SETTLING THE LANGUAGE FOR COOPERATIVE FEDERALISM

Context

- The 11th volume of the Report of the Official Language Committee headed by Union Home Minister was submitted to President recently.

- It has triggered angry reactions from the Chief Ministers of Tamil Nadu and Kerala, who have described the report as an attempt by the Union government to impose Hindi on non-Hindi-speaking states.

Committee of Parliament on Official Language

- It was set up in **1976** under **The Official Languages Act, 1963,** on a resolution to that effect being moved in either House of Parliament with the previous sanction of the President and passed by both Houses.

- The Committee is chaired by the Union Home Minister and has 30 members - 20 MPs from Lok Sabha and 10 MPs from Rajya Sabha.

- It reviews the progress made in the use of Hindi for official purposes, and make recommendations to increase the use of Hindi in official communications.

- The Committee submits its report to the President, who shall cause the report to be laid before each House of Parliament, and sent to all the State Governments.

- The first Report of the Committee was submitted in 1987.

> **As per Article 343 of the Constitution, the official language of the Union shall be Hindi in Devanagari script.**

Recommendations of the 11th volume of Report

- **Hindi as the medium of instruction in all technical and non-technical institutions**: For example, in IITs, IIMs and central universities by replacing current English language, while the **regional language** should be used in states where official language is not Hindi.

- **The removal of English**: As one of the languages in examinations held for recruitment to the Central services and ensuring requisite knowledge of Hindi among candidates.

- **The language of communication in the administration**: In northern states it should be Hindi and bureaucrats will be evaluated on their use of the language in the annual appraisals.
  - The letters, emails, events organised by the government and its departments, will have to be in Hindi.
- **Judiciary**: High Courts where proceedings are recorded in English or a regional language can make available translations in Hindi, since verdicts of High Court of other states are often cited in judgments.
- **Other recommendations**:
  - To give elementary knowledge of Hindi to students up to 9th class and to pay more attention to Hindi teaching examination.
  - Republish the Hindi dictionary by revising it.
  - **An Implementation Committee** should be constituted to review the progress of recommendations of the 1st to 11th volume of the Official Language Committee report.

  The States' concerns: The report is **divisive** in character and puts non-Hindi speaking people in a disadvantageous position.

The Committee's reply to the States' concerns

- The committee has clarified that its recommendations would exclude those states broadly outside the Hindi belt.
- Also, states like Tamil Nadu and Kerala are exempted as per The Official Languages Act, 1963 and the law is implemented only in 'A' category states, in which the official language is Hindi, e.g., Bihar, Haryana, HP, MP, UP, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan, etc.

Debate over official language in India

- **Constituent Assembly**: The origin of the linguistic row goes back to the debate on official languages in the Constituent Assembly where Hindi was voted as the official language.
  - The Constitution makers then decided that for a period of 15 years (1950 to 1965), **English** will continue to be used for all official purposes of the Union along with Hindi.

o But due to intense anti-Hindi agitations in the south, the President of India appointed first Official Language Commission in 1955 under the chairmanship of **G. Kher**.

o The Centre later announced that English would continue to be used even after 1965.

Arguments favouring Hindi as official language

- **Hindi as link language**: The people of India who speak different languages should communicate with each other in an Indian language rather than the language which colonialism imposed (English).

- **Promote freedom ideals**: Swabhasha (native language), Swadeshi (indigenous) and Swaraj (self-government) were the three foundations of Indian freedom movement. These 3 principles can be fully realised only by common native language.

Arguments against Hindi as official language

- **Limited speakers**: The number of Hindi speakers in India is only around 44%, which includes speakers of mixed-Hindi languages such as Awadhi, Maithali, Bhojpuri, etc. Thus, imposing Hindi may be detrimental to national unity.

- **English is a global language**: English is now accepted as the language of discourse across continents, and its colonial past is a matter of distant history.

- **Against federalism**: The Indian Constitution leaves it to the States to choose its language for official purposes. Thus, imposing singular language may be detrimental for longer term political harmony implied in cooperative federalism.

- **Affect learning abilities**: Imposition of Hindi language e.g., by removing English as one of the compulsory papers in recruitment exams can affect the learning abilities of non-Hindi speakers thereby affecting their self-confidence and future job opportunities.

RBI TO PILOT DIGITAL RUPEE FOR RETAIL USE FROM DEC 1

- The Reserve Bank of India's first pilot for a retail e-rupee, its version of the central bank digital currency (CBDC), will be launched on December 1.

- The pilot will cover select locations in a closed user group comprising participating customers and merchants.

Central bank digital currency (CBDC)

About

- CBDC is the legal tender issued by a central bank in a digital form.
- The digital rupee (e-Rupee) is the digital currency launched by Reserve Bank of India.
- It is the same as a fiat currency and is exchangeable one-to-one with the fiat currency, only its form is different.

