

9pm

Compilation

1st to 11th October, 2020

9 PM Compilation for the Month of October (First week), 2020

General Studies - 1

1. A case for older women
2. The legacy of Gandhi
3. The Prime Minister India almost forgot
4. Women in science
5. Women representation and impact - Kenya case study

General Studies - 2

1. Changing Health Behaviour
2. QUAD Grouping- India, Japan, US and Australia
3. Need of a Maritime strategy
4. India- China
5. Amnesty halting India operations
6. NCPCR analysis
7. The future of GST hangs in the balance
8. India and QUAD
9. Re-imagining education in 100 years
10. Disintegration of the criminal justice system
11. Garib Kalyan Rozgar Abhiyan (GKRA)
12. Misinformation storm
13. Assisted Reproductive Technology (Regulation) Bill, 2020
14. Violence and justice for women
15. CAG audit- Improvement in disaster management
16. Impacted Mental Health during Pandemic
17. Supreme court verdict on shaheen Bagh protest
18. World Food program
19. TRP (Television Rating Point) scandal

General Studies - 3

1. The end of 'Inspector Raj'- Labour and Farm Bill
2. C&AG's report on GST compensation cess
3. Labour bills
4. Biodiversity and Pandemic
5. India's inflation targeting policy
6. Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC 2016)
7. India's inflation targeting policy
8. Power sector in India
9. The non-violent economic model
10. Farms Bills
11. Rainbow new deal - Integrating ecological protection and tackling inequality
12. Labour codes reforms
13. Issues of Indian Sugar Industry
14. Production Linked Incentive Scheme
15. Platform Workers
16. Artificial Intelligence - 'AI for All'
17. Ensemble forecast
18. India's monetary framework and COVID-19
19. Manufacturing in India - PLI scheme
20. Redesign policy for private investment
21. CRISPR-Cas9: life sciences into new epoch
22. MPC meeting- shifting focus from containment to revival

Created with love ❤️ by ForumIAS- the knowledge network for civil services.
Visit academy.forumias.com for our mentor-based courses.

General Studies Paper - 1

General Studies - 1

1. A case for older women

Source: The Hindu

Syllabus: GS-1- Society

Context: Welfare of elderly women.

How elderly women are a vulnerable category of people?

- Elderly women in a majority of Asia-Pacific countries are facing major challenges due to a change from **traditional to nuclear family-oriented patterns** which are far more fluid, split structures.
- **Lack of adequate support:** Many older women, with a higher tendency to live alone, **face poverty and are more likely to lack family and other socioeconomic support.**
- **Access to a caregiver:** The majority of older people do not have reliable and sustained access to a caregiver and many have slid into poverty during the pandemic.

What are the plans in place for the elderly?

- There is a need for **better policies, more resilient social systems and gender equality** in order to improve the lives of elderly women.
- **2002 Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing:** This agreement mentions the development of evidence-based policies that help create “a society for all ages”.
- Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (**ICPD**) and the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals** underscore the basis of this approach to healthy ageing.
- **The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA):** It is committed to helping governments in full partnership with civil society and communities.
- UNFPA incorporates the need to enable and strengthen the self-reliance of older persons.

Way forward

- In order to transform the challenge of population ageing into an opportunity we must collectively prioritise greater action, funding and implementation.
- **Address the complex demographic shift of population ageing**, with strategic solutions:
 - A life cycle approach to healthy ageing, with particular emphasis on girls and women, firmly grounded in gender equality and human rights is required.

2. The legacy of Gandhi

Source: The Hindu

Syllabus: GS-1- History

Context: Mahatma Gandhi was an intercultural Indian and his intellectual openness helped him to live up to his ideals.

What can one understand by Gandhi and his ideas?

- **Gandhi was an original thinker and an acute political strategist**, who believed profoundly in the possibility of introducing humanity to the principle of non-violence.
- **Gandhi's idea of non-violence was a realistic hope** with a little of practical idealism. He presented himself as an Asian who was influenced by Hinduism,

9 PM Compilation for the Month of October (First week), 2020

Jainism and Buddhism, and as a person who was deeply influenced by the teachings of Jesus Christ, Socrates, Tolstoy, Ruskin and Thoreau.

- **Intellectual openness:** It helped him to learn from others. He was the founding father of modern non-violence as it has been practised for the past 100 years around the globe.

What was ethical mode of conduct?

- **The philosophy of non-violence** turned into an instrument of public dissent and a practical tool of the powerless against the powerful.
- **The “soul force”:** It was an instrument of conflict resolution and universal harmony. Non-violence was also an essentially moral exercise and an ethical mode of conduct.
- The Gandhian philosophy of non-violence assigns a duty to **citizens to be watchful** about the abuses of power by the state and to struggle **against the “Sultanization” of political power** in our contemporary societies.

What was Gandhi’s idea of establishing a just society?

- Gandhi’s idea of democracy centres on moral growth in humankind, where an undisciplined and unrestricted **individualism is replaced by empathetic humanism.**
- Gandhi believed that humanity had to **develop certain qualities such as fearlessness, non-possession and humility.**
- The main aim was to **restructure humans** to suit to an inter-cultural and pluri-dimensional democracy.

Were his approaches ahead of its time?

- **Non-violent democratic theory** as a philosophy of inter-cultural dialogue is still far ahead of our times, several generations after his death.
- **Pluralistic approach to the dialogue** of cultures and faiths, Gandhi was far ahead of his time.
- His philosophy of democracy remains neither mono-cultural nor essentialist.
- The modes and methods of achieving democracy include **Satyagraha and Swaraj**, which are not theological concepts.
- **Approach to the many-sidedness of truth:** It was an effort to bridge different views of life and this is why he did not reject different traditions of social life.
- He simply stated what he considered to be authentic in them and thought of bringing them together in the realisation of an ethical common ground.

What was his idea of ‘Indianness’?

- **Politics- a fragile concept:** he refused to define India in terms of ethnic purity or linguistic unity or some other unifying religious attribute as it is vulnerable to nationalist justifications of violence and war.
- Gandhi’s philosophy of democracy introduced an anti-monistic and **diverse dimension into a mainly territorial rootedness of Indianness.**
- **Gandhi’s appeal to global companionship** was based on an inclusive and dialogical idea of living together which disapproved all forms of national or religious self-centredness.

Way forward

- We should ponder upon his saying that “The golden way is to be friends with the world and to regard the whole human family as one. He who distinguishes between the votaries of one’s own religion and those of another miss-educates the members of his own and opens the way for discord and irreligion.”

3. The Prime Minister India almost forgot

Source- The Hindu

Syllabus- GS 1- Modern Indian history from about the middle of the eighteenth century until the present- significant events, personalities, issues

Context- Lessons from Lal Bahadur Shastri’s political life.

Who was Lal Bahadur Shastri?

- He was born on 2nd October, 1904.
- He resigned twice from the cabinet posts assuming his moral responsibility-
- a. **1956-** For railway accidents in Mahbubnagar, Andhra Pradesh and Ariyalur, Tamil Nadu.
- b. **1963-** To work in the party organisation under the Kamaraj Plan.
- He served as the second Prime Minister of India during 1964-1966.
- Slogan- “Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan”.
- He died under mysterious circumstances on 11th January, 1966.
- He was posthumously awarded the ‘Bharat Ratna’.

What were the changes achieved by Lal Bahadur Shastri as a political leader?

1. **Promote Green Revolution-** His vision for self-sufficiency in food grains led to sowing the seeds of the Green Revolution, and promotion of the White Revolution, a national campaign to increase milk production.
2. **Srimavo-Shastri Pact-** In 1964, he signed an agreement with the Sri Lankan Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike, in concern with the status of Indian Tamils in Ceylon.
3. **Anti-corruption-** In 1961, he was appointed as Home Minister, and he appointed the Committee on Prevention of Corruption. He created the famous “Shastri Formula” which consisted of the language agitations in Assam and Punjab.
4. **A Leader-** Shastri’s selection as Prime Minister was itself an affirmation of the party’s organisation and self-correcting mechanism, notwithstanding its moral ambiguities and patronage politics.
5. **1965 War-** His brilliant leadership during 1965 war in countering Pakistan’s aggression and surprise attack helped India in gaining its lost confidence due to the 1962 war and paved way for winning 1971 war. Under his Prime Minister ship India for the first time took the battle to invader’s territory.
6. **As a Diplomat -** He developed close relations with USSR in the aftermath of 1962 war. However, he is criticised for letting USSR dictate terms of Tashkent agreement as an arbitrator and surrendering Haji Pir Pass to Pakistan which India had occupied in the war.

What were the challenges faced by the Lal Bahardur Shashtri during his office of Prime Minister?

In the national arena-

The Following were some of the question marks at the cross-section of nation, region and institution for the Prime Minister. -

- a. The language violence in Tamil Nadu.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of October (First week), 2020

- b. Returning President's rule in Kerala.
- c. Persisting feuds in Uttar Pradesh.
- d. Enduring demand for a Punjabi suba.
- e. Continuing farce in Kashmir.

In the international arena-

- a. A subdued Non-Aligned Movement.
- b. Nuclear challenge of China.
- c. A change in the Soviet leadership.
- d. A new leader in Pakistan- President Ayub Khan.
- e. An Anglo-American-Commonwealth combine distracted with varied issues such as Vietnam and Southern Rhodesia.

Way Forward

Like most in his time, he rose humbly from the provinces in national politics, and carried his convictions from his faith in people, their constitution and representation. Crucially, he remained modest in both his personal probity and policy making and was not invested solely in his occupancy of his office.

4. Women in science

Source: The Indian Express

Syllabus: GS-1- Society

Context: Rigorous efforts are required to make the workplace inclusive for women scientists in India.

What is the status of women scientists in India.

- **The Department of Science and Technology** is reportedly making up a policy where the proportion of women employed will be considered in ranking a scientific institution.
- **National Task Force for Women in Science:** According to their data, Indian scientific institutions collectively employ only 15 per cent women even as women form 37 per cent of PhD holders and accounted for 40 per cent of university enrolment in science subjects in 2001.
- 12 years later the **Indian National Science Academy** had only 5 per cent elected women colleagues in their ranks.

What are the reasons for drop in number of women in science?

- **Drop in the number of women in science:** Juggling professional and domestic responsibilities is one of many reasons.
- **Administrative hassles at the workplace, uncertainty** of securing a travel fund for attending research conferences and presenting papers at national and international meetings.
- **Acting as help at the home front caring** for young children or ageing parents often makes the woman scientist focus on publications since they are perceived as the one objective criterion to judge a scientist.
- **Avoid hiring couples:** This has been a major stumbling block for many scientists who found like-minded partners in their own fields.

What changes can be done to rectify the inequalities during the early stages of a scientific career?

- **Making creche facilities mandatory at workplaces:** the crèche should be sustainable and affordable for all as it will provide employment opportunities to more women.
- **Safe travel:** Prioritising young families for on-campus housing by revamping the current seniority-based system and providing workplace transport facility.
- **Change in approach to conferences:** Supporting and rewarding organisers who ensure greater participation of women will ensure higher participation and present networking opportunities.
- **Special sessions at conferences** can provide a platform for floating ideas and understanding the needs of the industry.
- **The childcare leave**, if extended to either parent, will prevent women from bearing the brunt of career setbacks.
- The best research institutions **create spaces for mixing and mingling**, ironing out stereotypes and perceptions of being the “other” group.
- **Creating a metric for evaluation of such resources**, and a channel for inter-institutional mobility, cross-fertilisation of ideas, technical expertise and resources can arise.
- **The flexibility to switch career paths** and the opportunity to make a permanent move could prevent stagnation and create a much-needed change between academic institutes-government and private centres of learning, research institutes and even the industry.

Way forward

- **The new policy has to be sensitive to ground level realities:** Committees and organisations have to be sensitised and implementation ensured through periodic evaluations of outcomes.
- Making the data regarding publicly funded projects widely available will allow analysis of factors beyond equality in numbers.
- **The goal should be ensuring equality without compromising quality of research.**

5. Women representation and impact - Kenya case study

Source: The Indian express

Syllabus: GS-1- Women

Context: Asymmetric political representation between men and women in Kenya and India.

How was the representation of women in India before 1947?

- In the making of Indian constitution, **women members of the Constituent Assembly**, though minuscule, made a significant contribution.
- **Women had a large presence in the freedom movement** and their numbers grew, with a significant voice, in Parliament and state legislatures.

How the constitutional histories and judicial action of Kenya and India vary?

- **Kenya’s article 27(8)** requires the state to take judicial and other measures to implement the principle that not more than **two-thirds of the members** of elective or appointive bodies shall be of the same gender.
- **33 per cent reservation in Indian Parliament:** The two bills introduced in 1996 and 2010, have been delayed, even when addressed as a “historic step” that will ensure significant representation for the women of India.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of October (First week), 2020

- **“Quota within a quota”:** The ways should be found to ensure that this reservation should contain 33 per cent reservation within for SC and ST women.
- Some suggested a systemic practice of reservation at the stage of distributing party tickets.
- Some continue to fight for underprivileged and rural women.
- Some maintain that a constitutional convention directing increased representation for women by parties will be more appropriate than a constitutional amendment.
- **Kenya does better than India:** Kenya has secured 76 (or about 22 per cent) women in the present National Assembly comprising 349 members, whereas:
 - India peaked to its highest number in the 2019 elections with 62 women (around 14.58 per cent), out of a total of 542 Lok Sabha seats.
- **In the Kenyan Senate** 21 (or 31 per cent) of the 67-member House are females; **in the Indian Rajya Sabha** women comprise 25 out of 243 elected members.
- For instance, **Marilyn Kamaru** (on behalf of a collective of activists which had petitioned to have parliament dissolved three years ago) said:
 - “Whether the president dissolves parliament or illegally retains it in violation of the Constitution”, a constitutional moment was “made possible by the work of women activists, feminists and the queer community.”
- The learned chief justice memorably outlined the idea of **constitutionally justified elite pain** and social suffering involved in putting constitutions to work in India.

What are the similarities in both nations?

- **Women’s representation has always been “pyramidal”:** most women remain below the constitutional locator at the bottom, even when a few scale national heights.
- **Women and other sexual minorities,** sacrificial politics continues to prevail, as violence against women and sexual minorities continues to be a sad social display in both societies.
- **Asymmetric representation** in both societies has generated a long and complex debate concerning women’s representation.

The way forward

- The Indian Constitution is among the world’s leading modern and postcolonial constitutions but more actions are required to reduce asymmetrical representation.

General Studies Paper - 2

General Studies - 2

1. Changing Health Behaviour

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- The role of health behaviour in public health practice needs special attention during an epidemic.

