

9pm

Compilation

21st to 27th September, 2020

9 PM Compilation for the Month of September (Fourth week), 2020

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General Studies Paper - 1

General Studies - 1

1. Women and women leadership

Source: The Hindu

Syllabus: GS-1- Women

Context: It is necessary to get rid of inborn biases about the efficiency of women in roles of authority.

How did countries with female leaders do during the pandemic?

- **Countries with women leaders:** Germany, Taiwan and New Zealand are the countries that have women heading their governments and have managed the pandemic much better than their neighbours.
- **Female leaders more effective:** A recent study by researchers in the United States reports that **States which have female governors had fewer COVID-19 related deaths**, possibly relatively because female governors acted more decisively by issuing earlier stay-at-home orders.

What are the roles of women in India's gram panchayat?

- **Effectiveness of female leadership:** they perform significantly better than men in implementing policies that promote the interests of women. This was proven in another study conducted by Nobel Laureate Esther Duflo and co-author Raghavendra Chattopadhyay.
- **State's mandate:** Their study was made possible by the 1993 amendment of the Indian Constitution, which mandated that all States had to reserve **one-third of all positions of pradhan for women**.
- **Role of pradhans:** The study concluded that *pradhans* invested more in rural infrastructure that served better the needs of their own gender.
- For instance, women *pradhans* were more likely to invest in providing easy access to drinking water since the collection of drinking water is mainly the responsibility of women.

When did women get voting rights globally?

- **Voting rights in India:** Women were allowed to vote from 1950 onwards and so could participate on an equal basis with men from the first general election of 1951-52.
 - This is in striking difference to the experience in the so-called "mature democracies" of Western Europe and the United States.
 - **Voting rights in the US:** 1920.
 - **Voting rights in Europe:** During the First World War.

Are women in India underrepresented?

- **Female representation in India:** The current government at the Centre is not very far from the typical gender composition in Indian central and State governments. Female members make up only about **10% of the total ministerial strength**.
- **The underrepresentation of female Ministers** in India is also reflected in the fact that Ms. Banerjee is currently the only female Chief Minister.
- **The underrepresentation of women in Indian legislatures:** The 2019 election sent the largest number of women to the Lok Sabha. Despite this, women constitute just over 14% of the total strength of the Lok Sabha.
- **India ranks 143 out of 192 countries** for which data are reported by the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

What is the status of women's bill in India?

- **Establishment of quotas for women:** Since women running for elections face numerous challenges, it is essential to create a level-playing field through appropriate legal measures.
- Mandated reservation for women in gram panchayats was established in all major States since the mid-1990s.
- **Women's reservation bill:** The Bill was first presented to the Lok Sabha by the H.D. Deve Gowda government in 1996 and male members from several parties opposed the Bill on various grounds.
- Afterwards, various governments have reintroduced the Bill in successive Parliaments, but without any success.

What are the steps needed to reduce prejudice?

- **Third of party nominations for women:** The major party constituents of the NDA and UPA alliances can sidestep the logjam in Parliament. This will surely result in increasing numbers of women in legislatures and subsequently in cabinets.
- **Increasing female representation in policy making:** This will go a long way in improving perceptions about female effectiveness in leadership roles.
- **This decreases the bias among voters against women candidates,** and results in a subsequent increase in the percentage of female politicians contesting and winning elections. Such quotas have both a short-term and long-term impact.

General Studies Paper - 2

General Studies - 2

1. Hate speech

Source- [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus- GS 2- Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation

Context- The Sudarshan News case is a chance to infuse clarity in our legislation by identifying the distinction in merely offensive speech, hate speech and the exceptional cases.

What is Sudarshan News Case?

Recently, the Supreme Court of India enjoined a Hindi language television Channel, Sudardhan News, from continuing its broadcast as object of the programme is to vilify Muslim community.

The show added a number of evidently false statements-

- It claimed that the upper age limit for Hindus attempting the civil service examination was 32 years, while the age limit for Muslims was 35.
- Muslims were entitled to nine attempts at the examination when Hindus were entitled only to six.

Supreme Court remarks- It was "insidious" to use the freedom of press to make "rabid" allegations and mount an attack on a religious minority community.

What is hate speech?

The term hate speech is understood as any kind of communication in speech, writing or behaviour, that attacks or uses pejorative or discriminatory language with reference to a person or a group on the basis their collective identity, be it race, ethnicity, religion, gender or sexuality.

The hate speech attacks two key tenets of democratic republic-

- The guarantee of equal dignity to all
- The public good of inclusiveness.

What are India's hate speech laws?

India prohibits hate speech by several sections of the Indian Penal Code, the Code of Criminal Procedure, and by other laws which put limitations on the freedom of expression and Article 19(2) of the Constitution gives all citizens the right to freedom of speech and expression but subject to "reasonable restrictions" for preserving inter alia "public order, decency or morality".

Section 153 (A) of Indian Penal Code

Whoever

- By words, either spoken or written, or by signs or by visible representations or otherwise, promotes or attempts to promote, on grounds of religion, race, place of birth, residence, language, caste or community or any other ground whatsoever, disharmony or feelings of enmity, hatred or ill-will between different religious, racial, language or regional groups or castes or communities, or
- Commits any act which is prejudicial to the maintenance of harmony between different religious, racial, language or regional groups or castes or communities, and which disturbs or is likely to disturb the public tranquility.

Section 295 (A) of Indian Penal Code

Whoever

- With deliberate and malicious intention of outraging the religious feelings of any class of [citizens of India], [by words, either spoken or written, or by signs or by

visible representations or otherwise], insults or attempts to insult the religion or the religious beliefs of that class,
Shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to [three years], or with fine, or with both.

The grounds that speech must reach a level of incitement to be criminalized are-

1. The utterance dispute must go beyond advocacy.
2. The second ground requires a re-imagination of our hate speech laws.

Way forward-

The Supreme Court must chisel its contents into a feasible, constitutionally committed model. When it becomes evident that the basic objective of a broadcast is to evoke hatred and to vilify a vulnerable minority the law must find a way to foil the harm. A lot will ride on how the Court strikes this balance — for hate speech, once uttered, not only leaves little room for restitution but can also ramify to serve all manners of undemocratic ends.

2. Peace in Afghanistan

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Syllabus: GS2- India and its neighbours

Context: Recently, intra-Afghan talks commenced in Doha.

What are the factors that should be considered during intra-Afghan talks?

- **Polity:** The balance of Afghan society and polity which was shaken in 1973 with the monarchy's departure has never been restored need to be discussed.
- **Instability:** The country has witnessed the overthrow of the monarchy, a nationalist dictatorship, communist rule, the mujahideen era, the Taliban's Islamic Emirate and the current Islamic Republic.
- **Sovereignty:** It has also experienced almost three decades of the presence of foreign forces and outside interference, especially from Pakistan.
- **Social factors:** sharpening ethnic divides, extremist ideologies and theologies, large migration to foreign lands, internal displacement, spread of narcotics and violence.
- **Concerns of Youth:** over the past 15 years, a section of Afghan urban youth linked to the world through the social media wants more open systems within an Islamic framework.

What are the challenges present before Afghanistan?

- **Taliban is in a position of strength:** The Afghan political class had failed to consolidate the republic and to keep Taliban confined to a small area.
- **Taliban-Pakistan nexus:** The Taliban with Pakistani support has shown remarkable resilience and has gained great confidence.
- **No concrete steps taken against Taliban-Pakistan:** To effectively tackle the nexus, American troops would have had to enter Pakistan territory and carry out a sustained operation. That, none of the three presidents who had to deal with the Taliban after 9/11 were willing to do.
- **Flawed system:** The 2019 presidential election was deeply flawed. The declaration of the incumbent president, Ashraf Ghani, as victor was dubious.
- **Disunity among negotiators:** Ghani was forced to accept his rival Dr Abdullah as the head of the Peace and Reconciliation Council which implies that he would have to share authority in **decision-making in the peace negotiations.**
- **Issues of religious interpretation and social codes:** The constitution of the Islamic Republic, adopted in 2004, begins with the Islamic shahada and commits the state

to the “Holy religion of Islam”. Whereas the Taliban accept Hanafi jurisprudence like the majority of Afghans but believe that the Islamic sharia in its extreme Deobandi interpretation along with distorted Pashtun social codes.

- **Violence by Taliban to show influence:** it would be unrealistic to expect the Taliban to agree to a ceasefire though they may calibrate violence as the talks progress.
- **Fears among Non-pushtun:** At its core the Taliban is Pushtun. However, it has tried to put forward a pan-Afghan image and has succeeded in making some headway in a few non-Pushtun areas. However, old fears remain strong among many non-Pushtun especially in the cities.

What needs to be done?

- **Consensus building:** the search for durable peace and stability will not succeed unless all parties and, in some cases their foreign patrons, especially Pakistan, are willing to give up personal gains.
- **Flexible approach:** The world has been transformed and both sides need to be flexible. The Kabul elite would also have to make **concessions on political issues and social codes.**

What was India’s position?

- **Solution should be Afghan led:** Indian policy-makers **refused to modify their Afghan approaches** even as it became increasingly evident that the Taliban had gained ground in the country and was getting international legitimacy.
- **Diplomatic contradictions:** India failed to strengthen its ties with Kabul and at the same time opened links with the Taliban while all other major powers were doing so.

What India should do now?

- India should continue with its traditional policy of fostering close ties with any legitimate Afghan government.
- In the interests of Afghanistan and the region, India should stress for a successful peace talks that their failure would be catastrophic for the Afghan people and the region.

3. Basic Structure Doctrine

Source: [IndianExpress](#)

Syllabus: **GS2:** Separation of Powers between various organs Dispute Redressal Mechanisms and Institutions.

Context: Recently, Kesavananda Bharati passed away whose name is synonymous with the famous doctrine of basic structure propounded by the Supreme Court.

What is basic structure doctrine?

- Basic structure doctrine holds that Parliament cannot touch certain parts of the Constitution that are fundamental to democracy, even with the consent of Legislature at the Centre and states by following the procedure established by law.
- The basic structure doctrine was coined in **1973. (Kesavananda Bharti case)**

What is the significance of Basic Structure doctrine?

- **Limitations on Parliament:** The doctrine holds that there are certain implied limitations on Parliament’s amending power although these are not explicitly mentioned.
- **Aim:** To save democracy from the hands of a tyrannical few and to protect the fundamental rights of the citizen.

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- **Torch bearer:** The doctrine continues to be valued by Judiciary and is recurrently applied in significant cases.

What are the issues arising due to Basic structure doctrine?