India's approach to CBDC

- **Budget 2022-23 announcements**
- In her 2022-23 Budget speech, the Finance Minister announced the launch of the Digital Rupee, the name of the CBDC in India, from 2022-23
- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) will issue these in 2022-23.
- **Regulatory Framework**
- Currently, there is **no regulation or any ban** on the use of cryptocurrencies in the country.
- The Indian government is expected to introduce the **Crypto currency and Regulation of**

Official Digital Currency Bill.

- It is expected to regulate the role of investment, transaction and use of private crypto currencies in the country, including working of CBDC.
- **Launch of Digital Rupee**
- Based on the usage and the functions performed by the digital rupee and considering the different levels of accessibility **RBI has demarcated the digital rupee into two broad categories**: general purpose (retail) and wholesale.
- From November 1, 2022, RBI launched its first pilot project to use digital rupee in the **wholesale market for secondary trade in government securities** (G-secs).
- Wholesale CBDC has the potential to transform the settlement systems for financial transactions undertaken by banks in the government securities (G-Sec) segment, inter-bank market and

capital market more efficient and secure in terms of operational costs, use of collateral and liquidity management.

o From December 1, **retail digital rupee** (e-R) pilot will be launched.

▪ In effect, the retail e-rupee will be an electronic version of cash, and will be primarily meant for retail transactions.

▪ It will be potentially available for use by all — the private sector, non-financial consumers and businesses.

▪ It will be distributed through intermediaries, i.e., banks.

▪ Transactions can be both person to person (P2P) and person to merchant (P2M) using QR codes displayed at merchant's locations.

▪ It will not earn any interest and can be converted to other forms of money, like deposits with banks.

Why RBI is launching e-Rupee?

• The key motivations for exploring the issuance of CBDC include

o Reduction in operational costs involved in physical cash management,

o Fostering financial inclusion,

o Bringing resilience, efficiency and innovation in the payments system.

• It will add efficiency to the settlement system and boost innovation in cross-border payments space.

• Introducing its own CBDC has been seen as a way to bridge the advantages and risks of digital currency.

o Specially, concerns over money laundering, terror financing, tax evasion, etc. with private crypto currencies like Bitcoin, Ether, etc.

• Being interoperable with other payment systems, it will complement existing techniques like UPI, thus completing the mobile payments ecosystem.

News Summary:

• The RBI has announced that the **retail digital rupee (e-R) pilot** will launch on December 1 with four banks - State Bank of India, ICICI Bank, IDFC First Bank and Yes Bank.

SELECTED USERS MUST HAVE E-WALLE

- E-₹ pilot has roped in SBI, ICICI Bank, IDFC First Bank & Yes Bank
- The cities involved for now are Mumbai, New Delhi, Bengaluru & Bhubaneswar
- The pilot would be offered to closed user groups of customers & merchants in some locations
- Selected users must have digital wallet for e-₹ — digital

tokens of same denominations as current notes & coins
- Industry insiders say the E- would have images with ser numbers, but there will be anonymity for users too
- Phase 2 will see BoB, Unio Bank, HDFC Bank & Kotak Bank
- Nine more cities will also be added— Ahmedabad, Gangtok, Guwahati, Hyderabad, Indore, Kochi, Lucknow, Patna & Shiml

Key highlights

- The e-R would be in the form of a digital token that represents legal tender. It would be issued in the same denominations that paper currency and coins are currently issued.
- Like in the case of paper currency, the digital rupee would be distributed through banks.
- Users must use a digital wallet through a participating bank and store it on their mobile phone or device.
- Payments to merchants can be made using QR codes displayed at merchant locations.
- The pilot will test the robustness of the entire process of digital rupee creation, distribution and retail usage in real time.

HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE AND DISASTER RELIEF (HADR) EXERCISE 'SAMANVAY 2022'

Indian Air Force is conducting the Annual Joint Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) Exercise "Samanvay 2022" from 28th to 30th November 2022 at Air Force Station in Agra.

About:

- The exercise aims to provide a unique platform for the exchange of domain knowledge, experience and best practices with the participating Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) member countries.
- Various representatives of the ASEAN countries are participating in the exercise.
- The aim of the exercise includes assessing the efficacy of institutional Disaster Management structures and contingency measures.

- The exercise will promote a synergistic approach by involving various institutions like the Armed Forces, National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), Border Roads Organisation (BRO), India Meteorological Department (IMD) and the Civil Administration.
- The exercise would aid in the evolution of institutional frameworks for effective communication, interoperability, cooperation and their application for the successful conduct of HADR.

Disaster Management in India:

- In India, NDMA is the apex statutory body for disaster management.
- It was formally constituted on 27th September 2006, in accordance with the Disaster Management Act, 2005 with Prime Minister as its Chairperson.
- Indian defence forces, under the aegis of Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff (HQ IDS), have been carrying out HADR operations within the country as well as outside the country.
- The defence forces can deliver during various HADR contingencies because of their expertise in damage assessment, evacuation, setting up of relief infrastructure, restoring communication and providing medical facilities, distributing ration supplies, clothing etc.