What are the skills required from public health professionals during an epidemic?

1. **Social Groups-** To identify the social groups which can be at greater risk to disease at any given point of time.
2. **General Population-** To pick up those who are at risk from a general population, even before they know that they are at risk.
3. **Awareness of the people-** To know whether any group is at risk or not is possible only if people have a deep understanding of the society.
4. **Reliance on Laboratory's test-**
 - The overreliance on laboratory tests not only means that people lose the opportunity to detect those who are possibly at high risk of transmission but also the opportunity to look for high risk behaviour among people.
5. **Control on spread of disease-** The primary purpose of public health action during an epidemic is to prevent the spread of a disease in the community.

Who is more successful in controlling the epidemic- science or people?

Success in controlling the epidemic- The fact that if there is success in controlling an epidemic, the credit goes to science and institutions and the government.

Failure in controlling the epidemic-

- If there is a failure to control the epidemic, the blame is placed on the people.
- There is a failure to understand that health behaviour is only a subset of human behaviour and is closely linked to a person's living and working conditions.
- Behavioural change takes place when society is organised in such a way that there is no option to engage in risky/ unhealthy behaviour by virtue of one's occupation or social position.

Which means are the governments using to ensure that people follow certain health behaviour?

1. **Disease control models-** They focus on modifying individual risk factors. The role of public health in this case gets largely confined to 'preaching' with very little scope for action. Such as Epidemic Diseases Act of 1897.
2. **The police-**
 - The second approach has been to create fear of punishment as the basis of behavioural change.
 - The police are given the responsibility to fine people when they violate rules.
 - This has serious ethical implications, especially for those who cannot afford certain health behavioural practices.

Way Forward

Health behaviour plays a critical role in deciding the success of any public health intervention. The real change in health behaviour is possible only when there is

acknowledgement of its societal roots and there are efforts to alter it at multiple levels. Instead of putting the onus of changing or modifying health behaviour onto individuals will only result in 'victim blaming' and create distrust between people and those responsible for epidemic control.

2. QUAD Grouping- India, Japan, US and Australia

Source - The Hindu

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

Context – 2nd ministerial meeting of the QUAD is going to be held in Japan.

What is QUAD grouping?

1. **The quadrilateral formation includes-** Japan, India, United States and Australia.
2. **Purpose-** All four nations find a common ground of being the democratic nations and common interests of unhindered maritime trade and security.
3. **Formed-** The idea was first mooted by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in 2007. However, the idea couldn't move ahead with Australia pulling out of it.

What are China's views on the Quad?

Asian version of NATO-The strategic community in China has branded it an emerging "Asian NATO-North Atlantic Treaty Organization".

China's shrillness

China was hoping that its naval build-up might slip under the radar because the Americans were distracted by continental challenges including Russia, Afghanistan and Iran, and would not look sea-ward.

Nine dash line- Once the idea of Quad 1.0 had died down, China stakes claim to 90% of the South China Sea, and this claim is based on the U-shaped nine-dash line etched on map in the 1940s by a Chinese geographer.

China's global naval strategy and expansion-

China undertook the rapid kind of warship building activity reminiscent of Wilhelmine Germany before 1914.

China built its first overseas base in Djibouti.

Started systematically to explore the surface and sub-surface environment in the Indian Ocean beyond the Malacca Straits.

Beijing rejects tribunal's ruling- China's dismissal of the Arbitral Award in the dispute with the Philippines on the South China Sea.

Ruling-

There was no legal basis for China to claim historic rights to resources within the sea areas falling within "nine-dash line"

- a. China violated its obligations to refrain from aggravating or extending the parties disputes during the pendency of the settlement process

What is the significance of QUAD 2.0

China's brazen militarization of the islands after its President had publicly pronounced to the contrary has once again brought the four countries onto the same page and given a second chance to the Quad.

Plurilateral mechanism –

U.S.-India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF) also suggested that other countries might be invited to join in the future. This too is welcome; India has many other partners in the Indo-Pacific.

A positive agenda built around collective action in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, monitoring shipping for search and rescue or anti-piracy operations, infrastructure assistance to climatically vulnerable states, connectivity initiatives and similar activities, will re-assure the littoral States that the Quad will be a factor for regional benefit, and a far cry from Chinese allegations that it is some sort of a military alliance.

Way forward

The forthcoming Ministerial meeting will be an opportunity to define the idea and chart a future path. Needless provocation of China should be avoided. The Quad nations need to better explain that the Indo-Pacific Vision is an overarching framework that is being discussed in a transparent manner, with the objective of advancing everyone's economic and security interests.

3. Need of a Maritime strategy

Source: The Hindu

Syllabus: GS-2-International relations

Context: India's obsession with continental strategies has produced unfavourable results and it's time to shift focus to the maritime strategy.

What is the state of continental strategy?

- **Current state:** Border stalemate with China and Beijing doesn't seem keen on reinstating the *status quo* with India as of March 2020.
- **Aksai Chin: China is pushing back New Delhi's claims** with its slow but aggressive implementation.
- **Ceasefire violations with Pakistan** on the Line of Control (LoC) have spiked since last year as has the infiltration of terrorists across the LoC.
- **India-Pakistan contestation over Kashmir** has become fiercer with the change of the status of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) by New Delhi in 2019, and Pakistan altering its political map a few months ago to include all of J&K.
- **China-Pakistan axis:** There is a **geopolitical conspiracy between Islamabad and Beijing** to contain and pressure New Delhi from both sides.

What are the changes in Afghanistan?

- The ongoing **withdrawal of the United States** from Afghanistan and the return of the Taliban. India has very little contact with Taliban which could turn the geopolitical tide against New Delhi.
- **With the withdrawal of forces of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization from Afghanistan**, the geopolitical interests of Pakistan, China and Russia would broadly converge in the region.
- **India's 'Mission Central Asia':** The change of the geopolitical landscape in Afghanistan and the frictions in Iran-India relations will further dampen the mission.

What should India do?

- **Creatively deal with its continental dilemmas:**
- India would need to deal with pressure from the Pakistan front by **addressing the Kashmir question with Islamabad.**

9 PM Compilation for the Month of October (First week), 2020

- **Activating existing mechanisms** such as the Director General of Military Operations (DGMO) hotline.

What is Maritime strategy?

- India should shift its focus from the continental sphere to the **maritime sphere**.
- **The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA)** established a new division to deal with the Indo-Pacific in April 2019 and it needs to be fast-tracked to keep pace with the evolving realities.

State the reasons why a maritime grand strategy would work to India's advantage?

- The maritime sphere is wide open to India to undertake **coalition building, rule setting, and other forms of strategic exploration**.
- **Arrival of the concept of 'Indo-Pacific'**: Great powers remain interested in the maritime sphere and this interest has grown significantly since the arrival of Indo-Pacific.
- Germany recently released its Indo-Pacific guidelines after France brought out its Indo-Pacific strategy last year.
- **Beijing's bullying behaviour in the South China Sea**: This has generated a great deal of willingness among the Euro-American powers and the countries of the region, including Australia and Japan, to push back Chinese unilateralism.
- **The maritime space is more important to China**: The massive Chinese trade that happens via the Oceanic routes and India's maritime strategy can potentially disrupt that trade.

Way forward

- The MEA's Indo-Pacific Division is a good beginning; so is the decision in 2019 to elevate the Quad meetings among India, Japan, the United States and Australia to the ministerial level.
- India should join its military and non-military tools, engage its strategic partners, and publish a comprehensive vision document on the Indo-Pacific.

4. India- China

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus: GS-2- International Relations

Context: India should be involved with China economically even as it opposes it militarily.

Why should India be involved with china economically?

- **Timing of the economic disassociation with China**: India's economy was badly affected by the Covid-19 and attempt to break ties with china economically has a wrong timing.
- **India is dependent on Chinese imports**: Chinese venture capitalists have poured in more than \$8 billion into some of India's most successful start-ups where as a smaller portion of China's imports are from India.

What are the lessons from China?

- **Relationship of china and Taiwan**: Trade between the China and Taiwan has remained strong over the past four years even though China claims Taiwan as its own territory and sometimes threatens invasion.
- The Taiwanese firm Foxconn makes almost all the iPhones that the world buys from factories in China.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of October (First week), 2020

- **Relationship of china and US:** China continues to do business with the US despite the tensions between both the nations. The US is the largest trading partner of china.
- U.S. Tesla's massive car and battery plants are coming up in China and American farmers still sell soya to China.
- **Relationship of china and the European Union:** In the first half of 2017 more than 3,000 container trains ran between the two continents, exceeding the total for the previous six years combined and serving 35 cities in China, with 34 destinations in Europe as a part its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).
- The European Union is China's second largest trading partner.

Why shouldn't India take knee-jerk reactions?

- **China has consistently increased its trade with South Asia** after 2005 according to the Brookings Policy Brief.
- **Defying the logic of proximity**, most of India's neighbours are now largely reliant on China for their imports.

Way forward

- India should consider joining the rest of the world in restraining in China and calling it out for its worst extremes.
- India should establish road and rail connectivity with its immediate neighbours and even Southeast Asia.

5. Amnesty halting India operations

Source- The Hindu

Syllabus- **GS 2-** Development processes and the development industry —the role of NGOs, SHGs, various groups and associations, donors, charities, institutional and other stakeholders.

Context- Amnesty International has halted its human rights operation in India due to the freezing of its bank accounts by the Government of India.

What is the case?

Recently, Amnesty International (AI) India had demanded an independent investigation into all allegations of human rights violations by the police during the north-east Delhi riots and the establishment of the National Commission for Human Rights in Jammu and Kashmir.

- **Government's response-** India doesn't allow interference in domestic political debates by entities funded by foreign donations. This law applies equally to all and it shall apply to Amnesty International as well.
- In order to circumvent the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010 (FCRA) regulations, Amnesty UK remitted large amounts of money to four entities registered in India, by classifying it as Foreign Direct Investment (FDI).
- A significant amount of foreign money was also remitted to Amnesty (India) without approval of the Ministry of Home Affairs under FCRA. This rerouting of money was in contravention of extant legal provisions.

What are the new rules for NGOs under FCRA amendment 2020?

The Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2020 was passed by the Parliament amending Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of October (First week), 2020

- In order to receive foreign funds, an NGO has to register with the Ministry of Home Affairs. It is assigned a unique FCRA registration number, to be renewed every five years.
- The cap on administrative expenses has been lowered from 50% of foreign funds received to 20% to ensure spending on their main objectives.

What is the impact of this amendment?

- This amendment may be used to suppress the NOGs that dissent against the Government and restrict freedom of expression.
- It prohibits the transfer of foreign grants received by an entity to a partner organization or an associated person, which is a usual practice.

Way forward

Democratic regimes that are bound by constitutionalism should not consider critical activism by groups such as Amnesty as being adversarial, but instead view it as constructive critique of their functioning. Government needs to allow for a vibrant civil society that has spearheaded several reforms related to accountability (the Right to Information Act), welfare (the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act), privacy rights, gender equality and rights of sexual minorities, environmental activism among others. Non-governmental organizations will continue to have a role to play in this.

6. NCPCR analysis

Source: The Hindu

Syllabus: GS-2- Polity

Context: Recent actions of NCPCR suggest a serious parting from its primary duty to ensure the well-being of all children.

What is NCPCR? What are the concerns related to it?

- **The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR)** is the top body for upholding, monitoring and facilitating child rights in the country.
- **Directions by NCPCR:** The NCPCR directed District Magistrates in eight States to ensure that all children within CCIs be de-institutionalised, repatriated and rehabilitated within a specified period.
- An instructed repatriation without an adequate case-by-case assessment plan within a short period of time would likely place the children again at **grave risk of abuse, exploitation and neglect.**
- They also point to the absolute **inadequacy of current systems to organise adoption** and foster care.
- **Selective Raids:** Disturbing report of raids being undertaken by the NCPCR in select NGO-run CCIs, in order to establish whether foreign funds have been misused in any manner.
- **Monitoring of the FCRA regulations is outside of the mandate of the NCPCR.**
- The raids also targeted individuals who have been outspoken in the criticism of the Central government on issues such as the **National Register of Citizens and the Citizenship (Amendment) Act.**
- **Communal overtones:** An enquiry led by the Chairperson enquired into whether the previously homeless children in the CCIs belonged to a particular community (Rohingya), even as the institutions are known to be secular.
- **Increase in problems due to pandemic:** Existing issues of child malnutrition, child labour, child abuse, child marriage and mental illness have increased.

Way Forward

- The NCPCR could have used its authority and **power to issue recommendations to relieve** these grave conditions by strengthening child-related institutions through adequate funds, and appreciating the relief measures that many civil society organisations were engaged in.
- The NCPCR was expected to take a stand on the rape and murder of a 14-year-old girl in Bhadoli in Uttar Pradesh, to make a test case of the lack of **systems to fight crimes against children**.
- **CCIs need monitoring and reforms:** The Commission should be on the front to ensure the support that would necessarily be required to implement these reforms.

7. The future of GST hangs in the balance

Source: The Hindu

Syllabus: Gs2: Issues and Challenges Pertaining to the Federal Structure, Devolution of Powers and Finances up to Local Levels and Challenges Therein.

Context: The Centre needs to raise additional resources to bridge the GST compensation gap.

What is the GST compensation issue?

- In 2017, the Centre made a promise to the States that a certain minimum amount of GST revenues will be guaranteed to every State for every year until 2022.
- It was hailed as a harbinger of 'cooperative federalism'.
- However, there is not enough money in the GST kitty for the Centre to honour this obligation.

What is proposed by the centre to bridge the gap?

- The Centre has proposed that the States should borrow money.
- Centre will act as a guarantor to facilitate this borrowing.
- Many States have accepted this proposal while many others have rejected it and implored the Centre to borrow.

How States have responded?

- Gujarat and Karnataka support the Centre's proposal while Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu have opposed it.
- GST compensation constitutes a significant share of the revenues of Punjab and Himachal Pradesh, yet Himachal Pradesh supports the Centre's plan while Punjab is against it.
- Rajasthan and Haryana have similar sized fiscal deficits. Rajasthan is apprehensive but Haryana is ready to indulge in more borrowing.

What are the implications of GST compensation issue?