- **Not immune:** It was defeated within two years of the judgement when **Indira Gandhi suspended all fundamental rights**.
- **Not defined:** In the absence of any certainty as to what constitutes the “basic structure” it is left to the wisdom of the SC judges to decide upon it on **a case to case basis**.
- **Regularly tweaking the doctrine:** Newer features have been constantly added to list that is “basic” which gives them the immunity that the basic structure enjoys. For example, the **Right to Education was introduced by the 86th amendment** in the form of Article 21A.
- **Unlimited powers to Judiciary:** for example, the Court recently relied on the basic structure to strike down the 99th constitutional amendment act (National Judicial Accountability Commission). The Bill was passed by two third majorities of both Houses of Parliament and 20 state legislatures
- **Jolt to fundamental rights chapter:** The basic structure has now **frozen Part III of the Constitution** but crucial fundamental rights were violated during! 950-51. **For example**, the First Amendment heavily diluted the rights to property and free speech and expression These valuable aspects of democracy cannot now be debated by Parliament

It is certainly important for the Constitution to have **certain non-negotiable principles** but at the same it must be **narrow and comprehensively identified to protect democracy** from the hands of elected parliamentary representatives.

4. Abraham Accords [peace for peace deal] and India

Source- [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus- **GS 2-** Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India’s interests.

Context – Israel, United Arab Emirates and Bahrain have announced an agreement that will lead to reshaping the order of West Asia politics.

What is UAE-Israel peace deal?

1. **Normalize relations-** Israel, United Arab Emirates and Bahrain agreed to a historic deal to normalize their long-strained relations.
2. **Importance-** This move is significant because, with the exception of Jordan and Egypt, Israel does not have diplomatic relations with Gulf Arab states owing to its long-standing conflict with Palestinians.
3. **Under the accord-** The agreement comes after Israel’s Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu agreed to suspend plans to annex parts of the West Bank, one that had been bitterly criticized by these Gulf Arab states, Europe and a few other countries around the world.
4. **As per the deal, the UAE and Bahrain will establish-**
 - Embassies and exchange ambassadors.
 - Working together with Israel across a range of sectors including tourism, trade, healthcare and security.
5. The agreement is also known as the **Abraham Accords**.

What are the significances of the agreement?

The significance of the Abraham Accords-

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1. **Diversifying geographies**- The UAE and Bahrain can become the centre to Israeli exports of goods and services to diverse geographies.
2. **Providing skilled man-power**- Israel has the potential to supply skilled and semi-skilled manpower to the GCC states, particularly from the Sephardim and Mizrahim ethnicities, many of whom speak Arabic.
3. **Business perspective**- Israel is known as the start-up nation and its stakeholders could easily fit in the various duty-free incubators in the UAE.
4. **Sharing Technology**- Israel has niche strengths in defence, security and surveillance equipment, arid farming, solar power, horticultural products, high-tech, gem and jewellery, and pharmaceuticals.
5. **Religious diplomacy** - The Abraham Accords also open the door for Muslims around the world to visit the historic sites in Israel and to peacefully pray at Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, the third holiest site in Islam.
6. **To alienate Iran** - The agreement could pave the way for the region's Sunni Arab kingdoms and the Jewish-majority Israel enhancing regional cooperation against their common foe, Shia Iran.
7. **Domestic politics of USA**- This agreement brokered by US is seen as diplomatic win of President Trump ahead of the November elections, where he seeks re-election.

What are India's interests in Israel and Gulf Countries?

1. **Energy** – The Gulf region is the world's largest oil-producing region accounting for 34% of world production, 45% of crude oil exports and 48% of oil proven reserves and India has been heavily dependent on energy supplies from the region.
2. **Military and strategic ties with Israel** - The rise of Islamic extremist terrorism in both India and Israel has generated a strong strategic alliance. Even Israel is the second largest source of military defence equipment for India.
3. **Diaspora**- India expatriates have constituted a substantial share of regional labour market of Gulf nations.
4. **Remittance from the region**- Over eight million Indian diaspora in the Gulf remitting annually nearly \$50 billion.
5. **Multifaceted and socioeconomic engagements**- Indians are also the biggest stakeholders in Dubai's real estate, tourism and Free Economic Zone.
6. **Geographical location**- The Gulf region is strategically significant due to its enormous energy resources, trade route links to different parts of the world.

Way forward

Israeli foray into the Gulf has the potential to disrupt the existing politico-economic architecture India has carefully built with the GCC [Gulf Cooperation Council] states. India would have to be on its guard to monitor and even pre-empt any threat to its interests in the Gulf. Moreover, India needs to manage the economic fallout of the Israel - GCC synergy.

5. Dilution without adequate deliberation

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus: Gs2: Government Policies and Interventions for Development in various sectors and Issues arising out of their Design and Implementation.

Context: Recently, the government withdrew three Bills related to labour laws and replaced them with new ones.

Background

- In 2019, the government introduced **four labour codes** as Bills to replace 29 existing laws.
- These Codes dealt with regulation of wages, occupational safety and health, social security, and industrial relations.
- The **Code on Wages** was passed by Parliament last year.
- The reports on the other three Bills were presented by the Standing Committee on Labour recently.
- Government has replaced these three bills that were introduced in 2019 with a new bill and it has been reintroduced in Lok Sabha.

What is need of labour laws?

- To regulate labour and the employer-employee relationship.
- To **simplify and rationalise the complex regime of labour laws.**

What are the major changes in new bills?

1st change-2020 Bills raise several thresholds:

- **The Factories Act of 1948** defines any manufacturing unit as a factory if it employs 10 workers (and uses electricity) or 20 workers (without using electric power).
- These thresholds are **being raised to 20 and 40 workers**, respectively.
- **The Industrial Disputes Act of 1947** requires any establishment employing over 100 workers to seek government permission before any retrenchment.
- The threshold has been raised to 300, with the government empowered to raise it further through notification.
- **The Industrial Employment (Standing Orders) Act of 1946** requires employers to formally define conditions of employment under them if they have at least 100 workers. The 2020 Bill has increased this threshold to 300 workers.

2nd Change-More power to Government:

- The Code on Industrial Relations governs working conditions, trade unions, retrenchment and layoffs, dispute resolution, and establishes industrial tribunals.
- The 2020 bills provide the government with the **power to exempt establishments from any or all of their provisions** in public interest

3rd Change: Compromises safety

- The Code on Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions specifies leave and maximum work hours, requires health and safety norms including adequate lighting and ventilation and welfare measures.
- The 2020 Bill allows **the State government to exempt any new factory from its provisions in the interest of increased economic activity** and employment generation.
- It provides Wide discretion to the State government to exempt new factories from basic safety and welfare norms.
- However, the Factories Act permitted such exemption for a limited period of three months only during a “public emergency”.

4th change- Restricts contract labour:

- The 2020 Code **prohibits the employment of contract workers** in any core activity, and specifically permits employment in a specified list of non-core activities including canteen, security and sanitation services.

4th changes- Widens the scope for women employment

- The 2019 Bill on Occupational Safety allowed the government to **prohibit employment of women in undertaking operations that could be dangerous to their health and safety.**
- The 2020 Bill removes this power to prohibit employment of women and instead allows the government to require employers to provide adequate safeguards.

What are the issues remaining to be resolved?

- There is no clarity whether such features which are left on the government, should be hard-coded in the Acts.
- The **issues of relaxations for small enterprises** to reduce their compliance burden is unresolved.
- **Safety standards** should apply to everyone while others that provide job security could be based on the size of the firm. However, the Occupational Safety Bill exempts small establishments from its purview.

The need of the hour is that there is **wider scrutiny and public discussion** on these Bills as several changes are introduced. The bills must be referred to the Standing Committee for due deliberation.

6. India- China and Russia

Source- [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus- GS 2- : Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

Context- India decided to pull out of Russia's Kavkaz 2020 military exercise due to India-China tensions along the Line of Actual Control.

How are the India- Russia relationships at present?

India's Russia engagement has remained steady till now-

1. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh visits-

- He visited Russia in June for the 75th Victory Day parade.
- He was in Moscow again on September 4 to attend the SCO Defence Ministers' Meeting, which also formed the setting for the bilateral meeting with his Chinese counterpart.
- These visits saw detailed discussions around furthering the India-Russia defence relationship alongside the promise to accelerate certain supplies based on New Delhi's requirements.

2. **India's External Affairs** Minister S. Jaishankar attended the online **BRICS foreign ministers meeting** on September 4 and also travelled to Moscow for the SCO Foreign Ministers meeting.

3. India will host the SCO Heads of Government Meeting in November.

How India- China conflicts are going to affect India- Russia relation?

1. **Uncompleted communications-** In June, the Russia-India-China Foreign Ministers meeting, convened at Moscow's initiative and coming days after violent border clashes that led to the death of 20 Indian soldiers, ended without an official communiqué.
2. **Russia's diplomatic role-** Moscow has been playing a quiet diplomatic role during the recent border clashes without actively taking sides.

Thus, it is hardly surprising that on-going conflict between two prominent members has given rise to concerns about its impact on India-Russia ties.

What are the roles of multilateral forums?

The multilateral forums are playing important role as they foster continued India-Russia cooperation at the bilateral and multilateral levels.

1. The increasingly divergent foreign policies of its members pose challenges of agenda-setting and overall scope.
2. It also underscores that at this moment of flux, countries such as India and Russia are keeping all their options open.

What are the challenges for India and Russia cooperation in the Asia?

1. **Balancing power**- The cold war between China and US, has led Russia to qualitative improve its ties with Beijing as the superpower looks to partner with a strong external player that can balance the West.
2. **US policies**- The U.S. policy towards Russia has further pushed the latter towards China, strengthening the rising power, to the detriment of both Indian and western interests.
3. **Bilateral relationship**- This makes it difficult for India and Russia to pursue fully convergent policies; it does not preclude the bilateral relationship from retaining its relevance.

Way Forward

India and Russia are pragmatic players looking at maximising their strategic manoeuvrability, which understandably has led them to align with different powers based on their respective geopolitical positioning. Both recognise the value of having a diversified portfolio of ties and that makes it imperative that seeming contradictions in their respective policies are managed pragmatically while taking a long-term view of the strategic partnership.

7. UNSC reforms

Source: [The Indian Express](#)

Syllabus: GS-2- International relations

Context: Current political fragmentation is an opportunity for India to build a more dynamic coalition.

How has the pandemic affected the UN?

- The coronavirus has exposed the **structural weakness of the system (UN)** that was set up amidst the ruins of the Second World War.
- The UN has been unable to respond effectively to the once-in-a-century global crisis triggered by the coronavirus.
- **China blocked a serious discussion** on the origin and sources of the crisis at the UN Security Council. While the World Health Organisation did move a bit in that direction, the US was not satisfied with the outcome and walked out of the forum.
- UN was meant to be a concert of great powers who had a permanent seat in the Security Council and **cooperation among the great powers was the precondition** for its success in the security arena.

How should India restructure its traditional approach towards UN?

