

- The Bill has been formulated recognizing the need for regulation of the use and application of Deoxyribonucleic Acid (DNA) technology, for establishing identity of missing persons, victims, offenders, under trials and unknown deceased persons.
- The purpose of this Bill is to expand the application of DNA-based forensic technologies to support and strengthen the justice delivery system of the country.
- The utility of DNA based technologies for solving crimes, and to identify missing persons, is well recognized across the world.
- By providing for the mandatory accreditation and regulation of DNA laboratories, the Bill seeks to ensure that with the proposed expanded use of this technology in this country, there is also the assurance that the DNA test results are reliable, and furthermore that the data remain protected from misuse or abuse in terms of the privacy rights

of our citizens.

Highlights of the Bill:

- The Bill regulates the use of DNA technology for establishing the identity of persons in respect of matters listed in a Schedule. These include criminal matters (such as offences under the Indian Penal Code, 1860), and civil matters such as parentage disputes, emigration or immigration, and transplantation of human organs.
- The Bill establishes a National DNA Data Bank and Regional DNA Data Banks. Every Data Bank will maintain the following indices: (i) crime scene index, (ii) suspects' or undertrials' index, (iii) offenders' index, (iv) missing persons' index, and (v) unknown deceased persons' index.
- The Bill establishes a DNA Regulatory Board. Every DNA laboratory that analyses a DNA sample to establish the identity of an individual, has to be accredited by the Board.
- Written consent by individuals is required to collect DNA samples from them. Consent is not required for offences with punishment of more than seven years of imprisonment or death.
- The Bill provides for the removal of DNA profiles of suspects on filing of a police report or court order, and of undertrials on the basis of a court order. Profiles in the crime scene and missing persons' index will be removed on a written request.

Key Issues and Analysis

- The Schedule lists civil matters where DNA profiling can be used. This includes "issues relating to establishment of individual identity." DNA testing carried out in medical or research laboratories can be used to identify an individual. It is unclear if the Bill intends to regulate such laboratories.
- The Bill requires consent of the individual when DNA profiling is used in criminal investigations and identifying missing persons. However, consent requirements have not been specified in case of DNA profiling for civil matters.
- DNA laboratories are required to share DNA data with the Data Banks. It is unclear whether DNA profiles for civil matters will also be stored in the Data Banks. Storage of these profiles in the Data Banks may violate the right to privacy.

- DNA laboratories prepare DNA profiles and then share them with DNA Data Banks. The Bill specifies the process by which DNA profiles may be removed from the Data Banks. However, the Bill does not require DNA laboratories to remove DNA profiles. It may be argued that such provisions be included in the Bill and not left to regulations.
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