- **Erosion of credibility:** There is a bitter stand-off between the Centre and these protesting States.
- **Widening trust deficit:** Recently Comptroller and Auditor General revealed that in the last few years the Centre mis-allocated nearly Rs. 3 lakh crore. It was collected through various cesses to reduce the States' share of tax revenues.
- **Politicisation of the GST Council:** Twenty members of the GST Council that have agreed to the Centre's proposal are governed by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) or a BJP alliance. The 11 States that have opposed the Centre's plan are all governed by the Opposition.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of October (First week), 2020

- **Against cooperative federalism:** The 11 opposing States account for a greater share of overall GST revenues than the 20 supporting States. However, it does not matter since every State, large or small, has equal weight in the GST Council.

How Centre can increase tax revenue?

- Centre can Increase taxation of capital market transactions.
- Between April and June, India's stock markets experienced its highest activity levels in its history, with a 75% increase in transactions vis-a-vis last year.
- The stock market rose 30% in this period and a minority few profited.
- The Centre can levy a **higher tax on such speculative stock market** trading to earn additional revenues during these difficult times, which will also not hurt the economy like an increase in GST rates or cess will do.
- Also 15 years of data show there is no evidence that in India raising securities transaction taxes adversely impacts stock market activity or the overall economy.

GST compensation is an **economic issue** and should be settled based on what makes the most economic sense for each State and for the nation overall.

8. India and QUAD

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Syllabus: Gs2: Bilateral, Regional and Global Groupings and Agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests

Context: Confusion on what the Quad is and its future in India's international relations

Is quad a military alliance?

- Quad is multilateral framework that brings India together with the US and its Asian allies, Japan and Australia.
- It is a platform for building issue-based coalitions in pursuit of shared interests.
- It is a critical element not only for India's foreign and security policy but also a definitive moment in the evolution of post-War Asian economic and security architectures.

What is military alliance?

- They are a means to enhance countries military power. Alliances are made to deter or defeat one's enemies.
- The alliance treaty usually involves written commitments to come to the defence of the other against a third party.

Why military alliances are not favoured in India's foreign policy?

- In India, Alliances have a negative connotation in our foreign policy discourse, In India's foreign policy, alliances are seen as a taboo.
- India's Non-Alignment policy is seen as central to Indian worldview.
- India's negative view towards alliances was shaped when the Western powers the US, UK, and France that joined Soviet Russia to defeat fascist Germany turned against Moscow after the Second World War.

Does India Forge alliances?

- India does do alliances but on necessary conditions and on selective terms when the need arises.
- **During national movement:** During second world war, Subhas Chandra Bose joined forces with Imperial Japan to set up a provisional government in Port Blair, Andaman Islands.

Created with love ❤ by ForumIAS- the knowledge network for civil services.
Visit academy.forumias.com for our mentor-based courses.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of October (First week), 2020

- **Jawaharlal Nehru's Period:** Though he actively opposed US alliances in Asia, but turned to cope with the Chinese aggression in 1962 he sought the US for military support
- **Indira Gandhi's Period:** During 1971 to cope with the crisis in East Pakistan she signed a security cooperation agreement with the Soviet Union

Why alliances are not reliable?

- Pakistan, signing the 1954 bilateral security agreement with the US Could not prevent Pakistan division by India in 1971.
- Also, agreements for security cooperation are made in a specific context and against a particular threat. When those circumstances change, security treaties will also become meaningless
- For example, the 1950 Treaty with Nepal was to protect them against the Chinese threat. But now Nepal no longer see a danger from china.
- Similarly, during 1970's Russia was willing to support India against the China's aggression. But today, Beijing is Moscow's strongest international partner.

QUAD & Way forward: India's foreign policy aligned towards the non-alignment confronts our need to rapidly expand our national capabilities in partnership with like-minded partners. The New India should find coalitions like the Quad critical for its international prospects.

9. Re-imagining education in 100 years

Source- The Hindu

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

Context- There is a need to explore the contours of national education practices leading to 2047 when politically independent India becomes 100 years old.

What are the critical design principles for transformation of the educational sector in India and what are the efforts made in this direction?

From a teacher's perspective, the next education practices can be viewed through the following five design principles-

1. Autonomy- To excel is the key

a. Aspects of autonomy-

- Greater autonomy for the educational institutes would entail greater leeway for the institutes in terms of regulations imposed by regulators in **Academic, Organizational, Financial and Staffing dimensions.**
- **Autonomy of customization-** There would be autonomy of the learner in creating his/her own curriculum at his/her own pace and capabilities. This could play a critical role in improving learning outcomes as well.

b. Efforts being made in autonomy direction- Premier institutes like the IITs and IIMs have been granted autonomy in their day to day functioning.

c. Concern-

- Despite the best intentions of granting autonomy to the higher educational institutes, these efforts have yielded limited returns due to practical limitations.
- The granting of autonomy to the premier institutes (IITs, IIMs) in India has resulted in no dramatic variation in the nature of autonomy of these institutes.

2. Learning-Technology followed education

a. There needs to be a greater emphasis on technology-driven education.

b. Technology embedded way of learning-

Created with love ❤ by ForumIAS- the knowledge network for civil services.
Visit academy.forumias.com for our mentor-based courses.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of October (First week), 2020

- Teachers will raise awareness rather than delivering content.
- Smart schools and smart classes may soon morph to smart chairs and smart desks, which may have sensors to map the flow of attention in the classroom.
- Learning will be about propagation of crucial questions rather than pre-determined answers.
- c. Concern-** In 2047, six billion people in the world would constitute the middle class. The needs of affordable education to a larger number of students spread across a larger area while also ensure better learning outcomes.

3. Trans-disciplinary education- Coherence across fields

Trans-disciplinarily is about creating a coherent intellectual framework beyond the disciplinary perspectives.

a. Multidisciplinary- It involves experts from different disciplines working together, each drawing on their unique disciplinary knowledge.

- It would help to construct an understanding of the real-life problems.
- For instance, tackling the pandemic required medical scientists, economists, health workers and political scientists and more experts to bring their disciplinary depth to the table.

b. Efforts being made in autonomy direction- The NEP 2020 roots for multi-disciplinary institutions rather than standalone schools.

4. Technology- innovation- Technology-led innovation will take learning from cognition to immersion. The content of knowledge has evolved from text that had to be cognized to include visual, audio and tactile immersive experiences.

5. Value based education- By 2047, Indian teachers will be engaged in nurturing global mindsets based on three classical values which are-Satyam (Authenticity), Nityam (Sustainability) and Purnam (Wholeness).

Way forward

In 2047, a teacher's role, based on five principles, will be to oversee the transformative re-birth of citizens. The most valuable outcome of education is the becoming of a competent and compassionate human being. Education is finally about creating and sustaining wholesome cultures rather than serving the templates of outmoded civilizations.

10. Disintegration of the criminal justice system

Source- The Hindu

Syllabus- GS 2- Structure, organization and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary—Ministries and Departments of the Government; pressure groups and formal/informal associations and their role in the Polity.

Context- A majority government can also selectively pursue only those crimes which it cares about.

What is happening to the criminal justice system in India?

1. There is a synergy between the crimes, its pursuit by an investigation and the calling to account of those found guilty which is unofficially referred to as a criminal justice system.
2. However in India, it is in disarray such as-
 - a. There was a crime, several crimes in fact. The State police decided to pursue it.
 - b. However, there was no waiting for a trial to condemn the accused and sentence him; punishment was swiftly meted out by the police itself.
 - c. So much so, that an erstwhile Supreme Court Judge felt that the State's version of events made it appear as if it did not even care whether the encounter story was believed or not.

For Example- The encounter of the Vikas Dubey in the State of Uttar Pradesh.

How is executive ruling the State of Uttar Pradesh instead of Judiciary?

The power to condemn was sourced not from a judicial order but from the power to level allegations, which is wholly an act of executive in scope. This way the police became judge, jury and executioner.

1. **Encounter without trial-** This State has always demonstrated willingness to punish without condemning an accused through a trial.
2. **Publishing massive hoardings-** It has passed a law enabling the publishing of massive hoardings with the names and personal details of persons allegedly involved in the destruction of property caused in riots following the Anti- Citizenship Act protests. All of this is done before a court convicted those people for these acts.
3. **Refuse to register FIR-**
 - Even when there was a serious offence and there were major injuries. The police did not register a case for hours.
 - However, where the police was not willing to register the rape case, it has swiftly registered at least 19 cases regarding an alleged conspiracy to use the incident for political purposes to show the State in a bad light.

For Example- The recent rape case of a young girl in the village Hathras, Uttar Pradesh.

What are the issues in Criminal Justice System in India?

1. **Growing disconnect between the Government and judiciary-** The bolstering of executive power as a result of this growing disconnect and the unsurprising imitation of executive-mindedness by the judiciary.
2. **Criminal Justice is suffering from Inertia-**
 - a. **Ineffectiveness-** The purpose of the criminal justice system was to protect the rights of the innocents and punish the guilty, but now-a-days system has become a tool of harassment of common people.
 - b. **Pendency of Cases-**In India police is seemingly super-efficient, but judiciary system is super slow.
 - According to Economic Survey 2018-19, there are about 3.5 crore cases pending in the judicial system, especially in district and subordinate courts, which leads to actualization of the maxim "Justice delayed is justice denied."
 - c. **Huge under trials-** India has one of the world's largest numbers of under trial prisoners.
 - According to NCRB -Prison Statistics India (2015), 67.2% of our total prison population comprises of under trial prisoners.
 - d. **Investigation-** Police is being a front line of the criminal judiciary system, which played a vital role in the administration of justice. Corruption, huge workload and accountability of police are a major hurdle in speedy and transparent delivery of justice.

Way forward-

Indian criminal justice mechanism suffers from lack of judiciary's accountability and cooperation between its investigation and prosecution wings, allowing criminals go scot free. India need to have a more effective and professional investigation system, better management of court procedures

11. Garib Kalyan Rozgar Abhiyan (GKRA)

Source: Indian Express

Syllabus: GS-2 Policy

Context: The central government launched the **Garib Kalyan Rozgar Abhiyan (GKRA)** to reduce the hardship of migrant workers.

What are the features of Garib Kalyan Rozgar Abhiyan?

- Objective is to provide employment and benefits to villages through the development of rural infrastructure using returning migrants' skills.
- The scheme only applies to districts which had at least 25,000 returning migrants.
- It is an umbrella scheme of 25 different government schemes under 12 ministries under Ministry of Rural Development.
- It covers 116 districts in six states for 125 days, that have large concentration of returning migrant workers with a financial outlay of Rs 50,000 crore.

Why selected districts are chosen for this programme?

- **Only certain districts have higher number of out migrants:** For example, states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar account for a large part of the out migration and the GKRA has 63 out of 116 districts in UP and Bihar.
- **Low capacity:** The poorest districts with the largest number of migrant workers are precisely the ones that need to generate employment, but have the least capacity to deliver.
- **Relative poorness:** GKRA districts are on average has low literacy rates and the proportion of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes population is high, and hence the emphasis on these districts seems justified.
- **Inefficient Public delivery programmes:** GKRA districts fare worse on average on an overall composite index of coverage and intensity than the other districts. For example, benefits of MGNREGA are highly concentrated on some selected beneficiaries.

12. Misinformation storm

Source: The Hindu

Syllabus: GS-2- Policy

Context: Those who use social media platforms must pull in another direction to maintain access to a range of sources and views.

How did the advent of internet changed the way news was presented and consumed?

▪ **The US experience:**

- **In the 1980s** hundreds of news organisations existed to serve these sorts of towns, much like they still do in multilingual India today.
- Contrary to the expectations of more media centres propping up with the advent of Internet, fewer news outlets with the advent of internet.
- Most Americans now get their news from dubious Internet sources.
- **Political polarisation:** The hardening of political stances on both sides of the divide is plain to see, and the acute polarisation of the average American's viewpoint.

What are possible effects of news delivery through the internet?

- **No journalistic norms:** Anyone can say anything at any time about any topic with slight respect for the truth as everything is an opinion generated on such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and Twitter.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of October (First week), 2020

- **The spread of false and malicious news** can stoke violence at short notice. For example: WhatsApp came under Indian regulatory scrutiny after a doctored video that originated as an innocent advertisement in Pakistan spread on that medium and stoked violence.

How is this worrisome for India?

- **Polarisation of viewpoint:** India could be going through the same political polarisation like the US in 4-5 years.
- **Highly targeted algorithms:** The algorithms were built around making users stay online longer and click through to advertisements.
 - They are likely to bombard users with information that serves to reinforce what the algorithm thinks the searcher needs to know.
 - For instance, if I show a preference for right-wing leaning posts, for instance, the algorithms are likely to provide me with ever more right-wing posts from people and organisations.
- Newly online Indians are bound to fall prey to **the echo chamber algorithms** and become easy marks for targeted advertising, both for products and of political viewpoints.

What is the way forward?

- India might need to chart its own path by **keeping tech firms under check** before they proliferate unlike the US.
- New Indian legislation needs to preserve free speech while still applying pressure to make sure that **Internet content is filtered for accuracy, and plain decency.**
- **Corporate responsibility:** regulatory attempts to influence the transparency of information that members of the public see are instead being converted into secret corporate processes and so strong intervention is required.
- Else, in addition to the media, which has largely been the responsible fourth estate, we may well witness the creation of **an unmanageable fifth estate in the form of Big Tech.**

13. Assisted Reproductive Technology (Regulation) Bill, 2020

Source: [Indian Express](#)

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

Context: Recently, the Assisted Reproductive Technology (Regulation) Bill, 2020 was introduced in the lok sabha by the Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan.

What are its objectives?

- It was introduced to supplement the Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill, 2019 which awaits consideration by the Rajya Sabha.
- The main objectives of the bill are (1) to regulate ART banks and clinics, (2) allow safe and ethical practice of ARTs and (3) protect women and children from exploitation.

What are the concerns associated with the bill?

Concerns on who can access ART:

- The Bill allows for a married heterosexual couple and a woman above the age of marriage to use ARTs.
- It excludes single men, cohabiting heterosexual couples and LGBTQI individuals and couples from accessing ARTs.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of October (First week), 2020

- This is a violation of Article 14 of the Constitution and the right to privacy enshrined in Puttaswamy case.
- It also violates Supreme Court directive in **Navtej Johar case** where the court insisted the state to take positive steps for equal protection for same-sex couples.
- It also fails to reflect the true spirit of the Constitution as there is no prohibition on foreign citizens accessing ART while Indian citizens in loving relationships cannot.

No holistic protection for the Egg donor

- Harvesting of eggs, if performed incorrectly, can result in death.
- The Bill fails to provide for the counselling of egg donor or the ability to withdraw her consent before or during the procedure.
- Fails to pay for bodily services as there is no compensation or reimbursement are provided for the expenses on loss of salary, time and effort.
- Only an insurance policy needs to be obtained by the commissioning parties in her name for medical complications or death; no amount or duration is specified.
- Unfree labour is prohibited by Article 23 of the Constitution.