There are huge possibilities for enhancing India's multilateral standing

- **UN is more than the Security Council:** While the UNSC was dysfunctional, India developed a multilateral agenda of its own, from decolonisation and disarmament to a new international economic order and mobilised considerable political support for it.

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- The past underlines the possibilities for shaping the global discourse in the present.
- **Basic relationship between national interest and multilateralism:** The primary objective of India's present multilateralism must be to ensure its territorial integrity.
- Delhi has worked mechanisms like **FATF** to mount pressure on Pakistan to stop supporting cross-border terrorism in India.
- **Writing the new rules and reshaping the global order:** India needs to strengthen its recent turn to a more dynamic coalition building, while reclaiming its role in the Non-Aligned Movement.
- India's new engagement with the US on building like-minded coalitions acquires much significance in this regard.

Way forward

- Raising Delhi's contribution to at least one per cent might convince its partners that India is serious about pursuing a more vigorous multilateralism as the shares of China, Japan and the US are at 8, 10 and 22 per cent respectively while India has 0.7 per cent share.

8. E learning in India

Source: The Hindu

Syllabus: GS-2- Education

Context: Online learning may not guide a revolution in poorly performing educational systems.

What is the state of education during COVID-19?

- Our education system was never very efficient even in the best of times. The COVID-19 pandemic has reduced it to be extremely biased and faulty.
- There are several sets of guidelines and plans issued by the government, the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) and the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) for online education.
- The Internet space is crowded with learning schemes, teaching videos, sites and portals for learning opportunities.

What are the key issues in the education system during pandemic?

1. Exacerbation of inequality

- **The plight of millions of migrant labourers** proved the point adequately.
- The children of the same people will be at a disadvantage as they are deprived of resources.
- **Government plans:** The government began plans for students with no online access only by the end of August.
- These plans assume that semi-literate or illiterate parents will teach their children, community involvement, mobile pools which is not possible.
- **Inaccessibility:** Whatever online or digital education is available is for students with only online access. Thus, digital India may become even more unequal and divided than it already is.
- **The quality of online teaching-learning:** The NCERT declares in its Learning Enhancement or LEG that 60-70% students, teachers and parents consider learning satisfactory.
- However, its survey asks a single question on the feeling of students using the criteria of 'joyful to burdensome'. But it says nothing about the quantum and depth of learning.

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- **Technical issues:** Listening to lectures on the mobile phone, copying from the board where the teacher is writing, frequent disconnections and/or having blurred video/audio can hardly and naturally connect the child's present understanding with the logically organised bodies of human knowledge.
- 2. No focus on concepts**
- **Conceptual understanding missing:** In the science and mathematics videos, in particular, there are many misconceptions and doubts. The emphasis is more on 'tricks' to remember for success in an examination than laying the stress on conceptual understanding.
 - **Khan academy:** The government of Delhi uses videos from here and American educators have questioned the quality of teaching and have pointed out inadequate or plainly wrong concepts, particularly in mathematics.
- 3. The thrust, post-COVID-19**
- **The NCERT's LEG** states that "COVID-19 has created a situation which demands transformation in school education and the transaction mechanisms in school education may go through a drastic change.
 - **Alternative modes:** It recommends that "alternative modes of education for the whole academic session including Internet-based, radio, podcast, community radio, IVRS, TV DTH Channels, etc." should be developed.
 - **Increasing inadequacy:** This transformation of schools in the current understanding of pedagogy, suitability of learning material and quality of learning provided through IT will further devastate the already inadequate system of school education in the country.
- 4. Institutional environment**
- The institutions function sub-optimally, students themselves create an environment that supports their growth morally, socially and intellectually in conversations and interactions with each other. The online mode of teaching completely shut out this opportunity.

What should be the way forward?

- It requires well-connected, regular efforts that are incrementally building to help the child focus his attention and to provoke him to distinguish and to discriminate, and develop a habit of staying on task.
- This requires help from someone who knows the child as well as understands the objective of education.

9. Uniting to combat COVID-19

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus: Gs2: Issues Relating to Development and Management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health.

Context: The growth prospects for the world's fastest-growing region, South Asia, appear grim due to the pandemic.

What is the current scenario?

- In April, the World Bank predicted that growth in the region would be 1.8%-2.8% this year.
- According to World meter, in South Asia, the Maldives has the highest number of tests per million population followed by Bhutan.

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- Countries facing a surge in cases, such as India, could have flattened the curve by increasing the number of tests.
- The countries that have conducted more tests have been more successful in containing the pandemic.

Low mortality in south Asian region

- India has the second largest number of COVID-19 cases in the world (over 55 lakh) after the U.S. Whereas Bangladesh has around 3.5 lakh cases.
- However, South Asian countries are experiencing a lower mortality rate despite having a higher infection rate.
- Probable reason could be due to the region's tropical climate, protection offered by a tuberculosis vaccine (BCG), exposure to malaria, and a weaker strain of the virus.
- Epidemiological studies and the World Health Organization's reviews have been sceptical about the hypotheses of low mortality doubting Issues of data reliability and under-reporting:

Government responses in South Asia:

- **Lock down measure:**
 - India resumed its economic activities on a limited scale following a strict lockdown imposed in late March and lasting through April.
 - Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka did the same after an extended lockdown.
 - Bhutan and the Maldives have managed to largely contain community transmission and avoid prolonged lockdowns due to a higher testing rate.
- **Stimulus Packages:**
 - India announced a \$22.5 billion relief package to ensure food security and cash transfers to save the livelihoods of an estimated 800 million people living in poverty.
 - Bangladesh announced a stimulus package worth about \$8 billion in addition to an earlier \$595 million incentive package for export-oriented industries.
 - Pakistan unveiled a comprehensive fiscal stimulus package of \$6.76 billion.
- **Monetary measures:** The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) slashed the repo and reverse repo rate to create liquidity for businesses. Pakistan's central bank also slashed the interest rate.
- **Regional cooperation:** the Maldives government mobilised a \$161.8 million emergency fund. It also announced a short-term financing facility for the tourism industry. Sri Lanka signed an agreement with the RBI for a currency swap worth \$400 million to support domestic financial stability. The Afghan government allocated about \$25 million to fight COVID-19.

Issues in Implementation

- **Issue of distribution:** India and Bangladesh announced financial and material stimulus packages, distribution concerns remain unaddressed. For instance, the **Open Market Sale in Bangladesh** appears ineffective as there is **no physical distancing**.
- **Political tampering and poor governance:** In India, the announcement of the lockdown gave citizens less than four hours to prepare.
- **Hoarding of supplies:** In India, it caused a shortage in the market. The lockdown disrupted supply chains. It was a similar situation in Nepal and Pakistan.

What needs to be done?

- **Coordinated response mechanism:** leaders of the region need to look beyond narrow geopolitical rivalry and come together to work towards a well-coordinated response mechanism.
- **Operationalise SAARC COVID-19 fund:** It was created following Indian Prime Minister's call to South Asian leaders, but governments are yet to decide on its modus operandi.
- **Leverage existing institutional framework:** For instance, **SAARC Food Banks** could be activated to tackle the imminent regional food crisis, and the **SAARC Finance Forum** can be activated to formulate a regional economic policy response.

10. Vulnerable section – Homeless people and their mental health

Source- [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus- GS 2- Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes; mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections

Context- In the current situation of COVID-19, the most affected are homeless persons and the ultra-poor.

What are the challenges faced by the homeless persons with mental illness?

Homeless persons living with mental illness have following challenges-

1. Abject poverty, conflict, natural or man-made disasters.
2. Lack of access to health and mental health care.
3. Lack of adequate nutrition.
4. Social hardships, disruptions in care-giving, domestic violence which led to shunning of them by their family and kinships.
5. Ridicule by the society, which lead to isolate them from mainstream society and occupying a lowly place in society's hierarchical structure.
6. Risk of sexual violence, violent victimisation, assault and long-term incarceration.
7. Their experience of loneliness and hyper-segregation contributes to their low sense of self-worth, shrunken group identity and weakening their collective ability to influence change.
8. They are the most long stay patients in State mental hospitals.

What are the actions taken for the homeless persons?

United Nation-

- The UN set up a fund of \$2 billion to alleviate the distress of the ultra-vulnerable, including those living with disability or chronic illness.

Best Practices - Tamil Nadu Government-

- Taking cognisance of the mental health needs of homeless persons, the government will take to scale **Emergency Care and Recovery Centres (ECRC)**
- **District level-** ECRC will support the treatment and community inclusion of this vulnerable section in 10 districts (in addition to the five districts where ECRCs were set up in 2018).
- **Facilities available-** Three hundred bed spaces will be earmarked for homeless persons in psychosocial distress, with a capacity to service more than 1,000 people a year, in smaller and integrated care units in district hospitals and/ or social care centres.
- **Better living-** Early enrolment into care may result in reduction of exposure to harm, injury and starvation, and better prognosis.

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- **Removal of stigma-** An integrated approach may also help address stigma associated with this group.
- **Reducing homelessness-** Facilitation of social needs care and livelihoods may reduce the recurrence of episodic homelessness, critical to sustaining and enhancing well-being gains.
- **Three sectors** — the government, development and corporate sectors — will partner to ensure that the lives of those who live on the fringes matter.
- **The mental health team-** That anchors the Centre may also lend further support to the District Mental Health Programme, and offer counselling support to address mental health issues in the context of the pandemic.

Way Forward

The action taken by UN Secretary is a powerful start to acknowledge the need to focus on minority mental health. The need for the homeless persons at the present situation is to incorporate heterogeneity of experiences and multimodal approaches to care and nurture them in an environment of patience, love and affection, not by out-casting them.

11. Pandemic Helping to Recognize Real Education

Source: [LiveMint](#)

Syllabus: Gs2: Issues Relating to Development and Management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

Context: The Pandemic disruptions have revealed the core of education and highlighted the invaluable role of true learning in fulfilling aspirations.

How brutal inequity, fragility and injustice in School education exist?

- For the vast majority of children, the shutting down of schools is a change in the trajectory of their lives.
- Losses of education is much longer and even permanent.
- Deprivation arising from shut schools is also a **loss of assured meals**.
- Innumerable girls face social pressure to drop out of school and get married.
- Uncertainty is also **eroding the hard-won social consensus** that sending children to school must be the norm.

How education is a social-human endeavour?

- Physical presence, attention, thought and emotions, all must be sewn towards learning goals, step-by step, often back-and-forth, and differently for each student.
- Online education is ineffective because of the absence of intense **verbal and non-verbal interactions**.
- Lack of access to the net and online resources.
- There is deep realization of the social-human nature of education.
- State after state that was enthusiastic about online education in May this year has backtracked and tried to implement other modes of student engagement.
- Such as teachers systematically going to the communities where **students live and organizing classes with small groups**, usually out in the open.

How pandemic has revealed usurious face of Private schools?