INTERNATIONAL JAGUAR DAY

The National Zoological Park, New Delhi (Delhi Zoo) recently celebrated the International Jaguar Day.

About:

- International Jaguar Day is observed annually on **November 29.**
- International Jaguar Day was created to raise awareness about the increasing threats facing the jaguar and the critical conservation efforts ensuring its survival.
- It celebrates the Americas' largest wild cat as an umbrella species for biodiversity conservation and an icon for sustainable development and the centuries-old cultural heritage of Central and South America.

- This is the third largest Cat Predator of the World and an important species of Amazon Rainforest.
- International Jaguar Day also represent the collective voice of jaguar range countries, in collaboration with national and international partners, to draw attention to the need to conserve jaguar corridors and their habitats as part of broader efforts to achieve the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals.

Jaguars (Panthera onca):

- Jaguars (Panthera onca) are often mistaken for leopards, but can be differentiated due to the spots within the rosettes on their coats.
- While many cats avoid water, jaguars are great swimmers, and have even been known to swim the Panama Canal.

Range and habitat:

- Jaguars once roamed broadly from central Argentina all the way up to the southwestern United States.
- Since the 1880s, they've lost more than half their territory.
- Their main stronghold today is the **Amazon Basin**, though they still exist in smaller numbers through Central America as well.
- They're typically found in **tropical rainforests but also live in savannas and grasslands.**

Conservation:

- Jaguars are classified as **Near-threatened by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature.**
- The species has national protections in almost every country it's found, and trade in its parts is banned by **CITES**.

SHAKTI Policy

Ministry of Power recently launched scheme for Procurement of Aggregate Power of 4500 MW for five years under SHAKTI Policy.

About:

- The scheme will help states that are facing power shortage and help generation plants to increase their capacities.
- PFC Consulting Limited has been designated as the nodal agency. It has invited bids for the supply of 4,500 MW electricity.
- The supply will commence from April 2023.
- The utilities that have shown interest for the scheme are Gujarat Urja Vikas Nigam Ltd, Maharashtra State Electricity Distribution Company Ltd, Madhya Pradesh Power Management Company Ltd, New Delhi Municipal Corporation and Tamil Nadu Generation and Distribution Corporation Ltd.
- It is for the **first time that bidding is being carried out under B(v) of SHAKTI scheme.**

SHAKTI Scheme:

- SHAKTI, or Scheme for Harnessing and Allocating Koyala Transparently in India, was launched in 2018.
- It aims to provide coal to stressed power units which lack coal supply.

iNCOVACC

World's first Intranasal Vaccine iNCOVACC has recently received approval for Covid booster doses from Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI).

About:

- It is developed by **Bharat Biotech International Limited.**
- It was developed in partnership with **Washington University, St Louis**, which had designed and developed the recombinant adenoviral vectored construct and evaluated in pre-clinical studies for efficacy.
- The approval is under Restricted Use in **Emergency Situation for ages 18 and above in India, for heterologous booster doses.**

- iNCOVACC is a **recombinant replication deficient adenovirus vectored vaccine with a pre-fusion stabilised SARS-CoV-2 spike protein.**
- It is the world's first intranasal vaccine to receive both primary series and heterologous booster approval.
- The vaccine candidate was evaluated in Phases I, II and III clinical trials with successful results and has been specifically formulated to allow intranasal delivery through nasal drops.
- It is stable at 2-8 degrees Celsius for easy storage and distribution.

DIGITAL RUPEE

The Reserve Bank of India announced the launch of the first pilot for the retail digital Rupee on 1st December 2022.

About:

- Eight banks have been identified for phase-wise participation in this pilot.
- The first phase will begin with four banks including **State Bank of India, ICICI Bank, Yes Bank and IDFC First Bank in four cities across the country.**
- Four more banks, including **Bank of Baroda, Union Bank of India, HDFC Bank and Kotak Mahindra Bank** will join this pilot subsequently.
- The pilot would initially cover four cities, including **Mumbai, New Delhi, Bengaluru and Bhubaneswar and later extend to Ahmedabad, Gangtok, Guwahati, Hyderabad, Indore, Kochi, Lucknow, Patna and Shimla.**
- The scope of the pilot may be expanded gradually to include more banks, users and locations as needed.
- The pilot would cover select locations in a closed user group - CUG comprising participating customers and merchants.
- The digital Rupee would be in the form of a digital token that represents legal tender.
- Users will be able to transact with digital Rupee through a digital wallet offered by the participating banks and stored on mobile phones.

Transactions:

- Transactions can be **both Person to Person and Person Merchant.**

- Payments to merchants can be made **using QR codes** displayed at merchant locations.

- The digital Rupee would offer features of physical cash like **trust, safety and settlement finality.**

- As in the case of cash, **it will not earn any interest** and can be converted to other forms of money, like deposits with banks.

- The pilot will test the robustness of the entire process of digital rupee creation, distribution and retail usage in real time.

- Different features and applications of the digital Rupee token and architecture will be tested in future pilots, based on the learnings from this pilot.