Embryo donation for research purposes

- The Bill requires pre-implantation genetic testing to identify whether the embryo is healthy or diseased.
- If the embryo obtained suffers from pre-existing, heritable, life-threatening or genetic diseases, the embryo can be donated for research with the commissioning parties' permission.
- This provision of donating embryo with the commissioning parties' permission can promote an unregulated programme of eugenics.

Inconsistencies between Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill (SRB) and Assisted Reproductive Technology (Regulation) Bill, 2020 (ART).

- There is considerable overlap between both sectors, Yet the Bills do not work in common. For example, While Core ART processes are left undefined in ART bill, few of these are defined in the SRB.
- A single woman cannot commission surrogacy but can access ART.
- Both the Bills speak on setting up multiple bodies for registration which will result in duplication or worse, lack of regulation (e.g. surrogacy clinic is not required to report surrogacy to National Registry).
- Also, the same offending behaviours are punished differently under both Bills. For example, punishments under the SRB are greater than ART.
- Finally, the ART bill stipulates to maintain records for 10 years while under SRB it is for 25 years.

Other concerns associated with the bill

- The SRB and the Bill impose high sentences (8-12 years) and hefty fines. However, the poor enforcement of the PCPNDT Act, 1994, demonstrates that enhanced punishments do not secure compliance.
- Gamete shortage is likely as the gamete donation is not compensated.
- Further, the Bill's prohibition on the sale, transfer, or use of gametes and embryos is poorly worded and will confuse foreign and domestic parents relying on donated gametes.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of October (First week), 2020

- The bill fails to provide ethics committee in clinics rather it requires clinics and banks to maintain a grievance cell.

The Bill must be thoroughly reviewed before passage as it raises several constitutional, medico-legal, ethical and regulatory concerns, affecting millions.

14. Violence and justice for women

Source: The Indian Express

Syllabus: GS-2- Polity

Context: Crime against women needs a more firm response after the brutal murder of a young Dalit woman in Hathras.

What are the problems related to crime against women?

- **Quick justice missing:** National Crime Records Bureau statistics show that in 2019, 1,62,741 cases were pending for trial with an increase of about 17,000 from 2017.
- **Rate of conviction:** 18,333 cases were disposed of, out of which 5,822 resulted in conviction and 45,536 cases were pending for investigation. The rate of conviction is about 27 per cent.
- In 2017, **331 cases were of rape**, gang rape and murder but didn't make it to the headlines.
- **Many cases are not reported** in this country because of various reasons:
 - victim shaming
 - Concern about law enforcement
 - fear of revenges
 - Rape is a social stigma and the legal procedures are very lengthy, costly, and time intensive.

What are the issues with fast track dispensation of justice?

- **Poor implementation** on setting up of fast track courts, irregularities and shortages in both creation of infrastructure and staff as well as funds.
- Poor or no availability of forensic labs.
- **Limited number of police personnel:** Investigation becomes difficult with such a large number of cases given and the same police personnel will serve these courts as well.
- **There is no examination** of what is needed to ensure proper and timely investigation of rape cases and the same investigation and judicial procedures will apply in these courts.
- Delays in dispensation of justice were said to have contributed to the Hyderabad Police shooting down four accused last year.

What is the way forward?

- **Delayed matters should be brought to a lawful end quickly.**
- There is need for **clear allotting of fast track procedures** for investigation and trial which include the presence of witnesses, examination of police personnel, issues of fixing dates/adjournments/cross-examination etc.
- **Social reform is necessary** and we have to collectively strengthen all the ways in which the position of women in society can be improved.
- In majority of the cases, the victim is attacked by known persons and in India, the position is made worse when the victim belongs to the SC/ST group, like in the Hathras case.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of October (First week), 2020

- **Ability to identify more serious cases:** Where witnesses are available, conviction appears likely. Such cases, possibly 30-40 per cent of the cases, should be especially fast tracked.
- **The ministries of home and law and justice should monitor**, through a special template, on a weekly basis, the cases which have been prioritised.
- The chief ministers of states, chief justices of high courts, chief secretary, **DG Police should be given the feedback** so that they can take steps, or issue instructions, to advance investigation/trials.
- **The Chief Justice could head a committee in the state** to review regularly. This will take some of their time but will send a strong message to all concerned.

15. CAG audit- Improvement in disaster management

Source- The Hindu

Syllabus - GS 2- Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability, e-governance applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential; citizens charters, transparency & accountability and institutional and other measures.

Context- The Public Account Committee (PAC) directed the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) to conduct a special audit into purchase of COVID-19 equipment.

What are the directions given by PAC?

Former Congress Minister and PAC chairman H.K. Patil has chaired a meeting of the panel and instructed the CAG to constitute a special team of its employees to get the audit.

1. The State Legislature's Public Accounts Committee (PAC) directed the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) to conduct a special audit into the purchase of COVID-19 equipment within 15 days.
2. The panel has also asked the CAG to conduct audit of expenditure incurred by the State government under the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF). The government had used the SDRF amount for purchase of equipment in various districts of the State.

Why there is need to conduct a special audit?

Political allegation- The congress has alleged a scam to the tune of ₹2000 crore were siphoned off to purchase inferior quality of personal protective equipment kits, sanitizers, ventilator, masks and other equipment at prices higher than those prevailing in the market.

Efficiency – A beneficiary survey will become part of the audit process to bring out efficacy of service delivery and the availability and quality of drugs.

However, emergency procurement to save lives and reduce sufferings are a chance to confuse rules and procedures in procurement.

What is the objective of CAG auditing?

1. Improvement in disaster management-

- Audit recommendations can contribute improvement in various aspects of disaster preparedness, management and mitigation.
- It will usher in better transparency, integrity, honesty, effective service delivery and compliance with rules and procedure and governance.
- The audit will focus on expense tracking and achievement of outputs and outcome, in qualitative and quantitative terms.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of October (First week), 2020

- The audit objectives may include the procurement of equipment and drugs for CGHS wellness centers and polyclinic, laboratories and hospitals.
- 2. Public assurance-** The audit will provide assurance to people's representatives, tax payers and public at large that government resources are being used prudentially, economically efficiently and effectively as per law and regulation.

Way forward-

With corruption likely in pandemic management, the CAG's audit can ensure checks and balance in the health sector. There is a substantial need of improvement in disaster management and preparedness. The internal audit must also ensure compliance with applicable procedures even in disaster related disbursements and procurement process and provide valuable inputs to the external audit conducted by the CAG.

16. Impacted Mental Health during Pandemic

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- The fear of being infected and anxiety about an uncertain present and future have impacted mental health of vulnerable communities during the pandemic.

How the Covid- 19 pandemic has impacted population around the world?

1. Change in daily lives-

- Before the pandemic, India's progress as one of the fastest growing economies led to large paradigm shifts in the daily lives of its citizens.
- Major lifestyle shifts led to the rise of many lifestyle disorders.
- The pandemic has completely changed the way people live.

2. New Normal- Necessary precautions such as social distancing, limited interactions and mask usage have become the new normal, with huge social, physical, economic and mental consequences.

3. Dire socio-economic conditions arise- Mass migration, unemployment and economic distress — make at-risk groups even more vulnerable during such times.

4. Rising stress-

- While progress on a COVID-19 vaccine is promising, uncertainty as a result of the pandemic is here to stay for the foreseeable future.
- The fear of getting infected, coupled with a lack of knowledge, isolation from the community and the economic fallout has created a new level of stress.

5. Vulnerable Population- The most who are susceptible to greater risks of infections are- Health-care workers, infected people, the elderly, migrant workers, those from resource-poor backgrounds, women facing domestic violence, individuals with compromised immunity, and those suffering from physical or psychological problems.

What are the reasons behind the increase in suicides during pandemic?

- 1. Lack of care in the treatment institution-** The findings reveal that one in four of these deaths occurred among hospitalised patients, demonstrating the need for extra care and vigilance during institutional treatment for either COVID-19 or any other illness.
- 2. Alcohol or drug addiction-** The sudden closure of alcohol/liquor outlets resulted in an increase in alcohol-related suicides.
- 3. Ignorance of early signs of poor mental health-** Such as a sudden change in behaviour, substance use, anxiety, disturbed sleep and difficulty in communication.

What are the necessary steps to prevent suicide?

- 1. Avoid distressing information-** While the feeling of uncertainty during this pandemic is normal, being informed and limiting ourselves to authentic sources of information and reducing exposure to distressing news is a good mechanism.
- 2. Educate people for their health-** Any sudden change in health should not be ignored.
- 3. Creation of national suicide prevention strategy-** The plan incorporates the three universal strategies-
 - A ban or reduction in access to highly hazardous pesticides.
 - Reduction in consumption and availability of alcohol.
 - A non-sensationalised and responsible portrayal of suicide by the media.
- 4. Media role in awareness-** The media would need to follow Press Council of India's guidelines on reportage of suicide and also create awareness about suicide prevention.
- 5. Destigmatising suicide-** There is urgent need for Destigmatising suicide as a phenomenon and encourage in large platform to seek help from the counsellor.
- 6. Regular Contact support-** It is to ensure there is an increase in the number of functional and accessible helplines and training of gatekeepers. If suicide has been attempted the individual has the required intervention and regular contact support.

Way Forward

The need is of understanding, compassion and support at both an individual and systemic levels. As we continue to fight the novel coronavirus, there is a growing need to make mental health and suicide prevention a priority. A majority of individuals who are suicidal do not really want to die but find living difficult. Support at the right moment can change one's life decision.

17. Supreme court verdict on shaheen Bagh protest

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus: Gs2: Development Processes and the Development Industry — the Role of NGOs, SHGs, various groups and associations

Context: Analysing the Supreme Court verdict on shaheen Bagh protest.

What did the court say?

- The Court observed that the administration neither negotiated with the protesters in Shaheen Bagh nor tried to clear the scene.
- It appreciated the existence of the right to peaceful protest against a legislation.
- The Supreme Court stated that public places cannot be occupied indefinitely and protests must be allowed only in designated areas.
- It has directed the government to take necessary action to remove encroachments and obstructions placed during such protests.
- The Court's view is of balancing the two contrasting rights, the right to protest and the right to free movement.

Are protests legal?

- Protests, derive legitimacy from the rightness of the underlying cause and the extent of public support and doesn't confirm to legality always.
- In many cases, they are against laws and regulations perceived as unjust. For example, flash strike, spontaneous road block, a call for a complete shutdown, or a campaign to fill up jails by defying prohibitory orders.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of October (First week), 2020

- Though they are not strictly legal they are inevitable part of the culture of protest in a democracy.

What would be the implication of Supreme Court ruling?

- The administration could delegitimise protest and restrict freedom of assembly by stating any of the reasons, that the peaceful protest had continued too long, or in a place inconvenient to others.
- For example, the earlier ruling by the courts, that any 'bandh' is illegal, led to routine stay on sector-wide strikes.
- It will undermine the larger democratic need for public expression of dissent in a manner and place that would be most effective.
- Both principles, the need for balance between the right to protest and the right to free movement, and the rule that protests should take place at designated areas are only beneficial from an administrative perspective.

What is the way forward?

- The ruling should not form the basis for suppression of such protests by the force of the state.
- Sudden, democratic resistance should not automatically invite the state's actions

18. World Food program

Source: The Indian Express

Syllabus; GS-2- International Relations

Context: The winner of Nobel peace prize 2020 is the UN agency World Food Programme (WFP) which has fought hunger around the world.

What is the WFP?

- Then US President Dwight Eisenhower had suggested **the idea of providing food aid through the UN system.**
- It was established in 1961.
- The WFP is **headquartered in Rome, Italy.** It is governed by an Executive Board, which consists of 36 member states.
- **It is headed by an Executive Director,** who is appointed jointly by the UN Secretary-General and the Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations for a fixed five-year terms.
- **Humanitarian crisis:** More than 12,000 people died in an earthquake in Boein Zahra in northern Iran. The WFP sent tonnes of wheat, sugar and tea.
- It played an important role in providing food aid in Thailand and Algeria.

What is the scale of its work?

- The WFP is **the world's largest humanitarian agency** battling hunger. In 2019, it assisted 97 million people in 88 countries, which is the largest number since 2012.
- **It delivered about 4.4 million tonnes of food,** purchased \$1.7 billion worth of food from 91 countries, and \$762 million worth of goods and services from 156 countries.
- WFP has **5,600 trucks, 30 ships and nearly 100 planes** on the move, delivering food and other assistance to those in most need
- WFP has unmatched **reputation as an emergency responder,** one that gets the job done quickly at scale in the most difficult environments.
- WFP has been a **constant presence for the poor and the needy,** refugees and the homeless all over the globe irrespective of how difficult the situation is.

Why does the world need a food programme?

- **The WFP is the UN's primary agency that works towards eradicating hunger** which is one of UN's Sustainable Development Goals to be achieved by 2030.
- **Hungry people:** According to the WFP, there are 690 million hungry people around the world and around 60% of them live in countries affected by conflict. The number of hungry people is expected to increase further due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- The WFP estimates suggest that by 2030, nearly half of the global poor will be living in fragile and conflict-affected situations.
- People living in countries with long-running crises are more than **twice as likely to be undernourished** than people elsewhere (2.5 times as much).

What is WFP's role in India?

- **It provides policy inputs, advocacy, technical assistance** for improving access to food and focuses on reforms in the **Targeted Public Distribution System**.
- **Unique initiatives:** The WFP has proposed initiatives like Automatic Grain Dispensing Machine (Annapurta) and Mobile Storage Units for the effective implementation of TPDS.
- **Annapurta** allows beneficiaries to withdraw their foodgrain quota accurately and at a time of their choice.
- It can dispense two commodities at a speed of 25 kg per 1.3 minutes and has a storage capacity of 200 kg to 500 kg.
- WFP India has completed a pilot on **rice fortification used in the government's Mid-day Meals scheme in Varanasi**.
- 4,145 tonnes of fortified rice has been produced and fed to 300,000 schoolchildren since 2018.
- WFP will provide technical assistance for **setting up supplementary nutrition production units** in 18 districts for supply of quality food to about 33 lakh beneficiaries of the Anganwadi scheme (Integrated Child Development Services).

What has the Nobel Committee said while declaring the award?

- **The Norwegian Nobel Committee** highlighted the work done by the WFP to eradicate hunger and underlined its role in the wake of the Covid-19 outbreak.
- The World Food Programme has demonstrated an impressive ability to **intensify its efforts during the pandemic**.