- Most private schools are bothered about making money and not about education or people.
- Commercialisation of schools have pushed every lever to squeeze money.
- For instance, demanding fees for “re-admission”, insisting on parents buying net-access devices, lobbying for the charade of online education, and more.

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- Private schools have exploited their teachers even more than usual, cutting or not paying their salaries arbitrarily.
- Public school have attempted a range of things to keep their students engaged because their goal is public service.
- Only a small percentage of schools run and owned by private bodies, which are truly public spirited.
- Education is effective only when it is truly animated by the spirit of public service

Why teachers are central to education?

- With teachers, education can happen anywhere, even under a tree without any other resource, as thousands of dedicated public-school teachers have shown.
- Teaching is not only about **subject knowledge and pedagogy**.
- It is about patience and dedication, about **empathy and judgment**, and also about balancing all this in the service of the **overall development of the child**.
- Teaching is a matter of deep human relationships and bonds.
- Pandemic have also made many realize how poorly we do for our teachers.

Why an education system is the most precious of things for any society?

- It shapes the future of a society and at the most basic level, the education system is also a vast child-care system too.
- The disruptions in our rhythms of social and economic life have made it clear that for the aspirations and promises of our society to be fulfilled, education is the fundamental social process.

India does not need a once-in-a-century pandemic with its devastating human toll to reveal all this about education. India needs to focus on basic character of education to make us more humane, and more together.

12. Culture of Secrecy

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Syllabus: Gs2: Important Aspects of Governance, Transparency and Accountability

Context: Paradoxically, In India the culture of secrecy is growing and sometimes justified in the name of transparency.

How culture of secrecy is evolving in India?

Examples of Culture of secrecy in different areas:

- **Judiciary: Sealed envelope has become a modus operandi**
 - **Case1: Related to political funding:** a three-judge bench headed by the then Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi in 2019 directed political parties to submit the details of donations received to the ECI in sealed cover.
 - **Case 2: Related to National Register of Citizens:** The Assam administration to show the progress it was making in the implementation of the National Register of Citizens submitted reports in sealed covers to Justice Gogoi.
 - **Case 3: Related to Sexual harassment at workplace:** Justice Gogoi was accused of sexual harassment. The panel formed by the SC found “no substance in the allegations” on the basis of a report it had received in a sealed cover.
- **Electoral bonds:**
 - Introduced in 2017, it allowed anonymous donations to political parties and to protect the **privacy of the donors**.

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- However, The Election Commission of India (ECI) criticised the opacity of this financial mechanism and described it as “a retrograde step”.
- As per ECI, it would **prevent the state** from ascertaining whether a political party has taken any donation in violation of provisions under **Section 29B of the Representation of the People Act**. (Sec 29B prohibits the political parties from taking donations from government companies and foreign sources).
- **Limiting CIC powers:** In 2019, government amended the RTI Act to limit the power of the CIC. The five-year fixed tenure for the Chief Information Commissioner and information commissioners was abolished.
- **Dilution of the Whistleblower’s Protection Act:** Whistleblowers can now be prosecuted for possessing the documents on which the complaint has been made.
- **Non-publication or alteration of some statistical information:** for instance, the National Statistical Commission and the Chief Statistician of India faced a credibility crisis when the new GDP series was released. The 75th round survey of consumer expenditures was not released which had found that the percentage of citizens living below the poverty line had increased between 2011-12 and 2017-18.

What are the implications of growing culture of secrecy?

- **Vaguely defined Public interest:** Issues flagged by whistleblowers have to be in “public interest” and should not be “affecting the sovereignty and integrity of India”, related to “commercial confidence” or “information received in confidence from a foreign government”.
- **Reducing institutional independence:** growth rate figures were changed and the National Crime Records Bureau has been affected by delays and deletions. For instance, lynchings and “religious killings” are no longer enumerated and the number of members of religious communities in the police forces is not listed.
- **Weakened the Right to Information Act:** the government did not appoint a Chief Information Commissioner for a year and did not fill vacant information commissioner posts in the Central Information Commission (CIC) between 2016 and 2018.
- **Huge pendency:** The backlog of pending appeals had reached 30,000 cases in late 2019 as the CIC has become a rather dysfunctional body.
- **Refusal of information:** For instance, queries about phone tapping are not responded. In 2016-17, the home and finance ministries rejected close to 15 per cent of the applications they received while the RBI and public sector banks rejected 33 per cent.
- **Reduces accountability:** For instance, RBI refused to give any information about the decision-making process that led to demonetisation.
- **Secrecy affects decision making:** To conceal the truth would make things worse because the actors in the economy would not be in a position to adjust to the real situation.

Transparency is necessary for making the economy work and to maintain democratic polity.

13. COVID-19- A spotlight on democracy

Source- [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus- **GS 2-** Indian Constitution—historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments, significant provisions and basic structure.

Context- The unprecedented COVID-19 crisis has resulted in major social, political and legal challenges globally.

What is international day of democracy?

The International Day of Democracy provides an opportunity to review the state of democracy in the world. Democracy is as much a process as a goal and only with the full participation of and support by the international community, national governing bodies, civil society and individuals, can the ideal of democracy be made into a reality to be enjoyed by everyone, everywhere.

- **Declared on-** The International Day of Democracy is celebrated around the world on 15 September each year.
- **Observed by-** It was established through a resolution passed by the UN General Assembly in 2007, encouraging governments to strengthen and consolidate democracy.
- **Theme for 2020-** COVID-19- A spotlight on democracy.

What are the main concerns in many countries in the context of COVID-19?

- **Liberty issues-** Measures to control the flow of information, crackdown on freedom of expression and press freedom against an existing background of shrinking civic space.
- Arrest, detention, prosecution or persecution of political opponents, journalists, doctors and healthcare workers, activists and others for allegedly spreading “fake news”.
- **Aggressive cyber-** Policing and increased online surveillance.

What are the key features of Indian Democracy?

India democracy credited as world's largest democracy with following key features-

- There are multiparty elections with universal suffrage.
- The smooth changeover in government after election.
- The existence of an independent press and judiciary, and the guarantee of civil liberties justiciable in courts of law.

However, to an extent it amounts to admiring a form of government for its own sake without concern for the socioeconomic outcomes that are produced.

Why there is dystopia in India's democracy?

Dystopia- Dystopia was imagined as a place where the people experience great suffering as they fend for themselves under the watchful eyes of an authoritarian state.

Life satisfaction- An important metric as it is based on people's perceptions on what matters most, including the responsiveness of the government to their needs.

- **UN's World Happiness Report 2020-** India ranked 144 out of the 153 countries evaluated.
- **UN's Human Development Index 2019-** India ranked 129th out of 189 countries in which the main element of ranking were Health and Education.
- The criterion that in a democracy the people must be satisfied with their life is given very little thought these days.

Ways to be free democracy-

1. **Build by the people itself-** The institutions that enable persons to lead fulfilling lives are built by the people themselves.
- **Example- United States in 1960s-** Saw movements for black empowerment, women's emancipation and sexual liberation. These movements were remarkably successful in the outcomes they achieved, while receiving no support from the U.S. state.

2. **Role of the states-** Laws must not constrain liberty when it is self-affirming and must change when it is realized that they do.

Way forward-

Liberty and capability are conjoined as the ultimate aspiration in a democracy so that people can participate in their own governance and government should do some endowment of individuals with capabilities that allow them to undertake the functioning or do the things that they value.

14. The foreign hand: On FCRA amendments

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Gs2: Important Aspects of Governance, Transparency and Accountability

Context: Recently, the amendments to the FCRA were passed in Parliament.

What are the key amendments?

- Bill proposes to make **Aadhaar a mandatory identification document** for all the office-bearers, directors and other key functionaries of an NGO or an association eligible to receive foreign donations.
- The Bill proposes to include **“public servant” and “corporation owned or controlled by the government”** among the list of entities who are not eligible to receive foreign donations.

What are the concerns associated with the recent amendments?

- **Over-regulation of NGO:** New regulations put **onerous conditions** on civil society organisations, and educational and research institutions that have partnerships with foreign entities.
- **No discussion on amendments:** The amendments were not discussed with the stakeholder and passed with limited discussion in Parliament.
- **Against Constitutional rights:** The International Commission of Jurists has said the new law was incompatible with international obligations and India's own constitutional provisions on rights.
- **Discourage social work:** Thousands of NGOs serve extremely disadvantaged sections. Only presumption of guilt against them all, followed by control, amounts to throwing the baby out with the bathwater.
- **Selective barriers:** the over-regulation appears to be towards select categories of global ideas and ideals such as environmentalism, human rights and civil liberties.
- **Reduce investments and technology flow:** As a growing economy, India has been proactive in seeking global capital and technology.
- **Against Indian cultural ethos:** Prime Minister has often cited the ancient Indian ethos of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam as the framework for its global engagement. It does not go well with India's legitimate ambitions to be a global player

Why such amendments?

- **Misuse of foreign funding:** In Parliament, the government alleged that foreign money was being used for religious conversions. For instance, In 2017, the government barred American Christian charity, Compassion International.
- **Loss to the GDP:** during the UPA that an official report even quantified the GDP losses allegedly caused by environmental NGOs, insinuating a foreign conspiracy against India.
- **To enhance transparency and accountability:** The annual inflow of foreign contribution has almost doubled between the years 2010 and 2019, but many

recipients of foreign contribution have not utilised the same for the purpose for which they were registered or granted prior permission under the said Act.

What can be the way forward?

- **Delink** religious propagation and conversions from the question of foreign funding.
- There are **adequate laws against conversion** by inducement. It cannot be decided against the touchstone of the source of funds, native or foreign.
- Seamless sharing of ideas and resources across national boundaries is essential to the functioning of a global community.
- Civil societies should not be discouraged unless there is reason to believe the funds are being used to aid illegal activities.
- Civil societies **supplements government works** and sometimes reach to the sections where government cannot.

15. Extent of media regulations

Source- [The Indian Express](#)

Syllabus- GS 2- Development processes and the development industry

Context- The Supreme Court underlined the need for laying down clear guidelines, and their effective implementation, for the media against hate speech in the Sudharshan TV case.

What happened when the government attempted to regulate the media?

The government has made several attempts in the past to regulate the media but all such attempts came crashing down in the wake of public outcry. The last attempt was-

- **April 2018-** When the Information and Broadcasting Ministry issued a circular stipulating that the accreditation of a journalist found to have “created and/or propagated” fake news will be suspended or permanently cancelled.
- The next 15 hours witnessed a huge furore against the circular, culminating in the I&B ministry revoking the circular.

What are the possible forms of checks and regulations to stop abuse of freedom of speech?

Government regulations-

- Currently, the government has own regulation policies. Such as-
 - a. Cable Television Network Rules of 1994
 - b. Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act of 1995
 - c. The Policy Guidelines for Up linking of Television Channels from India of 2000

Thus, the provisions within give it the power to block the transmission and retransmission of any channel in the country. Its effectiveness is a matter for critical examination.

