To include Tulu in the Eighth Schedule

What is the issue?

- There is a strong case for adding Tulu, among other languages in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution.
- Placing all deserving languages in the Constitution on an equal footing will promote social inclusion and national solidarity.

What is the current situation?

- According to the 2001 Census, India has 30 languages that are spoken by more than a million people each.
- Additionally, it has 122 languages that are spoken by at least 10,000 people each.
- It also has 1,599 languages, most of which are dialects.
- These are restricted to specific regions and many of them are on the verge of extinction.
- India must accommodate this plethora of languages in its cultural discourse and administrative apparatus.

What are the Constitutional provisions?

- **Article 29** of the Constitution provides that a section of citizens having a distinct language, script or culture have the right to conserve the same.
- Both the state and the citizens have an equal responsibility to conserve the distinct language, script and culture of a people.
- Among the legion of languages in India, the Constitution has 22 languages. They are protected in Schedule VIII of the Constitution.

What about the languages that aren't protected?

- Many languages that are kept out of this favoured position are in some ways more deserving to be included in the Eighth Schedule.
- For example, Sanskrit, an Eighth Schedule language, has only 24,821 speakers (2011 Census).
- Manipuri, another scheduled language, has only 17,61,079 speakers.
- However, many unscheduled languages have a sizeable number of speakers: Bhili/Bhilodi has 1,04,13,637 speakers; Gondi has 29,84,453 speakers; Ho, 14,21,418; Khandeshi, 18,60,236; Khasi, 14,31,344, etc.

What is the status of Tulu?

- Tulu is a Dravidian language whose speakers are concentrated in two coastal districts of Karnataka and in Kasaragod district of Kerala.
- The Census reports 18,46,427 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.
- Robert Caldwell, in his book, called Tulu as one of the most highly developed languages of the Dravidian family.
- The cities of Mangaluru, Udupi and Kasaragod are the epicentres of Tulu culture.
- At present, Tulu is not an official language in India or any other country.
- Efforts are being made to include Tulu in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution.

What does the Yuelu Proclamation say?

- The Yuelu Proclamation, made by the UNESCO in 2018, says that the protection and promotion of linguistic diversity,
    1. Helps to improve social inclusion and partnerships,
    2. Helps to reduce the gender and social inequality between different native speakers,
    3. Guarantee the rights for speakers of endangered, minority, indigenous, non-official languages and dialects to receive education,
    4. Enhance the social inclusion level and social decision-making ability.
- India has a lot to learn from the Yuelu Proclamation.

What would be the advantages?

- If Tulu is included in the Eighth Schedule, it would get recognition from the Sahitya Akademi.
- Tulu books would be translated into other recognised Indian languages.
- Members of Parliament (MPs) and Members of State Assemblies (MLAs) could speak in Tulu in Parliament and State Assemblies, respectively.
- Candidates could write all-India competitive examinations like the Civil Services exam in Tulu.
- Placing of all the deserving languages on equal footing will promote social inclusion and national solidarity.
- It will reduce the inequalities within the country to a great extent.
- So, Tulu, along with other deserving languages, should be included in the Eighth Schedule in order to substantially materialise the promise of equality of status and opportunity mentioned in the Preamble.

Source: The Hindu