Way forward

- WFP continues to work to provide food to the hungry and homeless amid a pandemic as the organisation believes that food is the best vaccine against chaos.

19. TRP (Television Rating Point) scandal

Source: [Indian Express](#)

Syllabus: Gs2: Statutory, Regulatory and various Quasi-judicial Bodies

Context: Recently the Mumbai police unearthed the TRP (Television Rating Point) scandal.

How the Broadcast Audience Research Council (BARC) came in to being?

The TAM controversy

- Initially, there were two rating agencies — Television Audience Measurement (TAM) and INTAM in India.
- However, the data produced by them were contradicting each other, causing great confusion.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of October (First week), 2020

- Also, during 2002-03, declaring a private channel as number one channel, which had just 4 per cent share by TAM brought suspicion because 35 out of the top 50 programmes in all TV homes were of Door darshan channel.

Revelation through investigation: The following irregularities were found out

- The poors were paid as little as 400 rupees per month to keep the bribing channel open, throughout the day.
- There were only about 2,000 meters measuring the audience, and this figure was being deduced for the country's one-billion population.
- Also, there was an issue of conflict of interest. A top international TV network famous for its highly-viewed serials had common ownership with the grand (parent) organisation of the research agency.

The Exit of TAM and the birth of Broadcast Audience Research Council (BARC)

- In 2008, The TAM Controversy was raised in the Parliament. TAM was accused for not having adequate "people meter" (instrument used for measuring the audience) and corruption.
- Later, NDTV sued TAM and Nielsen, a global TV rating agency for allegedly manipulating viewership data in India.
- Followed by this, the then IB minister Ranjan Dasmunshi also voiced her concern regarding TAM.
- Finally, in 2008, The Ministry of Information and broadcasting (MIB) asked the Telecom Regulatory Authority (TRAI) to frame policy guidelines for rating agencies.
- TRAI recommended an approach of self-regulation through the setting up of the Broadcast Audience Research Council (BARC), an industry-led body.
- On July 2015, The MIB, accredited BARC to carry out the television ratings in India.
- Following this, TAM exited TV viewership measurement. Since then, BARC is the sole provider of TV rating services on a commercial basis.

What is the current Issue?

- A similar issue that took place during the TAM years has now taken place under the BARC regime.
- Around 2,000 barometers installed in Mumbai were being used to manipulate TRPs.

What is the way forward?

- With a huge penetration of Direct to Home (DTH) television, the set-top box can now be tweaked to record which channel is being actually watched.
- Even if a fraction of these are adapted as audience monitors, it will be a huge number and provide fool proof data better than the small sample of 40 thousand people-meters with a history of manipulation.

Manipulation of TRP's is not only a financial fraud but a fraud on the people's right to know the truth, which the media is morally and legally bound to provide.

General Studies Paper - 3

General Studies - 3

1. The end of 'Inspector Raj'- Labour and Farm Bill

Source- The Indian Express

Syllabus- GS 3- Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment.

Context- Reforms are broadly about leaving resource allocation and production decisions to market forces rather than know-all ministers and bureaucrats.

What were the challenges faced by general people working in the Agriculture and Labour sector after the Independence?

Farmers in Agriculture Sector-

- They had been treated as captive sources of producing cheap food grain while living at subsistence levels.
- There was no freedom to choose the point of sale for his produce, they could not decide the price of their product and had no say in selecting the buyer.

In Labour Sector-

1. Entrepreneurs-

- If one even thought of becoming an entrepreneur, there were 44 different labour laws with more than 1,200 sections and clauses that demanded compliance.
- Different inspectors and departments administered those laws and the tyranny of "inspector raj" hindered or killed many entrepreneurial journeys from taking flight.

2. Private Investors- The Companies Act of 2013 needed to be reform as the Bill had many adverse provisions, one of which was to criminalise even otherwise normal civil infractions of routine nature. The Bill completely paralysed risk-taking and quick decision-making among the private wealth creators.

3. Financial sectors -

- They are completely outside the ambit of RBI regulation.
- They served millions of ordinary people, but had no standard governance norms or binding regulations to protect customer interest.
- The politicians who controlled these banks were the primary obstacles in introducing any reforms in these sectors.

What are the reforms that will change the life of farmers in Agricultural Sector and labours in Labour sector?

Farmers in Agricultural Sector-

- Now he can sell his produce wherever he wants, to whomsoever he wants and at whatever price he can command.
- If he gets a higher price in the market, then he is free to take it else the security of MSP anyhow exists.
- The stifling nature of the Essential Commodities Act and the APMC Act has both been removed.
- Contract farming is now nationally enabled, allowing private investment to come in, which will bring in technology, modern equipment, better seeds, and know-how for in-between-season crops, improved yields, better logistics and freer access to national and international markets.

In Labour Sector-

1. Labour Laws-

- The web of 44 central labour laws has been dismantled.
- The Parliament has now put in place four labour codes that are much simpler —
 - a. The Code on Wages.
 - b. The Industrial Relations Code.
 - c. The Social Security Code.
 - d. The Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code.
- They universalise minimum and timely payment of wages among a host of other labour-friendly measures.
- They enable ease of doing business by bringing in a regime of one-registration, one-licence and one-return. The tyranny of “inspector raj” is finally over.

2. Private investors- The perverse sections of the Companies Act 2013 have been done away with and the fear of criminal prosecution that hung over every corporate decision is now history.

3. Banks-

- The bilateral banking netting law has been passed and a large corpus of unproductive capital has been freed to be deployed in the market.
- Cooperative banks will now be regulated by the RBI and its customers will have the same protections as those of other regular banks.

Way Forward

The bureaucracy must ensure that the fruits of these reforms reach the last mile.

2. C&AG's report on GST compensation cess

Source- The Hindu

Syllabus- GS 3- Government Budgeting.

Context- In its audit report on the accounts of the Union Government, the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) has pointed out grave lapses in the accounting of revenue from the GST compensation cess.

What are the key findings of the CAG report related to cess?

- 1. Retained in the Consolidated Fund of India** - The GST Compensation Cess with ₹47,272 crore, was not remitted to its rightful account over the first two years of GST.
 - Union Finance Ministry quietly retained over 40% of all cess collections in 2018-19 in the Consolidated Fund of India (CFI).
- 2. Short transfer to the Public Account** - As many as 35 different cesses, levies and charges yielded ₹2.75-lakh crore in the year, but just around ₹1.64-lakh crore was remitted to the specific reserve funds for which these cesses were levied.
- 3. Crude Oil Cess** - Over 10 years, not a single penny 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.
- 4. Central Road and Infrastructure Fund** - 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.
- 5. A new 4% Health and Education Cess on income tax** was partly deployed towards education, but no fund was created for health. Same with a Social Welfare surcharge levied on customs.

What is the mechanism of utilization of compensation cess?

Transfer of reserve funds- Cesses and levies collected are required to be first transferred to designated Reserve Funds and utilized for the specific purposes intended by Parliament.

- Funds collected through Central taxes along with cesses and other levies go to the CFI.
- Taxes and surcharges in CFI are parked in a divisible pool and 42% of the total is given to States as devolution.

What are the major reasons for the proliferation of cesses in India?

Inter- governmental fiscal arrangement-

1. **Lack of transparency-** Article 271 excludes the distribution of the revenue from any surcharge or cess levied by the Union government for any specified purpose, revenues from these sources do not form part of the divisible tax pool and are thus not shared with states. The lack of transparency in the accounting of these funds is undesirable.
 2. **Complexities in Tax structure-** There are as many as 35 earmarked cesses, it is difficult to see all of them as priority areas requiring protection of funding. Too many cesses also complicate the tax system and add to administrative and compliance costs. There are debates over whether such levies are in sync with a nation trying to simplify its tax regime.
- The operation of the cesses involving collections and transfer to designated funds in the Public Accounts makes the entire process opaque as the operation of these funds too needs to be monitored and audited.

Way forward

Taxes in democratic societies indicate the presence of a collective socio-economic vision aimed at improving livelihoods. Since a cess is introduced with a specific purpose, it is unjustified when the proceeds remain unutilized for so many years. It is high time that the government immediately begins utilizing cess proceeds. Importantly, it should also publish an annual account of the manner in which they have been utilized.

3. Labour bills

Source: The Indian Express

Syllabus: GS-3- Economics

Context: Government's response to migrants' plight, economic crisis, has been to unilaterally bring changes in labour laws.

How has the share of circular migrants and workers outside agriculture changed over the years?

- **Employment security:** scarce jobs in industry and services increasingly became jobs which did not offer any job security.
- Between 2004-05 and 2017-18, the share of salaried workers outside agriculture without any written contract increased from **60 per cent to 71 per cent.**
 - In private and public limited companies, this share increased **from 59 per cent to 71 per cent.**
- **The share of the circular migrants** in all the risky jobs outside of agriculture increased over this period from 47 per cent to 57 per cent.
- **In organised manufacturing,** the reported share of contract labour increased from **13 per cent in 1995-06 to 36 per cent in 2017-18.**

What are the changes introduced in the ecosystem of labour laws?

- **The three revised labour Code Bills** were on Industrial Relations, Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions, and Social Security
- These three labour codes, along with the Code on Wages approved earlier, **affect the lives of every Indian worker**, except a tiny section of the public sector and managerial employees.
- In 2018, the government amended the **Standing Orders on Employment Act and introduced the category of “fixed term” worker**. That category, which creates a permanent unit of temporary workers, with no prospects of career growth and job security.
- Various government **spokespersons had rationalised fixed-term employment** by arguing that industries had resorted to the third-party engagement of contract labour to get around the rigidities in firing workers.
- **Codes further liberalised the provisions** relating to employment of contract labour and making their regulation applicable only in establishments employing 50 or more workers, instead of 20 or more.
- **The key provisions which regulate the employment** of inter-state migrant workers have been further diluted and made applicable only to establishments employing 10 or more such workers, compared to five earlier.
- **The threshold for factories:** It has been doubled from 10 to 20 workers with power and therefore eliminating a large number of important regulatory provisions for the smaller factories.
- Relevant **governments have been given much more scope in excusing establishments** from the applicability of a whole range of provisions in the Code.
- **Inspection provisions have been diluted** in all the Codes and will no longer even be complaints based.

Comment on the changes made in the bill?

- These changes may appeal to **narrow-minded interests** which believe that industrial prosperity can be built on a race to the bottom for workers.
- **The National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganised Sector (NCEUS)** has clearly argued, **informality contributes to inequality** and to conditions which make sustainable growth impossible, and economic recovery more difficult.
- **Low productivity and lack of competitiveness:** It also creates conditions in which employers under-invest in workers’ capacities and workers are not invested in a company’s future.

Way forward

- The NCEUS calls for changes which balanced employers’ interests with workers’ security and rights. It is this thinking that has led somewhat more enlightened governments, and industrialists, in India and the world over, to investing in the long-term future of workers.

4. Biodiversity and Pandemic

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus: GS-3- Environment

Context: India’s pandemic recovery must be greened as the country is a key member of biodiversity convention.

Why should India should plan a green trajectory after Covid-19?

- **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD):** The body acknowledged the link between biodiversity loss and the spread of animal pathogens and called for an end to destructive industrial and commercial practices.
- **UN Global Biodiversity Outlook 5 report:** None of the 20 targets has been fully met. Many countries have chosen to ignore the connection between biodiversity and well-being, and depleted ecological capital in a quest for financial prosperity.
- **Conservation targets set a decade ago**, to be achieved by 2020 were:
 - reform or phasing out of subsidies that erode biodiversity
 - steps for resource use within safe ecological limits
 - preventing industrial fisheries from destroying threatened species and vulnerable ecosystems
 - an end to pollution, including growing plastic waste
 - protecting surface and subsurface water, inland, coastal and marine areas
- **WWF's Living Planet Index:** It points out 68 per cent decline in vertebrate populations over 1970 levels.
- **India has recognised the value of nature** as much as the destructive impact of unregulated resources exploitation.
- **National laws of the 1970s and 1980s** have indeed protected islands of biodiversity, particularly in about 5% of the country's land designated as protected areas
- **The new EIA norms:** There is little concern for indigenous communities that have nurtured biodiversity, and there was no effort to make them strong partners in improving the health of forests and buffer zones.

Way forward

- The 196 CBD member-countries must chart a greener course, aligning it with the Paris Agreement, which has a significant impact on the health of flora and fauna.
- India too has the opportunity to plan a trajectory of green growth after COVID-19, around clean energy, ecological agriculture, a freeze on expansion of mining and dam-building, resource recovery from waste, and regeneration of arid lands.

5. India's inflation targeting policy

Source - Live Mint

Syllabus- GS-3 Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment.

Context- Inflation targeting and the decisions of Monetary Policy Committee (MPC).

What causes inflation?

The primary cause of inflation is the mismatch between demand and supply. The mismatch can be in following context-

1. **Excess money supply that raises aggregate demand**
2. **Supply deficiency** (A shortfall in the production of a commodity fails to meet even the basic needs of the citizens and thus prices raise causing inflation).

What is the new monetary framework?

The agreement between the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the central government signed in February 2015. The agreement explicitly made inflation targeting the objective of the MPC while using the repo rate as the instrument for it.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of October (First week), 2020

- **Rate steady-** The Reserve Bank's MPC was given the target of keeping inflation at 4% with a tolerance limit of 2%. This meant that inflation should be between 2% and 6%.
- **Contrasting target** - The target was in contrast with the multiple indicator approach that predated this framework where the central bank focused on both growth and price stability.

Thus, RBI was finally free to do its core job as guardian of the rupee's value and granting currency the stability needed to serve as a credible unit for long-range forecasts.

What is inflation targeting? What are the views of critics?

Inflation targeting refers to keeping inflation rate within the permissible band so that business houses can plan their investment activities.

Procedure-

1. **Review meeting-** (every two months): Where MPC discuss the likely inflation and growth estimates over the coming months.
2. **Targeting inflation:** Based on this review, the MPC targets inflation using the policy rate, or the repo rate.

Critics' view-

- Inflation targeting was ill-suited to an emerging economy like India.
- Flexible regime with a wide inflation band was far too rigid to foster growth.

Inflation in India has been subdued since the new monetary policy framework was brought in. Many view this as a sign of its success in India while others point at the tight policy and its adverse impact on India's growth rate as a sign of problems with the framework, which has come at the cost of growth.

Way forward

Centre must not act in haste to abandon inflation targeting. Price stability is a goal too worthy to give up on. For the sake of fairness, if not the rupee, government should resist the temptation to use the "money illusion" of inflation for short-term ends.

6. Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC 2016)

Source: The Hindu

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

Background: The Prime Minister mentioned that Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC 2016) would help aid India's path to self-reliance.

What are the issues hindering investments in India?

- **Backlog in court cases:** nearly four crore matters pending final judgment.
- **The enforceability of contracts:** On an average, it takes 1,445 days for a contract to be enforced, and that too at a cost of nearly 31% of the claim value.
- **Criminal penalties:** imprisonment for minor offences act as major deterrents for investors.

What is the importance of IBC in promoting investment climate in India?

- Replaced the inefficient bankruptcy law regime.
- It has transformed insolvency resolution in India by streamlining insolvency processes in a sustainable, efficient, and value retaining manner.
- It focuses on prioritising resolution rather than liquidation.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of October (First week), 2020

- Relatively short time-bound processes. With IBC in place, the overall time taken in recovery improved nearly three times. (4.3 years in 2018 to 1.6 years in 2019).
- It has successfully instilled confidence in the corporate resolution methodology.
- Increased the possibility for the creditors in recovering some of their investments in firms being liquidated. With IBC in place, the recovery rate improved nearly threefold (26.5% in 2018 to 71.6% in 2019).
- Besides promoting investor and investee confidence it has allowed credit to flow more freely to and within India.
- IBC reforms improved the ease of doing business in India that resulted in increased Foreign Direct Investment into India during 2019-2020.
- Instilled greater confidence in both foreign and domestic investors. It will help in enabling India to emerge as a 'Make for World' platform.

What are the other steps taken by government to promote investments?

- Government of India is working toward decriminalisation of minor offences which will significantly reduce the risk of imprisonment for actions that are not necessary.
- The rolling out of the commercial courts, commercial divisions and the Commercial Appellate Divisions Act, 2015, to resolve pending cases
- The removal of over 1,500 obsolete and archaic laws.

7. India's inflation targeting policy

Source - Live Mint

Syllabus- GS-3 Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment.

Context- Inflation targeting and the decisions of Monetary Policy Committee (MPC).

What causes inflation?

The primary cause of inflation is the mismatch between demand and supply. The mismatch can be in following context-

1. **Excess money supply that raises aggregate demand**
2. **Supply deficiency** (A shortfall in the production of a commodity fails to meet even the basic needs of the citizens and thus prices raise causing inflation).

What is the new monetary framework?

The agreement between the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the central government signed in February 2015. The agreement explicitly made inflation targeting the objective of the MPC while using the repo rate as the instrument for it.

- **Rate steady-** The Reserve Bank's MPC was given the target of keeping inflation at 4% with a tolerance limit of 2%. This meant that inflation should be between 2% and 6%.
- **Contrasting target** - The target was in contrast with the multiple indicator approach that predated this framework where the central bank focused on both growth and price stability.

Thus, RBI was finally free to do its core job as guardian of the rupee's value and granting currency the stability needed to serve as a credible unit for long-range forecasts.

What is inflation targeting? What are the views of critics?

Inflation targeting refers to keeping inflation rate within the permissible band so that business houses can plan their investment activities.

Procedure-

1. **Review meeting-** (every two months): Where MPC discuss the likely inflation and growth estimates over the coming months.
2. **Targeting inflation:** Based on this review, the MPC targets inflation using the policy rate, or the repo rate.

Critics' view-

- Inflation targeting was ill-suited to an emerging economy like India.
- Flexible regime with a wide inflation band was far too rigid to foster growth.

Inflation in India has been subdued since the new monetary policy framework was brought in. Many view this as a sign of its success in India while others point at the tight policy and its adverse impact on India's growth rate as a sign of problems with the framework, which has come at the cost of growth.

Way forward

Centre must not act in haste to abandon inflation targeting. Price stability is a goal too worthy to give up on. For the sake of fairness, if not the rupee, government should resist the temptation to use the "money illusion" of inflation for short-term ends.

8. Power sector in India

Source- The Indian Express

Syllabus- **GS 3-** Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc.

Context- The financial hole into which the DISCOMS have fallen will deepen in light of COVID.

What is UDAY scheme?

- Launched in November 2015, the Ujjwal DISCOM Assurance Yojana (UDAY) was designed to turn around the precarious financial position of state distribution companies (DISCOMS).
- The state governments took over 75 % of the debt of their DISCOMS, issuing lower-interest bonds to service the rest of the debt.
- In return, DISCOMS were given target dates (2017-19) to meet efficiency parameters like reduction in power lost through transmission, theft and faulty metering.

What is the current situation of State Electricity Distribution Companies DISCOMS in India?

DISCOMS today are facing unprecedented cash flow problems-

1. Loss-

- The losses of DISCOMS, which had reduced in 2016-18, have nearly doubled in 2019 to INR 28,036 crore.
- DISCOMS have also missed the FY 2019 UDAY target to bring down their aggregate technical and commercial (AT&C) losses to 15 %.

2. The finance minister allocated Rs 1.25 lakh crore to DISCOMS in her Rs 20-lakh crore stimulus package. This is roughly the amount the government portal, PRAAPTI, indicates are the dues owed by DISCOMS to the power generators.

What were the reasons for failure of UDAY scheme?

1. While the ACS-ARR gap was supposed to be eliminated by FY19, it remains as high as Rs 0.25 per unit.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of October (First week), 2020

- a. Part of the problem can be traced to inadequate tariff hikes. Currently, only four states — Himachal Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Karnataka — had recorded an ACS-ARR below 0.
2. The issue of whether the power subsidy released by state governments is adequate.
3. Dues by state DISCOMS to power generators have risen.

What are the fundamental problems in DISCOM sector in India and it's possible Solutions?

1. **Cross- subsidy-** Electricity price for certain segments such as agriculture and the domestic category is cross-subsidized by the industries and the commercial sector. This affects the competitiveness of industry.
2. **Led behind in eliminating the electricity cost gap-** There is the problem of AT&C, which is a technical term that stands for the gap between the cost of the electricity that DISCOMS gets from the generating company, the bills that it raises and the final realization from the collection process from end-consumers.

Solution-

1. **Clearing dues-** The stakeholders involved in the electricity value chain (generators, transmission companies, DISCOMS, consumers, regulators and state governments) to clear their dues to each other, the DISCOMS would look much stronger.
2. **Efficiency-** The AT&C (aggregate transmission and distribution losses) losses need to go down, and billing and collection efficiencies should go up.

Way forward

Need of an hour is a multi-pronged and networked overhaul of the DISCOM sector and, in particular, the regulatory structure and deliverables. All stakeholders will have to take a haircut. COVID will introduce a new pressure point (i.e. Generation Z and the millennial) on governments that would compel them to look at the inherited structural problems through a different angle.

9. The non-violent economic model

Source- [Live Mint](#)

Syllabus- **GS 3-** Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment.

Context- The year of corona may yet shift the focus from Gandhi as an icon of political protest to Gandhi as a far-sighted economic thinker.

What were the ideologies to solve the economic problems during the Great Depression, 1930?

1. **John Maynard Keynes-** People must pretend to ourselves and to everyone that fair is foul and foul is fair; for foul is useful and fair is not. Avarice and usury and precaution must be our gods for a little longer still.
2. **Mahatma Gandhi-** The charkha and rejuvenation of local economies. Gandhi's primary focus was on the profound structural violence unleashed by this assumption that lies at the heart of modernity.
3. **David Graeber, American anarchist philosopher and anthropologist-** He was credited with inspiring the Occupy Wall Street movement and coining the evocative term "99% vs. 1%" to describe wealth disparity.

Thus, Non-violent economics shifts the focus from wealth distribution to difficult questions about what constitutes value and how it might be measured.

What are the developments on the world stage that created hope of overturning the worship of greed?

Over the last 30 years, there were two major developments-

1. **The rise of the free or open software movement-** The open software movement gifted us the World Wide Web when its creator Tim Berners-Lee refused to patent its protocols.

However, the democratizing and decentralizing potential of the web has been cannibalized by Google, Facebook, etc.

2. **Manipulation** - Today's internet giants use their manipulative power that could undermine mental health and democratic institutions across the world.

Is there any hope for a non-violent economy?

1. **COVID** - It might serve as a wake-up call for leaders and foot soldiers of the current global disorder. The link between environmental degradation and proliferation of ever-more-deadly pathogens is more widely acknowledged.
2. **If value is equated with money-** People are shockingly vulnerable as long as value is equated with money. If supply chains break down for long enough, even millionaires are in danger of starving.
3. **GDP as a measure-** It is now more widely recognized that gross domestic product (GDP) as a measure of economic activity is grievously misleading. For instance, it doesn't take into account the negative externalities of using fossil fuels.
4. **Green accounting and HDI-** Creating a combined measure that tracks social(HDI) and environmental well-being(green accounting practices) is now a survival imperative.

Way Forward

Bhutan's gross national happiness mechanism, the genuine progress index (GPI) developed by think-tank GPI Atlantic etc hold promise because instead of directly attacking the "foul is fair" assumption by seeking to make it less lucrative.

10. Farms Bills

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus: Gs3: Issues and Challenges Pertaining to the Federal Structure, Devolution of Powers

Context: The passage of the three Farm Acts has raised a constitutional debate on Union's powers to legislate on state subjects.

What are the three contentious farm bills?

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

What is the controversy around Entry 33 in concurrent list?

- Following subjects are on the state list:
 - Agriculture
 - Trade and commerce within the State, production, supply and distribution of goods
 - Markets and fairs are enumerated as states subject.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of October (First week), 2020

- However, the trade and commerce within the State (Entry 26) & production, supply and distribution of goods (Entry 27) are subjected to the provisions of Entry 33 of concurrent list after the 3rd amendment act, 1954.
- As per Article 369, the responsibility of agricultural trade and commerce within a State was temporarily entrusted to the Union government for a period of five years beginning from 1950. However, the 1954 Amendment changed this into a permanent feature in the Constitution.
- Despite many opposed, stating that the Bill would lead to an expanding encroachment on the rights of the States the Bill was passed. Now the same Entry 33 was invoked to encroach the powers of the States.

What are the directives given by Supreme Court in I.T.C. Limited vs. Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) case 2002?

- The development of the tobacco industry was brought under the Centre through the Tobacco Board Act, 1975.
- However, Bihar's APMC Act continued to list tobacco as an agricultural produce.
- In this case, the question was if the APMC could charge a levy on ITC for the purchase of unprocessed tobacco leaves from growers.
- The then Constitution Bench upheld the validity of the State APMC Act, and provided some important directives :
 - a) Market fees can be charged from ITC under the State APMC Act
 - b) State laws become repugnant only if the State and Centre enact laws on the same subject matter under an Entry in List III.
 - c) In those cases, outside List III, one has to first examine if the subject matter was an exclusive entry under List I or List II, and only after determining this can one decide on the dominant legislation that would prevail.

How the directives of Supreme Court related to present Farm Acts of 2020?

- In the case of the Farm Acts of 2020, the applicable points are (a) and (c).
- With regard to (a), States could continue to charge mandi taxes from private markets anywhere in the notified area regardless of the Central Act.
- With regard to (c), the State legislation should prevail as agriculture is an exclusive subject matter under Entry 14 in List II.

Why the recent Farm Acts are said to have poor legal validity?

- Centre to use Entry 33 in List III to push the Farm Bills weakens the spirit of cooperative federalism.
- Second, agriculture is exclusively a State subject. Everything that is subsidiary to an exclusive subject in List II should also fall under the exclusive legislative purview of States.
- Most importantly, Entry 28 in List II markets and fairs is not subject to Entry 33 in List III.

11. Rainbow new deal - Integrating ecological protection and tackling inequality

Syllabus GS-3- Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment

Context – India needs a rainbow recovery plan to emerge successfully from COVID 19 and the structural changes it has brought in society.

What is meant by Rainbow new deal?

It refers to a seamless integration of ecological protection and tackling of wealth inequality and economic vulnerability of several hundreds of millions of people.

What are the features of rainbow new deal?

1. Sustainable livelihoods – Many small farmers, pastoralists, and fishers can be enabled to sustain or switch to organic, ecologically sustainable production. This would ensure their own food security and local marketing links.

This has to be built on regenerating and safeguarding the country's soil, natural ecosystems, water, biological diversity, and air.

2. Sustainable lifestyle – This involves encouraging lifestyles and livelihoods that obtain substantial food, medicines, household items and other needs, as also sustainable livelihoods, from natural ecosystems.

3. Focusing on MSME's -It would entail reviving and sustaining India's incredible diversity of crafts, and decentralized production of most goods and services with a massive investment in the small and medium sector enterprises.

For instance, Ela Bhatt, founder of SEWA, has proposed the '100-mile radius' as a region within which the objective of self-reliance can be met.

4. Improving social sector – It involves substantial investments in public health, education, housing, transportation and other basic needs.

5. Wealth redistribution - Economist Prabhat Patnaik has pointed out, a mere 2% wealth tax coupled with a 33% inheritance tax on the richest 1% of India could generate more revenue than the total recovery package the Government of India announced for corona induced challenges.

Way Forward

If the diverse strands of resistance, feminist, worker, farmer, and other mobilizations of the marginalized, and myriad grassroots initiatives at alternative living all can be synergized, a RND kind of transformation may yet be on the horizon in post-Corona Indian economy.

12. Labour codes reforms

Source- The Indian Express

Syllabus- **GS 3** - Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment

Context- The three labor bills will immensely help the country in bringing much needed economic growth and will help in employment generation.

What are the new labour codes?

The government has introduced new versions of three labour codes in Lok Sabha which are-

1. Industrial Relations Code Bill, 2020.
2. Code on Social Security Bill, 2020.
3. Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code Bill, 2020.

These three bills are part of four labour code envisaged incorporating 29 labour laws. First code on wages has already been enacted.

What are the benefits of labour codes 2020?