1. **Self-regulation-** It is though ideal, is easier said than done and continues to be a pipedream in India.
2. **Independent regulation-** The main concern is it will be set up by whom. If the government does it, the whole world is ready to pounce on it.
3. **Self-cum-independent regulation-**

News Broadcasters Association (NBA)

- It was set up in 2008.
- It further set up the **National Broadcasting Standards Authority (NBSA)** with Justice J. S. Verma as its chairman.

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- **Condition-** Justice J. S. Verma agreed to chair NBSA on the express condition that this will be an independent body and that he would brook no interference from the parent body- NBA.

National Broadcasting Standards Authority

- It was formed with the object to foster high standards, ethics and practices in news broadcasting and take action against defaulters.
- Its role has been acknowledged by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and the Election Commission.
- **Shortcomings-**
 - a. Its writ extended only to its members, which was limited due to its voluntary membership. Those who were unhappy with a verdict found it easy to walk out.
 - b. It lacks statutory backing from the government.
 - c. Extending its jurisdiction to non-members as well.
 - d. Empowering it to take punitive action like suspending and cancelling licences.

What are the several indigenous models to preserve the independence of the media?

1. **Empowering the NBSA-** With statutory backing, more stringent powers and extending its writ to all news channels.
2. **Supreme Court appointed monitoring panel** — like the one it set up in 1998 to monitor encroachments in Delhi which worked very effectively till the members became too old and the Court just forgot about them after appointing them.
3. **Press Council model-** An equal failure, spineless and toothless, despite a retired SC judge heading it.
4. **Like the Election Commission** — a constitutionally-appointed body which was empowered by the SC in 2002 as a regulator to enforce the model code of conduct evolved by the political parties voluntarily for self-discipline.

Way Forward

The Supreme Court should see this case as an opportunity to change the image of inaction and insensitivity it has unfortunately acquired during the last couple of years. Both Social media and television are needed to be dealt with a suitable and independent model with reasonable powers. Both needs to be dealt with decisively and urgently as unrestricted powers is always dangerous. Therefore, some restrictions on media will be able to keep the country's social harmony undisturbed.

16. The new NEP 2020 and its flaws

Source- [The Indian Express](#)

Syllabus- GS 2- Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

Context- The NEP has been charged with fostering inequalities and most importantly replacing constitutional values with banal ideas such as seva, ahimsa, swacchta, sacrifice and courtesy.

What is NEP 2020?

New National Education Policy 2020- Recently cabinet approved a new national education policy which will refine and re-engineer classroom transactions with an aim to:

1. **To reduce curriculum content** – It will enhance essential learning, critical thinking and more holistic experiential, discussion and analysis based learning.

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- 2. New pedagogical structure** - It also talks about a revision of the curriculum and pedagogical structure from a 10+2 system to a **5+3+3+4** system design in an effort to optimize learning for students based on cognitive development of children. The new model likely to look like this-

Foundational stage	3-8 years	3 years : play school/anganwadis 2 years : primary school
Preparatory Schooling Stage	8-11 years(grade 3 to 5)	Experiential learning across the sciences, mathematics, arts, social sciences, and humanities.
Middle school	11-14 years in grades 6 to 8	a subject-oriented pedagogical learning style
Secondary level	14-18 years(grades 9 and 10)	Creativity, away from rote learning

- 3. New assessment pattern** - It will compel educators to make pedagogical practices more child-centered. Such an approach will allow students to make mistakes, take risks, be creative and move away from rote learning.
- 4. Building soft skills-** Envisaging more towards empathy, resilience, conflict resolution and relationship building skills, which offer the key to success in a rapidly changing world.

What is Kothari Commission?

In order to remove the defects in the field of education, the government appointed a new education commission to advise the government on the national pattern of education along with general principles and policies for the development of education at all stages.

What are the flaws in new NEP 2020?

- 1. Load of studies-** Reducing load of studies is mistaken for a mechanical reduction of syllabus/ textbook content, despite the mental load of incomprehensibility — a situation where a lot is taught but little is learnt or understood.
- 2. Integrated curriculum-** The dilemma for textbook developer/ teacher of what needs to be integrated, resort to random addition/ deletion of content.
- 3. Lack of time-** If most of the teachers' time is spent on collecting evidence, record keeping and saving their skin because they know that students' assessment will be used to assess their performance, then no amount of formative assessment (FA) will improve students' learning.
- 4. Lack of clarity-** Confusing the notion of critical thinking with de-contextualized logical thinking whereby textbooks have no mention of conflicts/contradictions which children experience in their daily lives.
- 5. Mistakes in programmes-** Mistake of "fun in learning" for "fun of learning" thereby reduce the meaning of learning/pedagogic processes to song and dance and banal activities.

Way forward-

It is important that NEP's fundamental flaws are acknowledged and addressed with immediacy. The aim of new NEP 2020 should not be limited to imparting children with foundational skills of literacy, numeracy and competencies but removing structural disadvantages, thus enabling them to live a meaningful life, simultaneously strengthening our society as a secular, democratic space.

17. Cess pool: On CAG report of Centre's accounts

Source: [The Hindu](#)

GS2: Functions and Responsibilities of various Constitutional Bodies.

Context: The audit of the Union Government's accounts tabled in Parliament revealed that the Finance Ministry retained over 40% of all cess collections in 2018-19 in the Consolidated Fund of India (CFI).

What are key issues highlighted by CAG?

- **Cess were made part of general pool:** A large chunk of the money collected as cess to the general pool making it difficult to ensure that the funds were used for specific purpose.
- **Diversion of cess:** As many as 35 different cesses, levies and charges yielded ₹2.75-lakh crore in the year. Around ₹1.64-lakh crore was remitted to the specific reserve funds for which these cesses were levied.
- **No new dedicated fund was created:** A new 4% Health and Education Cess on income tax was partly deployed towards education, but no fund was created for health. Similarly, Social Welfare surcharge levied on customs.
- **GST compensation:** The GST Compensation Cess, over which the Centre and several States have now locked horns with ₹47,272 crore was not remitted to its rightful account over the first two years of GST.
- **Changed statistics:** diversion helped understate India's revenue and fiscal deficit numbers.
- **Disturbed fiscal federalism:** compensation cess transfers to States were accounted as Grants-in-aid to States which distorted the Centre-States fiscal math.
- **Over-reliance on Cesses:** Centre's reliance on cesses and surcharges to raise revenue has increased significantly since the States' share of the divisible pool of taxes was raised to 42% in line with the 14th Finance Commission's suggestions.
- **Cesses complicates taxation:** It is arguable that such levies are in sync with a nation trying to simplify its tax regime.

Other similar incidents:

- Over 10 years, not a paisa of the ₹1.25-lakh crore of cess collected on crude oil was transferred to an oil industry development body it was meant to finance.
- Part of the hefty cess collected as additional excise duties on petrol and diesel to finance roads and infrastructure was similarly retained in the CFI.

What should be done?

- **Centre need to rebuild bridges:** a climate of distrust is hovering over India's federal polity. For instance, the GST compensation dispute or the passage of Farm sector Bills without taking States on board.
- **Rationalisation of Cesses:** for example, the excise duties on petrol and diesel need to be rationalised to provide stimulus to citizens whose incomes and job prospects have been reduced by the pandemic and a shrinking economy.
- **Ensure transparency:** It is needed in the management of cess receipts so that Parliament and the people do not need to wait for audit findings to learn of this subterfuge.

18. Parliamentary committees

Source- [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus- GS 2- : Parliament and State legislatures—structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers & privileges and issues arising out of these.

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Context- The past few years only 26% of the Bills have been referred to the standing committees and have been passed without scrutiny by parliamentary standing committees.

What parliamentary oversight mechanisms are followed in India?

The parliamentary scrutiny of the regulators can take place through the following means-

- Question hour
- Discussion in Parliament
- Parliamentary committees

Some of the means of legislative oversight, such as annual submission of reports by regulators to Parliament, are provided in enactments.

What is Parliamentary Committee?

The Parliamentary committees are established to study and deal with various matters that cannot be directly handled by the legislature due to their volume. They also monitor the functioning of the executive branch.

Types of Parliamentary committees-

1. **Ad hoc committees-** These committees are temporary committees established by the board of director to address a specific issue. The latter are created on an ad hoc basis as the need arises and they are dissolved after they complete the task assigned to them.
2. **Standing or permanent committees-** A committee consisting of Members of Parliament. It is a permanent and regular committee which is constituted from time to time according to the provisions of an Act of Parliament or Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business.
 - Due to capacity and time constraints, it is not possible for MPs to scrutinize all policies and legislation on the floor of the House. It was felt that by forming smaller groups of members to examine the subjects would ensure deeper deliberation and debate. The standing committees are of the following kinds-
 - **Department related standing committees (DRSC)** - Aligned with specific ministries examine their performance and budgets apart from Bills or subjects related to their respective ministries. Currently there are 24 DRSC that comprise members from both Houses of Parliament.
 - **Financial standing committees (FSC)** –Primarily responsible for scrutinizing the expenditure priorities of the government, suggest measures to improve efficiency in spending and performance of Public Sector Undertakings.
 - **Administrative committees-** Primarily responsible for ensuring day-to-day activities of the legislature are planned in consultation with the members.

What are the current issues and relevance?

1. **Fewer Bills Referred** - To strengthen the lawmaking process, it is important that all Bills are examined by Standing Committees before passage. This ensures thorough scrutiny of the law. The government has shown extreme reluctance to refer Bills to Select Committees of the Houses or Joint Parliamentary Committees.
 - The 14th and 15th Lok Sabha saw 60 percent and 71 percent of bills referred to committees. This number has dipped sharply to just 27 percent in the 16th Lok Sabha.
 - The last Bill referred to a Joint Parliamentary Committee was The Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement (Second Amendment) Bill, in 2015.

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- Some of the most momentous Acts of Parliament in recent years such as the radical overhaul of Article 370 were not processed by any House committee.
- 2. Centre's willfulness-** The government used its majority in both the Houses of Parliament and steamrolled the Bills (with hardly any discussion), amid the predictable din and noise that a fragmented Opposition could mount.
 - 3. Longer Tenure for Members-** The committee system allows a smaller group of legislators to develop technical expertise on a particular subject and ensure better deliberation. In the present format, the members are nominated to a Standing Committee for one year. However, shifting of committees every year defeats this purpose.
 - 4. Speaker's traditional non-partisan role-** Very few Speakers, with exceptions such as G.V. Mavalankar, P.A. Sangma and Somnath Chatterjee, have taken cudgels with their party leaders to uphold the autonomy of the House.

Way forward-

The need of the hour is for greater and effective utilization of Parliamentary Committees to strengthen Parliament as a deliberative body which can ensure effective oversight. The government must make amends and restore the democratic majesty of Parliament.

