

Current Affairs 15 February 2019 with PDF

Banking and Economy

Finance Ministry asks six public sector banks to improve on PCA parameters

- The Finance Ministry has asked the six remaining public sector banks, currently under Prompt Corrective Action (PCA), to improve on seven parameters to get the government's support for coming out of the PCA framework.
- "We have told these banks to improve upon net interest margins (NIMs), CASA (current account savings account), RWA (Risk Weighted Assets), NPA recognition, divergence (disparity in loan recognition), operating profit and non-core asset selling to be able to get our support for being out of the PCA," official sources said.
- Earlier, a Finance ministry official had said all the six banks were expected to come out of PCA over the next two quarters or by June.
- Out of a total of 11 banks put under PCA last year, three have already moved out while another two will merge with a stronger entity. This leaves six in the list of weak banks that also face restrictions on lending.
- The banks under PCA are Allahabad Bank, United Bank of India, Corporation Bank, UCO Bank, Central Bank of India and Indian Overseas Bank.

India-US CEO Forum and Commercial dialogue held; sets up Working Groups

- India and the United States on February 14, 2019 held the India-US CEO Forum and India-US Commercial Dialogue in New Delhi. The Union Minister for Commerce & Industry and Civil Aviation, Suresh Prabhu chaired the meeting.
- However, Wilbur Ross, the Secretary of Commerce of United States, could not attend the Dialogue and Forum because of unforeseen flight cancellation. He participated in the most of the sessions remotely through teleconference.
- Suresh Prabhu and Wilbur Ross held one to one bilateral telephone conversation and discussed various aspects of India-US trade and commerce relations.

India and states

Bihar Government announces universal old age pension scheme-Mukhyamantri Vridhajan Pension Yojna

- The state government of Bihar has announced a universal old age pension scheme called Mukhyamantri Vridhajan Pension Yojna (MVPY) for all people above 60 years of age.
- The scheme will come into force from April 1, 2019. Except those senior citizens who have retired from government service, all will be eligible for 400 rupees monthly pension irrespective of caste, religion or community.
- The currently old age pension scheme is applicable to only the BPL category.
- Besides this, the state's Chief Minister Nitish Kumar announced a pension of Rs 6,000 for journalists above 60 years of age.

AYUSH Minister launches e-AUSHADHI portal

- **Minister of State for AYUSH, Shripad Yesso Naik on February 13, 2019 launched the e-AUSHADHI portal, for online licensing of Ayurveda, Siddha, Unani and Homoeopathy drugs and related matters at New Delhi.**
- The portal aims to increase transparency, improve information management facility, improve data usability and increase accountability.
- Timelines will be fixed for processing of application through this portal with SMS and e-mail status updates at each step of the process.
- **e-AUSHADHI is an acronym for Ayurveda, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy Automated Drug Help Initiative.**

Cabinet approves revision in the list of Scheduled Tribes of Chhattisgarh

- The Union Cabinet has given its approval to the cabinet note on the proposal for **official amendments in the Constitution (Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes) Order (Amendment) Bill, 2016 so as to modify the list of scheduled tribes of Chhattisgarh.**
- The act will called the Constitution (Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes) Order (Amendment) Bill, 2019.
- After the Bill becomes an Act, member of the communities newly listed in the revised list of scheduled tribes of Chhattisgarh will also be able to derive benefits meant for STs under the existing schemes of the government.

Third Indo-German Environment Forum held in New Delhi

- The third **Indo-German Environment Forum with the theme "Cleaner Air, Greener Economy" was held in New Delhi** on February 13, 2019.
- **While inaugurating the forum, Union Environment Minister Dr. Harsh Vardhan said that India and Germany have had a rich cooperation engagement for the last 60 years** which extends to sectors such as natural resource management, urban environment protection, climate change adaptation and mitigation and innovative green technologies.
- The one-day event involved panel discussions and parallel sessions focused on challenges, solutions and necessary framework conditions of air pollution control, waste management and circular economy as well as the implementation of NDCs and SDGs based on Paris Agreement and Agenda 2030 of UN respectively.
- It saw participation from around 250 representatives of ministries, business and science as well as non-governmental organisations.

Appointments

Sushil Chandra appointed new Election Commissioner

- **CBDT Chairman Sushil Chandra was on Thursday appointed the new Election Commissioner ahead of the Lok Sabha polls, making the poll panel a three-member entity again.**
- The other two members of the **Commission are Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sunil Arora and Election Commissioner (EC) Ashok Lavasa.**
- Chandra, 61, an IRS-IT officer of the 1980 batch, will fill the vacancy caused by the retirement of O.P. Rawat, who demitted office as Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) late last year.
- Chandra is the second Indian Revenue Service (IRS) officer to be appointed to the Commission after T.S. Krishnamurthy, who went on to become the CEC in 2004.

William Barr sworn in as US Attorney General

- In United States, **William Barr was sworn for second time as the nation's Attorney General, taking the helm of the Justice Department as special counsel Robert Mueller investigates Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election.**
- Earlier, the Senate voted 54-45 to confirm his appointment. Mr. Barr, who also served as the Attorney General from 1991 to 1993 during President George H.W. Bush's administration, succeeds Jeff Sessions.
- As the country's chief law enforcement officer, Barr will oversee the remaining work in Mueller's investigation into potential coordination between the Kremlin and the Trump campaign and decide how much Congress and the public know about its conclusion.

Sports

Prajnesh Gunneswaran breaks into men's singles top 100

- India's **Prajnesh Gunneswaran has made it to the top-100 of Men's Singles Tennis rankings with a jump of six places that took him to 97.**
- With the feat, **Gunneswaran has become the third Indian player to break into the top-100 barrier in the past decade after Somdev Devvarman and Yuki Bhambri.**
- He reached the semi-finals of the ATP Chennai Challenger last week to ensure his entry into the coveted bracket. If he is able to maintain his rank inside top-100, it will secure him entry into Grand Slam singles main draws.

World

US House passes a resolution to withdraw US military support in Yemen

- **The US House of Representatives on February 13, 2019 approved a resolution that would end US support for the Saudi Arabia-led coalition in the war in Yemen.**
- The resolution would direct the US President to withdraw US military forces in or "affecting" **Yemen** within 30 days unless they are fighting al Qaeda or associated forces. It is the first time the House of Representatives has ever supported a war powers resolution.

Australia government loses bill blocking sick asylum seekers

- **Australian legislators have passed a landmark bill making it easier for asylum seekers, being held on remote Pacific islands, to get medical treatment in the country.**
- This is the first time in decades the government has lost a vote on its own legislation in the lower house as the bill was passed with an opposition amendment.
- The bill is expected to sail through the upper Senate later this week after which it will become a law.