- 1. Raised the threshold for requirement of a standing order-** The expansion of firms by increasing the threshold for retrenchment/closure or lay-off without requiring government approval, from 100 to 300 workers.
- 2. Fixed term employment [FTE]** - It is an intervention to enable the hiring of employees directly instead of hiring through contractors, which will ensure flexibility.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of October (First week), 2020

- The code also reduces the time limit for receiving gratuity payment from the continuous service of five years to one year for all kinds of employees, including fixed-term employees, contract labour, daily and monthly wage workers.
- 3. **Social protection system**- The inclusion of the gig and platform workers in the Social Security Code 2020 is a step towards strengthening the formal economy.
- The provision for insurance coverage has been extended to plantation workers and free annual health check-ups. A bipartite safety committee has been introduced for hazardous factories.
- 4. **Gender equality and empowers the women workforce**- Female labour force participation is a driver of growth and, therefore, participation rates indicate the potential for a country to grow more rapidly.
- Women will be entitled to be employed in all establishments for all types of work and, with consent can work before 6 am and beyond 7 pm subject to such conditions relating to safety, holidays and working hours.
- 5. **Inclusion of inter-state migrant workers in the definition of worker**: It has been made possible that a migrant, who comes on his own to the destination state, can declare himself a migrant worker by registering on an electronic portal based on self-declaration seeded with Aadhar Card.
- Registration on the portal has been simplified and there is no requirement of any other document except Aadhaar Card.
- For de-licencing/de-registration, it is mandated to notify registering officers about the closure of their establishment and certify payment of dues to all employed workers, which will ensure that workers will not be exploited even during the closure of the concerned establishment.
- 6. **Reskilling Fund**- Industrial Relation code also proposes setting up of a reskilling fund to help skill retrenched workers.
- To set up a re-skilling fund for training of retrenched workers with contribution of the employer of an amount equal to 15 days last drawn by the worker.
- The lifelong learning opportunity is provided to match the evolving skill sets required for technology and process changes.
- 7. **Notice period**- Under Industrial Relations Code 2020, the provision for a 14-day notice period before strikes and lockdowns would allow both workers and employers to attempt resolving the issues.

Way forward-

The reforms introduced in the three labour codes will help to build a future of work that is safer, fairer, greener and more resilient. The reform measures address basic needs - to revive the economy and tackle barriers in the expansion of firms. Moreover, they promote the employment of women as well as reskilling of the workforce for the deployment of migrants.

13. Issues of Indian Sugar Industry

Source- The Hindu Business Line

Syllabus- GS 3- Issues related to direct and indirect farm subsidies and minimum support prices; Public Distribution System- objectives, functioning, limitations, revamping; issues of buffer stocks and food security; Technology missions; economics of animal-rearing.

Context - The Centre and States governments have persisted with populist policy measures have aggravated the sugar industry's structural problems.

What are the problems of sugar industry in India?

- 1. Mounting arrears-** High cost of sugarcane (due to high State advised price), inefficient technology, uneconomic process of production and heavy excise duty result in high cost of manufacturing. Lower prices of sugar than production cost causes mills to incur losses rendering them unable to pay farmer's dues.
 - In Uttar Pradesh alone have run up arrears of over ₹8,447 crore for 2019-20, twice the amount due in the previous year.
- 2. COVID-19 pandemic-** The extended lockdown, millers' cash flows have been hit by a sharp fall in the institutional off-take of sugar from food and beverage makers and hotels which usually a stable revenue source.
- 3. Impact of crude oil prices -** Usually, when oil prices are high, mills tend to divert cane for making ethanol that is used for blending with petrol. With recent fall in oil prices, mills will not find it attractive to divert cane for ethanol.
- 4. Transportation subsidy-** Centre delaying its promised payouts towards transport subsidy on sugar exports, relying on which the industry has shipped out over 60 lakh tonnes of sugar this year.
 - The Centre has been tardy in reimbursing mills for the carrying costs on the 40-lakh tonne buffer-stock created at its behest.
- 5. Structural problem-** Centre has kept up FRP hikes and begun announcing a 'minimum selling price' for sugar, which would discourage farmers from planting excessive cane.
- 6. Short Crushing season-** Sugar production is a seasonal industry with a short crushing season varying normally from 4 to 7 months in a year. It causes financial loss and seasonal employment for workers and lack of full utilization of sugar mills.

What are the steps taken by the government to address the issue of sugar industry?

C. Rangarajan committee (2012) was set up to give recommendations on regulation of sugar industry. Its major recommendations:

- **Price of sugarcane-** Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP) recommended a hybrid approach of fixing sugarcane prices, which involved fair and remunerative price (FRP).
- **Remove the regulations on release of non-levy sugar-** Removal of these controls will improve the financial health of the sugar mills. This, in turn, will lead to timely payments to farmers and a reduction in cane arrears.
- **Trade policy-** Abolition of the quantitative controls on export and import of sugar, these should be replaced by appropriate tariffs.

Way forward-

Considering the importance of sugar industry the crisis faced by sugarcane farmers need to resolved promptly through Centre and State policy initiatives such as allowing free market forces to dictate the demand-supply equation for sugarcane and its end-products

14. Production Linked Incentive Scheme

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus: Gs3: Changes in Industrial Policy and their Effects on Industrial Growth

Context: The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has introduced a Production Linked Incentive Scheme for Large Scale Electronics Manufacturing.

What is Production Linked Incentive Scheme?

- Aim is to position India as a global hub for electronics system design and manufacturing.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of October (First week), 2020

- It provides an incentive of 4-6 per cent on incremental sales of mobile phones and specified electronic components manufactured in India, to eligible companies, for a period of five years.
- Eligible companies are (a) mobile phones manufactured and sold by domestic companies, (b) mobile phones manufactured and sold by other companies (invoice value of ₹15,000 and above) and (c) specified electronic components.
- The scheme is available to all companies registered in India which meet the threshold requirement of a specified incremental investment between ₹100 crore and ₹1,000 crore in the next four years as well as incremental sales of manufactured goods.
- Accordingly, the scheme is designed to select only the few top companies. A maximum of five domestic and five global mobile manufacturing companies and 10 electronic component manufacturers will be selected.
- The scheme also provides for the constitution of Empowered Committee (EC) which has the power to review and revise rate of incentives, ceilings, eligibility criteria, etc.
- Unlike export linked subsidy schemes such as MEIS, EPCG, and SEZ, the present scheme is **investment and production linked** and may not violate international trade agreements.

What are the concerns associated with the scheme?

- The scheme offers higher incentives for higher production rate. However, the incentives cannot be claimed beyond the financial outlay proposed by the Government, which is ₹40,951 crore.
- In case of incentives exceeding the annual financial outlay, the incentives will be disbursed to all companies on the basis of their net incremental sales. This implies that an over-performing company may not be reap the benefits under the scheme in absolute terms.

What is the way forward?

- The Government should also look to implement similar incentive schemes for other sectors such as automobile, pharmaceuticals, FMCG, etc.
- Further, the government must also focus on service industry which has rarely got any incentive from the Government.

The Production Linked Incentive Scheme has all the necessities required to increase investments, employment generation, domestic value addition, capacity building and innovation to make India 'Atmanirbhar' as far as mobile phone manufacturing is concerned.

15. Platform Workers

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Syllabus: Gs3: Changes in Industrial Policy and their Effects on Industrial Growth.

Context: The recent labour codes has not offered any guarantees for better and more stable days for platform workers who are meant to be 'the future of work'.

What are the key provisions available for Platform workers in the recent labour code bills?

- The new **Code on Social Security** defines a platform worker by their **vulnerability**.
- The three new labour codes acknowledge platform and gig workers as **new occupational categories**.
- The **Code on Wages, 2019**, uses 'wages' as the primary definition to define who an 'employee' is.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of October (First week), 2020

- The main aim of these laws for a platform worker is to make available benefits and safety nets from the government or platform companies.

What are the concerns associated with new labour codes with respect to platform workers?

- Platform delivery people can claim benefits, but not labour rights. The new labour codes do not allow them to seek remedy in the courts to demand better and stable pay.
- This also means that the government or courts cannot regulate platform companies for their choice of pay, or limit working hours.
- Though the Code on Social Security, 2020, makes platform workers eligible for maternity benefits, life and disability cover, old age protection, provident fund, employment injury benefits it does not mean that the benefits are guaranteed.
- Actualising these benefits will depend on the political will at the Central and State government-levels and how unions elicit political support.
- The new labour code, does not make it mandatory for the platform companies to contribute towards benefits or be responsible for workplace issues.

The current laws do not see platform workers as future industrial workers. As India embraces 'new kinds of work', like delivery, in the digital economy it has to make labour friendly policies to keep India's young workforce secure.

Case study: No stable pay for Gig economy/platform workers

During the last six months, many platform workers have unionised under the All India Gig Workers Union and have protested against Swiggy for reducing their base pay from Rs. 35 to Rs. 10 per delivery order. Assured Stable earnings have been the key demand of delivery-persons and drivers through years of protests.

16. Artificial Intelligence - 'AI for All'

Source- The Indian Express

Syllabus- **GS 3** - Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life.

Context- India's "AI for All" strategy focuses on making India the AI garage of the world, a trusted nation to which the world can outsource AI-related work.

What is RAISE 2020 Summit?

RAISE 2020 summit [Responsible AI for Social Empowerment] is a first of its-kind, global meeting of minds on Artificial Intelligence to drive India's vision for social transformation through responsible AI.

- **Panel discussion-** **Leveraging AI** for Pandemic preparedness, **Inclusive AI** and partnership for **successful innovation**.
- **Organized by-** The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology and NITI Aayog.

What is Artificial Intelligence?

AI is the branch of computer science concerned with developing machines that can complete tasks that historically require human intelligence. It includes technologies like machine learning, pattern recognition, big data, neural networks, self-algorithms etc.

Economics advantages- The opportunity for AI in India is colossal, as is the scope for its implementation. By 2025, data and AI can add over \$500 billion and almost 20 million jobs to the Indian economy.

What are some applications of AI?

- 1. In healthcare-** Machine Learning-based deep-learning algorithms in AI can aid in the early detection and prevention of diseases by capturing the vitals of patients.
For example-
 - Bengaluru based start-up has developed a non-invasive, AI-enabled technology to screen for early signs of breast cancer.
 - Hospitals in Tamil Nadu are using Machine Learning algorithms to detect diabetic retinopathy and help address the challenge of shortage of eye doctors.
- 2. Communication** -For the COVID-19 response, an AI-enabled Chatbot was used by MyGov for ensuring communications and ICMR deployed the Watson Assistant on its portal to respond to specific queries on COVID-19.
- 3. Biopharmaceutical-** AI-based applications have helped companies to significantly shorten the preclinical drug identification and design process.
- 4. Agriculture** - Technologies like image recognition, drones, and automated intelligent monitoring of irrigation systems can help farmers kill weeds more effectively, harvest better crops and ensure higher yields.
 - ICRISAT has developed an AI-power sowing app, which utilizes weather models and data on local crop yield and rainfall and advise local farmer on when they should plant their seeds.
- 5. Weather Forecasting-** An AI-based flood forecasting model that has been implemented in Bihar is now being expanded to cover the whole of India to forecast warning 48 hours earlier about impending floods.

What are the initiatives taken by government to adopt Artificial Intelligence?

- 1. School curriculum-** CBSE has integrated AI in the school curriculum to ensure that students passing out have the basic knowledge and skills of data science, machine learning and artificial intelligence.
- 2. AI Programs** –
 - a. The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology had launched a “**Responsible AI for Youth**” programme, wherein more than 11,000 students from government schools completed the basic course in AI.
 - b. India has launched **National AI Strategy** and National AI Portal and has also started leveraging AI across various sectors.

Way forward-

The RAISE 2020 summit has brought together global experts to create a roadmap for responsible AI an action plan that can help create replicable models with a strong foundation of ethics built-in.

17. Ensemble forecast

Source: [The Hindu](#)

Gs3: Disaster Management

Context: India needs to shift to ensemble weather and flood forecast model to achieve better accuracy in flood forecasting.

What is the significance of using Ensemble forecast?

Deterministic forecast model	Ensemble forecast
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Deterministic forecast model merely indicates “Rising” or “Falling” above a water level at a river point.• In this model, there is no idea of the	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• It gives probability-based estimation as to different scenarios of water levels and regions of inundation.• For example, it can indicate the

9 PM Compilation for the Month of October (First week), 2020

area of inundation, its depth, and when the accuracy of the forecast decreases at 24 hours and beyond	probability like, the chances of the water level exceeding the danger level is 80%, with likely inundation of a village nearby at 20%.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• It provides a lead time of just 24 hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• It provides a lead time of 7-10 days ahead.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Since the end users (district administration, municipalities and disaster management authorities) receive such forecasts with very less “Lead time” and have to act quickly, flood forecast becomes less accurate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• It helps local administrations with better decision-making and helps them to get prepared better in advance.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• India has recently shifted towards - Deterministic forecast model	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The United States, the European Union and Japan have shifted towards Ensemble flood forecasting along with “Inundation modelling”.

What are the shortcomings with India’s flood forecasting?

Multiple agencies:

Lead Time

- The time gap from issuance of the forecast and occurrence of a flood event is termed as “lead time”.
- It is the most crucial aspect of any flood forecast to enable risk-based decision-making and undertake cost-effective rescue missions by end user agencies.

- The India Meteorological Department (IMD) issues meteorological or weather forecasts while the Central Water Commission (CWC) issues flood forecasts at various river points.
- Therefore, the advancement of flood forecasting depends on how quickly rainfall is estimated and forecast by the IMD and how quickly the CWC integrates the rainfall forecast with flood forecast.
- It also is linked to how fast the CWC disseminates this data to end user agencies.
- This complicated arrangement reduces the “Lead time”.

Obsolete methods:

- Most flood forecasts at several river points across India are based on outdated statistical methods that enable a lead time of less than 24 hours.
- It renders the India’s flood forecast driven by Google’s most advanced Artificial Intelligence (AI) techniques ineffective.

Not uniform across India:

- A recent study shows that, India has only recently moved to use hydrological or simply rainfall-runoff models not all, but in specific river basins.

Impact:

- Therefore, outdated technologies and a lack of technological parity between multiple agencies and their poor water governance decrease crucial lead time.
- Forecasting errors increase and the burden of interpretation shifts to incompetent end user agencies. The outcome is an increase in flood risk and disaster.

What is the way forward?

- The IMD has already started testing and using ensemble models for weather forecast through its supercomputers (“Pratyush” and “Mihir”).
- Yet, the forecasting agency has to adapt with advanced technology and need to achieve technological parity with the IMD in order to couple ensemble forecasts to its hydrological models.
- The IMD has to modernise the telemetry infrastructure along with raising technological compatibility with river basin-specific hydrological, hydrodynamic and inundation modelling.
- It also needs to train its technical workforce to get well versed with ensemble models and capable of coupling the same with flood forecast models.
- It is only then that India can look forward to probabilistic-based flood forecasts with a lead time of more than seven to 10 days that will place India on par with the developed world.

18. India’s monetary framework and COVID-19

Source - Live Mint, The Indian Express

Syllabus- GS 3 - Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment.

Context- Higher-than-anticipated inflation prints in recent months have compelled the six-member monetary policy committee (MPC) to hold policy rates.

What causes inflation?