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1. The genuine concerns of farmers

Source- [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus- GS 3- Major crops-cropping patterns in various parts of the country, – different types of irrigation and irrigation systems storage, transport and marketing of agricultural produce and issues and related constraints

Context- The Prime Minister blamed the Opposition parties for misleading farmers about the three Bills on agriculture in Parliament.

What are the bills and their purposes that have been protested by the farmers?

The farmers have been protesting against the bills ever since it was promulgated as ordinances in June. The bills are following-

1. The Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, 2020.
2. The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill, 2020.
3. The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill, 2020.

The purposes of the bills are-

- The Bills aim to do away with government interference in agricultural trade by creating trading areas free of middlemen and government taxes outside the structure of Agricultural Produce Market Committees (APMCs) along with removing restrictions of private stockholding of agricultural produce.
- Farmer organisations also agree that there is excessive political interference.
- There is need for reform as far as functioning of mandis are concerned.

What is the issue in implementing these bills?

Several reforms at the level of the central government as well as at the State level have been introduced and welcomed by farmers. However, the issue is not about the Bills-

1. **Avoiding stakeholders-** The government has failed to have or hold any discussion with the various stakeholders including farmers and middlemen.
2. **Rejecting the role of state government-** The government didn't consult the bills with State governments even though the subject of trade and agriculture are part of subjects on the State list.
3. **Corporation of agricultural sector-** The farmer organisations see these Bills as part of the larger agenda of corporatisation of agriculture and a withdrawal of government support.
4. **APMC Mandis and MSP-** The immediate concern has been the attempt to weaken the APMC mandis and eventual withdrawal of the Minimum Support Prices (MSP) guaranteed by the government.
5. **Ignoring poor farmers conditions-** The preference for corporate interests at the cost of farmers' interests and a lack of regulation in these non-APMC mandis are cause for concern.

Therefore, the attempt to pass the Bills without proper consultation and given the track record of this government on many issues including demonetisation of 2019, the introduction of Goods and services tax, and many more adds to the mistrust among various stakeholders including State governments and farmers.

What are the roles of APMCs Mandis and the concerns for farmer?

1. Plays an important role of price discovery essential for agricultural trade and production choices.

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2. Most farmers are familiar with the functioning of mandis and see it as an essential part of agricultural trade despite shortcomings.

Farmers concerns-

- Farmers in these Punjab and Haryana have genuine concern about the continuance of the MSP-based public procurement given the large-scale procurement operations in these States
- After the abolition of mandis, farmers in Bihar on average received lower prices compared to the MSP for most crops.
- Despite the shortcomings and regional variations, farmers still see the APMC mandis as essential to ensuring the survival of MSP regime.
- The vilification of APMCs and the middlemen who facilitate trade in these mandis is a poor reflection of the understanding of functioning of agricultural markets as The middlemen are a part of the larger ecosystem of agricultural trade, with deep links between farmers and traders

Way Forward

The government should make reforms in its rising input costs, so that farmers do see the market providing them remunerative prices. At the same time, ad hoc interventions by the government such as raising import duties on masur and a ban on onion exports should be taken into reconsideration to erase the suspicion about the intent of the government to leave the price discovery mechanism on the market. If government will take steps for the benefit of the farmers, instead of pushing them into a miserable condition alone. Only then farmers may end their protests and place their trust on the government and its stated objectives of these reforms.

2. Aatma nirbhar action plan required

Source: [The Indian Express](#)

Syllabus: GS-3- Economy

Context: Action plans should be prepared to ensure success of Atma nirbhar Bharat project.

What is ANBA and why is there a need for it?

- India's dependence on other countries has been exposed in several areas ever since the spread of covid-19. The country should **now refocus on manufacturing, and be self-reliant.**
- **The Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan (ANBA) was announced as a part of the post-pandemic economic revival package.**
- **Rs 20 lakh crore (10 per cent of India's GDP)** was set aside for the purpose.
- **Self-reliance and self-esteem:** Only a self-reliant nation can serve the diverse needs of its population and provide them with choices.
- A content nation can also contribute to the welfare of other counties with a sense of self-pride.
- **It is a rare opportunity for India to reinvent itself, economically** because of the COVID-related pressures and the unfortunate border tensions with its largest import partner.
- **India imports goods from China worth \$65 billion**, these imports include raw materials, components and intermediates required in producing finished goods by a large number of enterprises across several sectors, including MSMEs.
- For example, **the pharmaceuticals sector imports nearly 70 per cent of its raw material and drug intermediates.**

Is the thought of reviving the local born out of unrealistic enthusiasm?

- **It may not be feasible to replace all Chinese imports** in the near future.
- It may also be **debatable if the end goal is to replace the entire chain of imports from a country.**
- Some economists pick up, **a majority demand for dumping all that is of Chinese origin, may be forgotten soon.**
- Experts and industrialists do state that the ANBA is an excellent initiative and gives India the opportunity to board on the self-reliance drive.
- **A major part of the Vocal for Local mission rests on the MSMEs which are struggling for survival.** However, the reforms announced as part of the ANBA should put them on a stronger footing. Some reforms are:
 - Collateral free credit
 - Expanding the scope of the sector
 - An online market place exclusively for it
 - The proposal that governments will pick up equity stakes in enterprises that show growth potential

What are the positives of ANBA?

- **Creation of large scale employment opportunities** for both the skilled and unskilled workforce.
- **A stronger manufacturing base will also lead to positive derivatives** related to the supply-purchase of local raw material and capacity building of allied manufacturing units.
- **ANBA has a well-defined charter.** Even, then implementing the reforms would require innovative ways to overcome day to day obstacles and challenges.

What are the steps to be taken?

- **An action plan should be drawn by the Niti Aayog** listing all possible categories of targets under the ANBA and the Vocal for Local Mission.
- **A monitoring agency will review and suggest course correction** to ensure that no delay is allowed to build.
- **Each state/UT will develop an action plan in consonance with the umbrella plan with a similar agenda and a healthy mechanism.**
- A separate **organisation created by each state will be responsible for the implementation of the action plan**, as well as running all related operations on a day-to-day basis.
- It will **also conduct regular studies to identify local and global market trends and invite competitive solutions** to meet market demands.
- Each district will work out a more detailed action plan, and license of responsibilities for ground level officers and departments.
 - **The district action plan should incorporate the setting up of certain bodies/groups.**
 - **An autonomous authority to be headed by an additional DM** or a technocrat to manage and pilot the implementation of the listed measures on ground, and be solely accountable for timely delivery.
 - **Scaling up and setting up of a certain number of companies/ industries/ manufacturing units** over a fixed time period.
 - **The authority will also set up a 24X7 facilitation centre to help the existing and the newcomer companies** and resolve their doubts and disputes.

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- This agency will be responsible for **creating public awareness amongst all stakeholders.**
- Another group in the **district authority will be tasked to lay out detailed norms and guidelines on safe working conditions in each sector.**
- It will be responsible for matters related to **workers' families welfare, particularly in respect of health, education, and decent civic conditions.**
- The state/ UT and district authorities should be **headed by a few hand-picked officers.**
- **The state government will facilitate regular interactions amongst district authorities and help develop sector-specific strategies.**

Way forward

The ANBA is a mission to empower the people of India. People of the country and executive machinery should keep their faith in the spirit and mandate of this mission. It will in all likelihood become a benchmark of how governments and their various organisations can work in a mission mode.

3. Future of Work - Industry 4.0

Source: [The Indian Express](#)

Syllabus: GS-3- S&T

Context: Technological change need not cause a destruction of productive jobs and that is why a plan is required for industry 4.0

How will technological change affect the jobs in India?

- **Size of youth:** India's global significance in mastering the future of work and employing the largest global unit of 820 million youth is huge.
- **Government policies and labour markets:** They should sustainably manage the Fourth Industrial Revolution which triggered "storm of creative destruction" in employment.
- **The potential of capital-labour substitution** and the new ecosystem of software/AI/automation-mediated work will overturn 100-year-old ideas of work and employment.
- **Lack of jobs:** The ILO warns that the future may not hold enough jobs for everyone and 428 million workers in low middle-income countries like India may not find new jobs.
- **Change in the nature of jobs:** In 5-10 years, 10 per cent of human jobs will be substitutable and 50-70 per cent of jobs could be partially automated.
- Two-thirds of jobs in developing countries including India are prone to automation.
- **Tech Economy 4.0 "transformers"** in India's world of work include robotics, AI, the Internet of Things, cloud computing, supply chain 4.0, 3D printing, big data, digital payments, retail, health, education and professional services.
- **The most-affected labour-intensive sectors** include textiles, finance, construction, hospitality, travel, tourism, media, electronics, mining, agriculture, transportation and entertainment.
 - **The Indian ICT sector**, another major employer, is susceptible to AI/robots replacing workers in its major IT export markets.
 - **The retail sector**, the largest employer of lower skill youth, is job shedding as e-retail accelerates and human jobs in logistics, warehousing and delivery services are being robotised.

Explain the char dham roadmap for steering technological change?

We could steer technological change to four powers of possible destinations or Char Dhams:

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- **Gyaan Dham** is establishing a national observatory for scoping the tech-to-work equation and its trajectory.
- **Databases on existing and future trends**, sector by sector, need to be created.
- India's future of Tech-Economy 4.0/ employment tie using a human power by 2030 compass and hinge relevant strategies towards that.
- **Kaushalya Dham** means **nurturing "human capabilities"** for Tech-Economy 4.0 work. To meet labour market needs, potential skill gaps must be closed through the NEP and comprehensive training infrastructure.
- **Suniyojan Dham** involves transformative investments in multi-stakeholder ecosystems to empower the youth and women through future-of-work transitions.
- It is vital to raise institutions, job-rich sectors and MSMEs, close the rich-poor, rural-urban and gender gap in access to high-quality digital and physical infrastructure and tools.
- **Samajik Nyaya Dham** means ensuring a just transition through a new social compact among all stakeholders and a universal social protection floor. A human-centred and equity-based approach in future labour market policies and standards is needed.
- **Local and rural production**, care and green economies and social and health services must be fostered as job generators.
- **Upakram Dham** involves taking special initiatives enabling India to leverage the world's third-largest ICT workforce to pole-vault into Tech4 excellence.
- India's diversity, scale for neural net, data richness, huge base of engineers, mathematicians and coders of AI available or trainable at scale, and decent ecosystems in ICT metros are critical assets.

Way forward

Following this Char Dham roadmap, we could avert the alarming prospect of a job-poor future. India's ambition of sustainably transitioning to Tech 4.0 future of work is recognised in PM Modi's Atmanirbhar Bharat.

4. India's jobs conundrum

Source: [LiveMint](#)

Syllabus: **GS3:** Indian Economy and issues relating to Planning, Mobilization of Resources, Growth, Development and Employment.

Context: A country progresses when small and mid-sized firms grow, and create jobs alongside. India over the years is facing the **problem of inadequate mid-sized firms**.

How are job creation and firms' size related?

- **Contribution of Large firms:** McKinsey Global Institute (MGI) in a recent report titled India's turning point, an economic agenda to spur growth and jobs points out that India has around 600 large firms which earn a revenue of more than \$500 million per year.
- **Higher productivity:** The labour productivity of large firms is 11 times higher than that of the overall economy.
- **Growth in export and employment generation:** These firms are also responsible for 40% of exports and employ 20% of the people in the direct formal workforce.

Why does India have fewer large firms?

- **India's missing middle of mid-sized firms:** It's the mid-sized firms which grow into large firms, and create jobs and competition along the way.

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- **Slow corporate growth:** slow corporate growth led to slow economic growth and a situation where only 77 mid-sized firms became large between 2012 and 2018.
- **Chain reaction:** since 2017, India's GDP is free falling and in 2018, the revenues of large Indian firms amounted to 48% of nominal GDP compare to 58% in 2012.
- **Comparison with Other countries:**
 - The contribution made by large firms in other emerging economies like China, Malaysia and Thailand was 1.5 to 1.6 times that of India.
 - India has **fewer large firms** relative to gross domestic product (GDP) than China, Malaysia, South Korea and Thailand.
 - As per MGI, India's 1,500 mid-sized firms per \$1 trillion of GDP, with revenue between \$40 million and \$500 million, are only about half the number in peer emerging economies relative to their GDP.

What are the possible reasons for mid-sized firms?

- India's high **cost of compliance**.
- The small and mid-sized firms **lack the organizational resources** to manage costly procedures.
- Due to **cumbersome procedure**, it takes 1,445 days to enforce a contract in India. However, in South Korea it takes 290 days.
- Lack of access to low-cost capital stops firms from growing bigger.

What steps should be taken to tackle this?

- Lack of capital problem can be tackled by **deepening India's capital markets**.
- India needs to triple the size of its large firms by 2030.
- Unlocking land supply and allow prices to fall by 20% to 25%.
- Creation of flexible labour markets, privatizing the 30 largest PSU firms.
- Efficient power distribution.
- Improving ease of doing business and sector specific policies to improve productivity.

5. Farmer's protest on new farm bills

Source- [The Indian Express](#)

Syllabus- GS 3- Issues related to direct and indirect farm subsidies and minimum support price

Context- There have been a strong protests from farmers, especially from the states Punjab and Haryana against three Bills on agriculture reforms introduced in the Parliament to replace the ordinances issued during the lockdown.

What are the new Farm Bills?

Three Farm Bills that are bond for contention-

- The Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, 2020.
- The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill, 2020.
- The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill, 2020.

Why are these bills being opposed?

1. Against the spirit of cooperative federalism-

- Since agriculture and markets are State subjects – entry 14 and 28 respectively in List II – the ordinances are being seen as a direct encroachment upon the functions of the States.

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- The three ordinances passed by the Centre are viewed as against the spirit of cooperative federalism enshrined in the Constitution.
- 2. Absence of any regulation in non-APMC-**
 - According to farmers, the proposed bills give the preference for corporate interests at the cost of farmer's interests.
 - In the absence of any regulation in non-APMC, the farmers may find it difficult to deal with corporates, as they solely operate on the motive of profit seeking.
 - 3. End of MSP [Minimum Support Price]-** By allowing trade zones to come up outside the APMC area, as a sign of ending the assured procurement of food grains at minimum support price.
 - There is no mention whatsoever of the Minimum Support Price (MSP) regime, which is the lifeline of poor farmers and their key to survival, as also the survival of the nation's agriculture sector.
 - 4. Lack of consultation-** Farmers have argued that there is hastily attempt to pass the bills without proper consultation with any major stakeholders, farmer's representatives or any state governments before bringing the ordinances.
 - 5. Non-Favourable Market Conditions-** While retail prices have remained high; data from the Wholesale Price Index (WPI) suggest a deceleration in farm gate prices for most agricultural produce.
 - With rising input costs, farmers do not see the free market based framework providing them remunerative prices.
 - These fears gain strength with the experience of States such as Bihar which abolished APMCs in 2006. After the abolition of mandis, farmers in Bihar on average received lower prices compared to the MSP for most crops.
 - 6. Food security undermined-**
 - Easing of regulation of food items would lead to exporters, processors and traders **hoarding farm produce** during the harvest season, when prices are generally lower, and releasing it later when prices increase.
 - This could undermine food security since the States would have no information about the availability of stocks within the State.
 - 7. Deregulation of food items-**
 - The Essential Commodities [Amendment] bill removes cereals, pulses, oilseeds, edible oils, onion and potatoes from the list of essential commodities, which deregulate the production, storage, movement and distribution of these food commodities.

Way forward-

Centre needs to prevent the farmers from falling into the clutches of the monopolistic big corporates and need to enlarge the market for agriculture produce while preserving the safety net principle through MSP and public procurement. Government must provide MSP not just on wheat and rice but all other crops so that farmers are encouraged to diversify.

6. Agriculture sector and the benefits of the farms bills

Source- [The Indian Express](#)

Syllabus- **GS 3-** Transport and marketing of agricultural produce and issues and related constraints

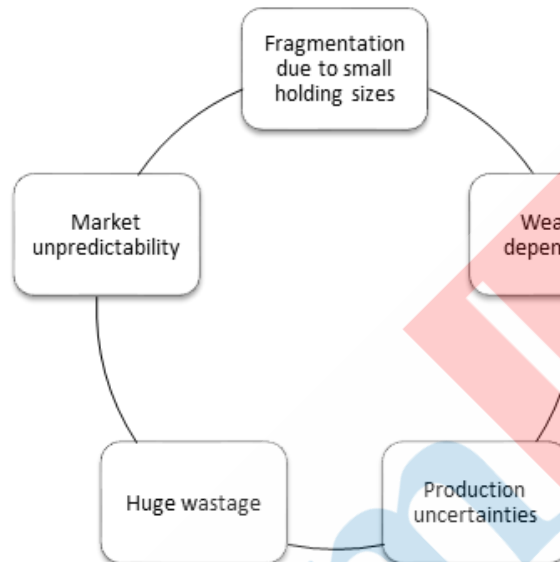
Context- The will to implement the long-pending transformative reforms has been finally demonstrated by the PM.

How is the agriculture sector working on India's Independence and till present?

- **1947-** Agriculture contributed 50 per cent to the national income and employed more than 70 per cent of the nation's workforce.
- **2019-** Agriculture contributed 16.5 per cent to the national income while the sector still employs more than 42 per cent of the workforce.

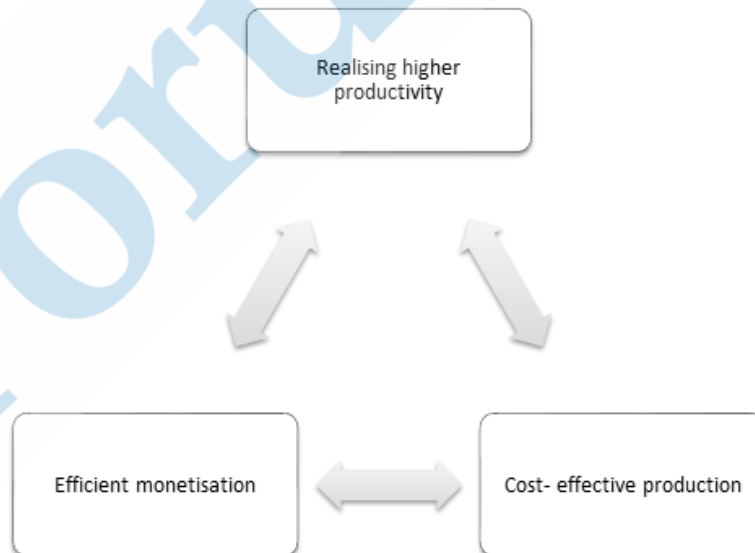
What are the challenges in the Indian Agriculture market and what are the methods to address these challenges?

The Challenges-



Therefore, this makes agriculture risky and inefficient with respect to both input and output management.

The challenges need to be addressed by-



What are the steps taken by the government?

1. **The government has taken various steps including the implementation of the Swaminathan committee's recommendations, such as-**
 - a. Fixing MSP at least 50 per cent profits on the cost of production.

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- b. Increasing the agri budget by more than 11 times in the past 10 years.
- c. The establishment of e-NAM mandis.
- d. An Agriculture Infrastructure Fund of Rs 1 lakh crore under the Atmanirbhar Bharat Package.
- e. The scheme for the formation of 10,000 FPOs.
- f. The removal of the mandi tax.
- g. The creation of a single market.
- h. Facilitating contract farming.

2. Farm bills provides for-

- a. **Alternative trading channel-** It will create an ecosystem where farmers and traders enjoy the freedom of choice of sale and purchase of farming produce to facilitate remunerative prices to farmers through competitive alternative trading channels.
- b. **Tax free market-** It will promote barrier-free inter-state and intra-state trade and commerce of farming produce outside the physical premises of markets notified under state agricultural produce marketing legislation. Thus, they will facilitate farmers with more buyers for their produce at their doorsteps.
- c. **Transparency in the system-**
 - This framework will facilitate greater certainty in quality and price, adoption of quality and grading standards, linkage of farming agreements with insurance and credit instruments to transfer the risk of market unpredictability from the farmer to the sponsor and also enable the farmer to access modern technology and better inputs.

What are the precautions which are taken by the government to secure the farmers from fraud?

In order to ensure that our farmers are not short changed or cheated by anyone, the bills have several safeguards such as-

1. **Protection of land-** The prohibition of sale, lease or mortgage of farmers' land and farmers' land is also protected against any recovery.
2. **Farming agreements-** Cannot be entered into, if they are in derogation of the rights of a sharecropper.
3. **Flexible prices-** Farmers will have access to flexible prices subject to a guaranteed price in agreements.
4. **Sponsor's active role-** The sponsor has to ensure the timely acceptance of delivery and payment of produce to farmers and farmers' liability is limited to only the advance received and cost of inputs provided by the sponsor.
5. **In case of any dispute-** It will be resolved through a Conciliation Board, to be constituted by the sub-divisional magistrate (SDM), failing which an aggrieved party may approach the concerned SDM for the settlement of the dispute.
6. **Power of the SDM-** SDM can order the recovery of the amount in dispute, impose penalties and also pass an order restraining the trader for the trade and commerce of scheduled farmers' produce for such a period as deemed fit.

Way Forward

The people of India must not allow falsehood and political opportunism to overshadow the key measures and mechanisms enunciated through this landmark reform, which finally puts the farmers first. These farm bills will bring transformative changes in our agricultural sector and reduce wastage, increase efficiency, unlock value for our farmers and increase farmers' incomes for the sustainable growth of the farming sector.