The primary cause of inflation is the mismatch between demand and supply. The mismatch can be in following context-

1. **Excess money supply that raises aggregate demand.**
2. **Supply deficiency-** A shortfall in the production of a commodity fails to meet even the basic needs of the citizens and thus prices rise causing inflation.

What is the new monetary framework?

The agreement between the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the central government signed in February 2015. The agreement explicitly made inflation targeting the objective of the MPC while using the repo rate as the instrument for it.

- **Rate steady-** The Reserve Bank’s MPC was given the target of keeping inflation at 4% with a tolerance limit of 2%. This meant that inflation should be between 2% and 6%.
- **Contrasting target** - The target was in contrast with the multiple indicator approach that predated this framework where the central bank focused on both growth and price stability.

What are the impacts of Pandemic on the inflation front?

1. **Higher rate-** Consumer prices have been rising at a higher rate than the Reserve Bank of India’s (RBI’s) 2-6% tolerance band since April this year, and are likely to rise further in September.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of October (First week), 2020

- 2. Retail inflation-** The prolonged pandemic is likely to have disrupted many smaller companies that produce and sell essential items for which demand is typically steady.
- 3. Low investment growth** - Investment growth is likely to be impacted more severely than consumption growth, even after the recovery starts gaining traction due to risk aversion, weak profitability and a tendency to preserve cash given the uncertain outlook.

How India can manage to keep inflation low

- 1. Structural reform-** The current framework has led to an excessive and obsessive emphasis on point CPI estimates, at the cost of ignoring other indicators. This should be taken into consideration, while reviewing the existing monetary policy framework.
 - The success of the inflation-targeting framework should not only be judged by the actual CPI inflation trend, but also in terms of the convergence achieved between actual CPI inflation and inflation expectations.
- 2. Pause on policy rates-** RBI should hold policy rates as it will allow the steps taken so far to work their way through the economy and it would bolster its inflation-fighting credentials, which is particularly important for the first meeting of a revamped MPC.

Way forward-

With a large drop-off in tax revenue caused by the pandemic, a high fiscal deficit and rising public debt, the authorities should double down on their inflation targeting objective. RBI needs to remain active with a host of unconventional measures, which will likely include more proactive bond purchases to ensure that market interest rates do not rise significantly due to fiscal and market borrowing-related concerns.

19. Manufacturing in India - PLI scheme

Source: [The Live Mint](#)

Syllabus: GS-3- Economy

Context: India can be the world's great back-up manufacturing factory.

How can India become back up factory?

- **Production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme:** It is designed to facilitate the country's emergence as a global manufacturing hub for mobile phones and electronic components.
- 11 global handset and input makers including Foxconn and Samsung are reported to have qualified for special **incentives spanning five years**, along with five domestic units, including the makers of Lava and Micromax devices.
- The government expects the initiative to result in **output worth ₹10.5 trillion over half a decade**, about 60% of it from exports.
- **Apple Inc's is keen on expanding supply** network operations here and except for Korea's Samsung, all the foreign firms on the PLI list work for the California-based company as contract manufacturers.
- **India could present itself up as a factory** to the world for some of its most fancied products as high-end **electric car sensation Tesla** is also seen to be on its way in the country.

Why could china face a possible potential isolation?

- **“China plus” strategy for global value chains:** After the risks of their Chinese dependence began to rise, strategy to diversify sources of supply has gained appeal among transnational corporations.
- **Trump’s trade war with China:** Efforts to isolate china have been intensified by worries of a **“bamboo curtain”** like the iron version of the Cold War era which foreseeably split the world apart into western and eastern blocs.
- A recent survey of over 200 US firms operating in the People’s Republic revealed that only about **4% were shifting some production back to the US.**
- China remains an attractively cheap place to make stuff; it also offers a huge domestic market that might take us rather long to match.

What is the way forward?

- **Easy for all to do business:** Cherry-picked businesses should not be given privileges at the cost of people at large, for example, as Beijing has long done.
- **Wage bill flexibility** is crucial for any large-scale export venture but there are plenty of other compliance requirements that need to be carved down.
- **Land acquisition policy needs clarity:** state-earmarked posts are all we have on offer. However, Investors need greater choice.
- **Skill and infrastructure gaps must be filled** and an assurance of policy stability will also help in doing so.
- Our import duties have seen too much change of late, for example, while every link in a global value chain which must operate across borders must **be allowed reliable cost projections.**
- Taxation could do with a repair to simplify a heap of taxes.

20. Redesign policy for private investment

Source- The Indian Express

Syllabus - GS 3- Investment models.

Context- Partnerships with various stakeholders in the private sector is required for sustainable infrastructure creation in India

What is PPP investment model?

Public Private Partnership is a cooperative arrangement between public and private sectors. The PPP model displays three essential characteristics:

- Long term contractual arrangement.
- A significant level of responsibility and risk that is transferred from public to private sector.
- Contractual arrangements are built around performance based outcomes.

What are the challenges on ramping up private investments in infrastructure?

- **Policy reforms-** Refreshing institutions and policies for channeling financing.
- **Stable ecosystem-** Providing a stable, durable, and empowering ecosystem for private players to partner with government entities in the task of infrastructure-creation.

What are the recommendations of Vijay Kelkar Committee on Revisiting and Revitalizing PPP Model?

Vijay Kelkar Committee Finance Minister in the Union Budget 2015-16 announced that the PPP mode of infrastructure development has to be revisited and revitalized. Committee had put out a timely, practical, and balanced report on overhauling the PPP ecosystem.

Key recommendations of the committee-

1. Contracts need to focus more on service delivery instead of fiscal benefits.
2. Better identification and allocation of risks between stakeholders.
3. Prudent utilization of viability gap funds where user charges cannot guarantee a robust revenue stream.
4. Improved fiscal reporting practices and careful monitoring of performance.
5. Report also included governance reform, institutional redesign, and capacity-building.

How government can redesign the PPP model?

1. Redesign ecosystem-

- Overhaul the culture and attitude towards the conjoining of government entities and private partners for creating specific pieces of infrastructure.
- **Plug and play-** There needs to be an approach of give and take, instead of government interlocutors trying to adopt a purely transactional approach without adequate focus on outcomes.
- **Minimizing risk-** Passing on uncertain elements in a project like the land acquisition risk to the private partner.
- **Incentives-** The private partners also need to be incentivized to focus on project outcomes, with guard-rails in place to discourage rent-seeking behaviour.

2. Regulatory front-

- **Secure legislation-** Promulgate a PPP legislation which can provide a robust legal ecosystem and procedural comfort to the various actors and stakeholders.
- **Revenue flow assurance-** The key to a successful PPP is to provide stable revenue flow assurances and a settled ecosystem to investors over long periods by means of policy stability, assurances possibly secured by law.
- Government partners in PPP arrangements need to ensure that open-ended arrangements that might entail unforeseeable risk are minimized for the private investor, including aspects such as land availability and community acceptance.

Way forward-

In a post COVID era, a focus area for public policy has to be the creation of a modern-day, sustainable and resilient infrastructure. Government needs to design a fresh approach and create a stable policy environment that provides comfort and incentives to private investors.

21. CRISPR-Cas9: life sciences into new epoch

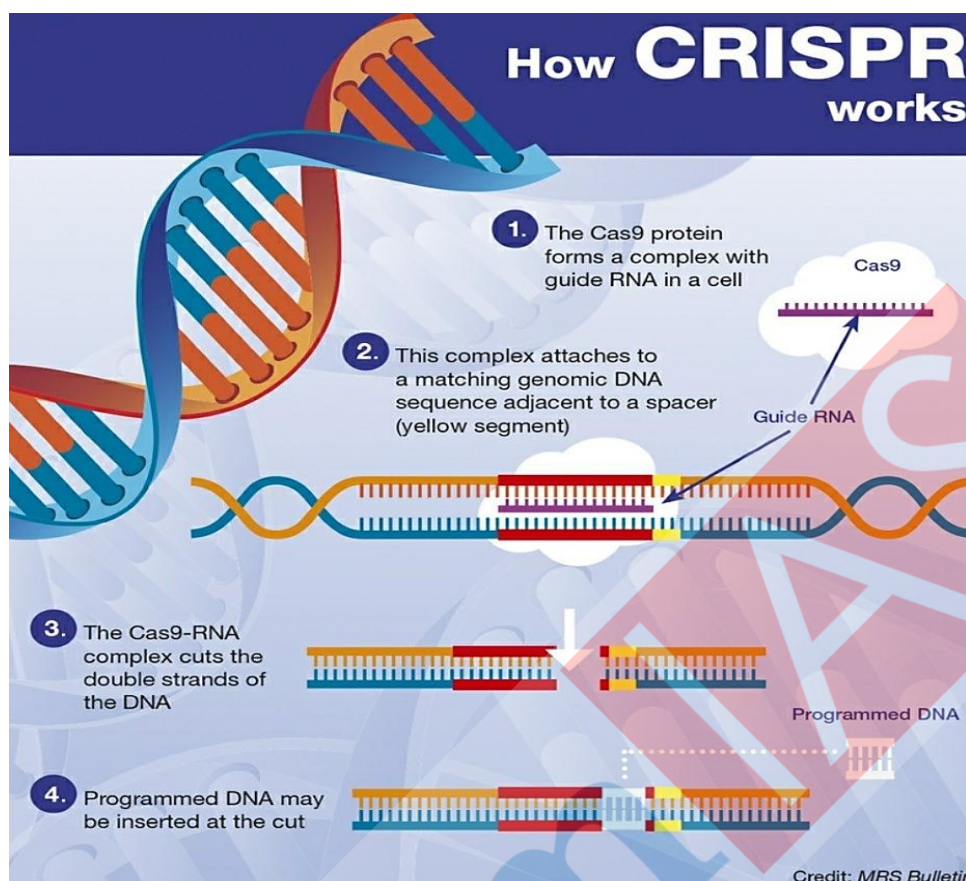
Source- The Hindu

Syllabus- **GS 3-** Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life.

Context- The 2020 Nobel Prize in Chemistry is awarded to Emmanuelle Charpentier and Jennifer A. Doudna for the development of CRISPR-Cas9 gene-editing technology.

What is CRISPR-Cas9?

It is a Gene editing technique which is short for “Clustered regularly interspaced short palindromic repeats and CRISPR-associated protein 9”.



- The CRISPR-Cas9 gene editing tool has two components — a short RNA (Ribonucleic acid) sequence that can bind to a specific target of the DNA and the Cas9 enzyme which acts like a molecular scissor to cut the DNA.
- To edit a gene of interest, the short RNA sequence (gRNA) that perfectly matches with the DNA sequence that has to be edited is introduced.
- Once it binds to the DNA, the Cas9 enzyme cuts the DNA (like scissors) at the targeted location where the RNA sequence is bound. Once the DNA is cut, the natural DNA repair mechanism is utilized to add or remove genetic material or make changes to the DNA.

What is the role of gene-editing technology?

In healthcare- The technology has enabled scientist to edit human DNA in a dish and early stage clinical trial are ben attempted to use the tool to treat a few diseases, including inherited disorders/diseases and some type of cancer.

In agriculture-

- It is being tried out in agriculture primarily to increase plant yield, quality, disease resistance, herbicide resistance and domestication of wild species.
- The potential to edit genes using this method has been used to create a large number of crop varieties with improves agronomic performance.

Is it legal to use Gene editing technique?

1. There is a general consensus in the scientific communities that the CRISPR–Cas9 gene-editing technique should not be used clinically in embryos.
2. There is also consensus that gene editing can be potentially used only to prevent serious genetic disorders that have no alternative treatment.

3. In the absence of any clinical trial data as well as consensus to use this tool to prevent HIV infection, performing it on babies as a form of medical intervention is unethical.

Way forward-

This CRISPR technology is indeed a path-breaking technology, to alter genes in order to tackle a number of conventional and unconventional problems, especially in the health sector. However, experiments and tests to validate its use must be subjected to appropriate scrutiny by the regulators, and their use must be controlled to prevent commercial misuse.

22. MPC meeting- shifting focus from containment to revival

Source- The Hindu, Live Mint and Live Mint

Syllabus- **GS 3-** Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment.

Context- The latest MPC decision came as retail inflation continued to remain at the upper end of RBI's tolerance range and the policy stance accommodative with reviving growth as the primary objective.

What are the measures taken by RBI to revive the growth?

1. **Keep repo rate unchanged-** The newly appointed Monetary Policy Committee members unanimously voted in sync with RBI members to leave the policy repo rate unchanged at 4% and maintain a dovish stance for the rest of the fiscal year, and into the next, along with continued provisioning of ample system liquidity.
2. **Nudge to bond market-** RBI request to the market to bid responsibly in government bond auctions, the policy has also taken some very strong measures to dispel any doubts regarding RBI's commitment to ensuring lower rates.
 - o **SLR HTM limit extended-** Extending the recently announced HTM limit hike to March 2022 that will help give confidence to banks to handle higher market risks from deploying higher liquidity in government bonds.
 - o Announcement of OMOs in state development loans (SDLs), which ensures the expanding borrowing programme of states do not lead to a rise in credit spreads.
 - o RBI also re-iterated its commitment to ensure smooth functioning of the borrowing programme.
3. **Liquidity measures-** RBI said the focus of liquidity measures by the RBI will now include the revival of activity in specific sectors that have both backward and forward linkages, and multiplier effects on growth.
 - o The new on-tap TLTRO scheme for banks to borrow up to ₹1 trillion from the window and invest in corporate bonds and other debt instruments of certain sectors.
 - o Doubling the size of open market operations (OMO) purchases in each auction to ₹20,000 crore to flatten the yield curve further and keep interest rates benign.
4. **Risk weightages-** The central bank also announced a rationalization of risk weightages assigned by banks for all new home loans sanctioned up to March 31, 2022 to spur job-intensive real estate sector.
5. Real time Gross Settlement payment system to go 24/7 from December 2020.

What are the projection and positives of the MPC meeting?

Positive growth outlook- RBI underscored while COVID-19 remains a threat, the economy is showing signs of improvement.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of October (First week), 2020

- The MPC said the agricultural sector emerged as a bright spot. Its prospects have strengthened on the back of good spatial and temporal progress of the south-west monsoon.

Inflation projection- The RBI said inflation will remain elevated in the September print, but ease gradually towards the target over Q3 and Q4.

Way forward-

RBI's commitment to keeping its stance 'accommodative' into FY22 is a particularly strong one. Combined with its commitment to provide liquidity and manage bond supply, the policy measures are geared towards ensuring that transmission across markets (money, bonds, bank lending) does not freeze and that monetary policy remains active.

ForumIAS