7. Will the farm bills benefit farmers?

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Gs3: Issues related to Direct and Indirect Farm Subsidies and Minimum Support Prices

Context: Recently, three farm bills were cleared by Parliament.

1. The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill,
2. The Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill and
3. The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill

What are the concerns about the bill?

- Lack of regulation may undermine farmers interest.
- Lack of regulatory oversight and reporting.
- Non-transparent and relies too much on private players.
- Devoid of the **State intervention** in agriculture, and agricultural policy.
- The bill assumes that private players don't exist and APMC has monopoly.
- Creating an alternative outside APMC is good measure as there will be no mandi fee. However, APMC continues to set the reference price even for private players.
- In the absence of APMC, there will no alternative for a large market that can actually set price signals.
- No proper grievance redressal mechanism in no APMC era.
- The farm bills aiming to enhance choices for farmers as they will get better prices for their produce. However, **market prices or farmers' incomes are not simply dependent on the market structure.**
- During the pandemic, market prices are sluggish because demand is sluggish. Farmers' incomes are actually seeing a period of stagnation.
- Other concerns of farmers are ignored in the bill such as growing input cost.
- The bills are not clear about the **procurement policy of the government.**

What are the possible consequences of these farm bills?

- **Create Monopoly:** Big retail players and corporates could **end up monopolising farm trade** and vitiate farmers' interests. Global experience such as, the French dairy producers and the dairy farmers' co-operatives in the U.S. **Buyer cartels will start fixing the market price.**
- **Create re-intermediaries:** There is unpredictability as farmers bear most of the risk and big players mostly co-opt with them. Co-opting with farmer will create large set of intermediaries because big players will find it expensive to deal with large number of farmers.
- **Big capital moving into the agricultural commodity trade:** The pandemic has caused a massive disruption for capital and profits as well. However, agricultural goods have suffered less because these are necessary items in consumption baskets.

What needs to be done?

- **Policy interventions:** In the form of subsidies or procurement. There is MSP and procurement prices but certain policy documents were presented before the government about replacing the Food Corporation of India (FCI) and PDS with cash transfers.
- **Need to regulate FCI:** Since 1990s India is not facing food shortage but problem of hunger still persists. This is because of maladministration.

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- **Need to regulate private players:** Post-liberalisation, private players and capital have a much greater role to play in the economy but the concerns regarding the government public procurement system needs to be addressed to quell fears.
- **Bring clarity:** ensuring MSP and creating an alternative outside APMC to encourage private players is self-defeating. Government cannot say they want private players but want to fix MSP also.

8. Environment and Development

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus: GS-3- Environment

Context: Firms should focus on creating green supply chains instead of following a few environmental practices.

What is environment sustainability?

- **Environmental sustainability** is understood as buying greener products, avoiding hazardous materials, energy optimisation, and waste reduction.
- **Sustainability, an essential issue of global importance:** It has been recognised by The United Nations Millennium Development Goals and the World Bank Group's global practices.

What is lacking in the steps towards environment sustainability taken by the firms?

- **Firms reluctant to engage:** Most of them don't want to compromise on the economic benefits by engaging in environmentally beneficial activities, while
 - Some others have positioned environmental practices at the forefront due to legislation, and industry and government commitments.
- **Fails to see the bigger picture:** Due to compelling regulatory norms in many firms, high importance has been given to environmentalism. However,
 - In this process, organisations and manufacturing sector; get so serious about the waste reduction and energy efficiency improvements that they fail to recognise the **need for restructuring their learning necessities** and see the big picture of environmentalism.
- **Short-term actions:** Government norms, organisational policies and corporate environmental responsibility projects to drive environment-friendly practices are mostly short-term actions towards environmental sustainability.

What are the long-lasting benefits of environment sustainability?

- **Green supply chain practices:**
 - Green procurement, green manufacturing, green distribution, and reverse logistics are useful.
 - Practices starting from purchase of eco-friendly raw material to disposal/reuse/ recycle of used products, employees, suppliers, distributors, retailers and customers will be able to join in environmental concerns in the daily operations of a firm.
 - Green supply chain practices enable organisational learning in environmental sustainability.
- **Connections between green supply chain practices, organisational performance and learning:**
 - A survey of 220 respondents across 21 manufacturing units in India was conducted.
 - These inter-linkages not only lead to a long-lasting natural drive towards environmental performance, but also to higher economic performance.

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- The positive impacts of environmentalism can only be felt in the long term when they get rooted into organisational learning systems through green supply chain practices.
- The resultant learning system eases the knowledge flow in the organisation and help firms to strategize for better performance, bearing in mind the environmental aspects.
- Environmental sustainability is ensured from the source (willingness) and not through force (regulations).
- **Understanding links:**
 - Drawing connections between green supply chain practices, corporate environmental performance, corporate economic performance and the dimensions of learning organisations in firms is **necessary for an organisation's progress and environmental protection in society.**
 - Understanding of these certain links will allow managers and experts to shape their organisational values, work practices, and performances for the greater good of society.

Way forward

- When the different manufacturing supply chain realise the essential benefits associated with organisational learning dimensions, their drive towards environmentalism will increase.
- Policymakers should support this thinking by not just imposing environmental practices as regulatory norms but by highlighting on the creation of green supply chain-based learning systems in manufacturing.

9. Demand to Rework Inflation Targeting Regime

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Gs3: Indian Economy and issues relating to Planning, Mobilization of Resources, Growth, Development and Employment.

Context: Recently the monetary policy committee (MPC) concluded that elevated inflation has constrained it from easing policy rates.

Why there is demand to rework inflation targeting regime?

- **Economy slowdown:** Since the growth rate is falling that is why question have been raised regarding the inflation targeting framework.
- **Growth-inflation quagmire:** there is demand for the government to relax the inflation targeting framework to spur growth and demand.

Suggestions:

- **Greater tolerance for higher levels of inflation** either by adjusting the acceptable range of inflation upwards, or by extending the period over which the MPC has to meet its inflation target.
- **Shift from headline to core-inflation** as the nominal anchor of monetary policy.
- **Incorporate other indicators such as nominal GDP** explicitly into the framework.
- Doing away with the inflation targeting framework altogether.

What are possible way outs and their implications?

Easing policy rate:

- It will inject a degree of uncertainty and unpredictability in monetary policy.
- Frequent revisions will destabilize household expectations.
- It will signal a lack of commitment to maintaining price stability.

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Shift to a multiple indicator structure:

- This move harks back to the pre-MPC days when there was **far greater uncertainty** over monetary policy.
- **No clarity over the indicator** that was dictating the stance of the RBI governor.
- Absence of a well-defined anchor will **reduce transparency and accountability** from the central bank.

Central bank financing the Centre's capital expenditure on a regular basis.

- **Monetisation should be the last resort:** The perils of falling back on this long-discarded policy need to be guarded against.
- **Tilt the balance of power in favour of the government:** Government owing to its short-term political imperatives will be seduced by the apparent simplicity of this idea without considering its long-term repercussions.
- **Channel funds to revenue expenditure:** It will lead to a situation wherein the entire budgeted capital expenditure is financed by the central bank.
- **Blur the line between fiscal and monetary policy:** Giving a central bank a degree of control over the government's expenditure priorities will allow unelected technocrats to be in charge of determining the expenditure priorities of the government. It will result in the **fiscalisation of monetary policy**.

Pledge Government shares in companies to avail loans against them:

- It raises questions whether a sovereign should pledge assets to borrow in the local currency.
- In 1991, India had pledged gold for a foreign currency denominated loan not a local currency loan.
- There is not clarity on what will happen if the value of the shares pledged falls below that of the loan.

What is the way forward?

- There is need to push for **more external voices in the MPC**. For instance, In the UK, a **non-voting treasury representative** sits with the MPC to discuss policy issues.
- During periods of extreme uncertainty, there is need to adopt some unconventional measures but the principles of **sound public policy** should not be discarded.

10. Farmers protesting on Farm bills

Source- [The Indian Express](#)

Syllabus- **GS 3- Transport** and marketing of agricultural produce and issues and related constraints; e-technology in the aid of farmers

Context- Farmer's organisation across the country gave a call for a bandh on September 25th to protest the three bills passed by Parliament.

What are the new Farm Bills?

Three Farm Bills that are bond for contention-

1. The Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, 2020 (FPTC).
2. The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill, 2020 (FAPAFS).
3. The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill, 2020.

Why are these bills being protested?

These bills have been protested by not only the farmers, even opposition and state legislatures are not supporting these bills due to-

1. Unconstitutional Procedure- The manner in which the bills were thrust upon the farming community. Not only the farmers' organisations, but even state governments and allies have not been consulted.

2. Against the spirit of cooperative federalism –

- All the earlier attempts at reforming agricultural marketing respected the constitutional separation of powers. While the Centre proposed the model acts, these were implemented by state governments.

For instances- Out of 36 states and union territories-

- a. 18 states have already enacted reforms allowing for establishment of private market yards/private markets.
 - b. 19 states have enacted reforms allowing for direct purchase of agricultural produce from agriculturists by processor/bulk buyer/bulk retailer/exporter.
 - c. 20 states have enacted contract farming acts.
 - d. Kerala and Bihar do not have APMC mandis and Tamil Nadu has a different system.
 - e. Most states have exempted levy of taxes and fees on sale of fruits and vegetables.
- The current reforms completely bypass the state governments and weaken their ability to regulate agricultural markets even though it is a state subject.
- 3. Changing objectives of the government-** unlike earlier reforms where the focus was on strengthening the functioning of APMC mandis while allowing for greater private market access and participation, the current FTPC bill bypasses the APMC altogether, creating a separate structure of trading.
- 4. Creation of dual market structure-** The absence of regulation and exemption from mandi fees creates a dual market structure which is not only inefficient but will also encourage unregulated trade detrimental to the primary purpose of providing market access to farmers for better price discovery and assured prices.
- 5. Corporate Exploitation-** FTPC Bill is not about delivering on the promise of freedom to farmers but freedom to private capital to purchase agricultural produce at cheaper prices and without any regulation or oversight by the government.
- 6. Contract farming bill and amendments in the essential commodities act-** Apart from the fact that the provisions of these bills are highly skewed in favour of private capital, with no limits on stockholding and restrictions of government interventions, there is limited recourse to any independent grievance redressal mechanism.
- 7. Government actions-** Agricultural terms of trade have moved against agriculture with rising input prices (with the government increasing diesel prices despite the collapse in international prices) and declining farm gate prices.

Way Forward

The government should re-consider all the farm bills with the states, farmer's organisations, and their representatives. So, that the farmers will get the opportunity to give their opinions and address their issues regarding the farm bills. Also by this farmers will understand the agenda of the government's view of the bills. This will bring harmony and peace among the protestors.