ECONOMY

❖ **RBI's Monetary Policy Statement**

➢ **CONTEXT: The Reserve Bank of India held its first bi-monthly monetary policy of 2023-24.**

➢ **What is the Monetary Policy Committee?**

- The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) is a committee of the Central Bank in India (Reserve Bank of India), headed by its Governor, which is entrusted with the task of fixing the benchmark policy interest rate (repo rate) to contain inflation within the specified target level.
- Under Section 45ZB of the amended RBI Act, 1934, the Union government is empowered to constitute a six-member Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) to determine the policy interest rate required to achieve the inflation target.

➢ **Background:**

- MPC was set up consequent to the agreement reached between Government and RBI to task RBI with the responsibility for price stability and inflation targeting.
- The Reserve Bank of India and Government of India signed the Monetary Policy Framework Agreement on 20 February 2015.
- Subsequently, the government, while unveiling the Union Budget for 2016-17 in the Parliament, proposed to amend the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Act, 1934 for giving a statutory backing to the aforementioned Monetary Policy Framework Agreement and for setting up a Monetary Policy Committee (MPC).
- The history of suggestions for setting up a MPC is not new and traces back to 2002 when the Y. V. Reddy Committee recommended a MPC to decide policy actions. Subsequently, suggestions were made to set up a MPC in 2006 by the Tarapore Committee, in 2007 by the Percy Mistry Committee, in 2009 by the Raghuram Rajan Committee and then in 2013, both in the report of the Financial Sector Legislative Reforms Commission (FSLRC) and the Dr. Urjit R. Patel (URP) Committee.

➢ **Composition of MPC:**

- There are a total of six members in the committee, three members are from RBI itself and the rest of them are appointed by the Government of India.
- The MPC consists of six members:
  - ✓ RBI Governor (Chairperson)
  - ✓ RBI Deputy Governor in charge of monetary policy,
  - ✓ One official nominated by the RBI Board
  - ✓ The Government of India will propose three members [committee chaired by the Cabinet Secretary].
  - ✓ Members of the MPC will serve for four years and are not eligible for reappointment.
  - ✓ The members of the Monetary Policy Committee are appointed for four years.

➢ **Functions of the MPCL**

- To target inflation, i.e., to maintain inflation to a certain level (4 % +/- 2%). The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is responsible for containing inflation targets at 4% (with a deviation of 2%)
- Price stability is a necessary precondition to sustainable growth.
- To meet the challenges of an increasingly complex economy.

➢ **Key Highlights of the MPC**

- MPC Decision on Interest Rates:
- The MPC decided to keep the policy repo rate under the liquidity adjustment facility (LAF) unchanged at 6.50%. The standing deposit facility (SDF) rate remains at 6.25%, while the marginal standing facility (MSF) rate and the Bank Rate stay at 6.75%.
- These decisions aim to align inflation with the medium-term target for consumer price index (CPI) inflation of 4% within a band of +/- 2%, while supporting economic growth.
- The repo rate is the rate through which the RBI lends money to commercial banks.
- Global and Domestic Economic Assessments:
- Global Economy: Global economic activity has been resilient despite high inflation levels, banking system turmoil in some advanced economies, tight financial conditions, and ongoing geopolitical conflicts. Financial stability concerns have led to risk aversion, flights to safety, and increased financial market volatility.
- Domestic Economy: The RBI's MPC marginally revised the GDP growth projection upwards to 6.50 per cent for the current financial year of FY 2023-24, from its earlier estimate of 6.4 per cent.
- Inflation:
- Headline inflation is moderating, but remains well above the targets of the RBI. These developments have led to heightened volatility in the global financial market. The central bank has projected inflation to marginally decline to 5.2 per cent in FY24.

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- Liquidity and rupee:
- India's current account deficit will remain moderate in Q4 FY23 and also eminently manageable going forward.
- The RBI will maintain an agile approach for liquidity management to manage the government's borrowing programme in a non-disruptive manner.

➢ **Conclusion**

- In conclusion, the RBI's Monetary Policy Statement for 2023-24 maintains a cautious stance, focusing on balancing inflation targets with supporting economic growth. The MPC will continue monitoring the evolving inflation and growth outlook, adjusting policy as needed in future meetings.

EDUCATION

❖ **National Curriculum Framework (NCF) for school education**

➢ **CONTEXT: Recently the Ministry of Education released the pre-draft of the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) for school education for public feedback on the recommendations which will be finalised after further rounds of discussions involving the national steering committee led by former ISRO chairperson K Kasturirangan that developed it.**

➢ **What is NCF?**

- The NCF, which was last revised in 2005, is a key document based on which textbooks are prepared. So the current set of NCERT textbooks, barring the deletions, are all based on the NCF 2005. Before 2005, the NCF was revised thrice.
- Under the latest round of revision, which is underway since September 2021, draft frameworks on early childhood care and education and school education have already been prepared, while work on teacher and adult education is underway.
- Apart from textbooks, the NCF, after its adoption by the CBSE and other state boards, will also restructure various other aspects of the classroom, including choice of subjects, pattern of teaching, and assessment.

➢ **About**

- The National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCF) is developed based on the vision of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, and to enable its implementation.
- It addresses education for the age group 3 to 18 years, across the entire range of diverse institutions in India. This is across the four Stages in the 5+3+3+4 Curricular and Pedagogical restructuring of School Education as envisioned in NEP 2020.

➢ **Key Highlights**

- It leans towards making students acquainted with true sources of knowledge, which have been a philosophical preoccupation of ancient Indians.
- These sources focus on six pramanas:

✓ Pratyaksa, interpreted as perception through five senses;
✓ Anumana, which uses inferences to come to new conclusions
✓ Upamana, which is knowing through analogy and comparison;
✓ Arthapatti, which involves knowing through circumstantial implication,
✓ Anupalabdhi, which includes perception of non-existence, and
✓ Sabda, which the document explains is "something an individual can only directly know a fraction of all reality through direct experience and inference but must rely on other experts was acknowledged thousands of years ago".

- It recommends developing moral values for the child through a balanced diet, traditional games, yoga asanas, as well as a wide variety of stories, songs, lullabies, poems, and prayers to develop a love for cultural context.
- It focuses on the importance of questioning by giving examples of the Upanishads, and includes examples from Katha Upanishad. It terms debates between Adisankara and Mandana Misra as legendary.
- It also stresses on identifying and explaining important phases of the Indian national movement against British rule, with special reference to Gandhian and other subaltern movements.
- It also recommends teaching concepts of Buddhism, Jainism and Vedic and Confucian philosophies.

➢ Objectives of this NCF

- It aims to help in positively transforming the school education system of India as envisioned in NEP 2020, through corresponding positive changes in the curriculum including pedagogy.
- It aims to help change practices in education and not just ideas
- It is this holistic overall transformation of the curriculum that will enable us to positively transform overall learning experiences for students.

➢ **Current Status**

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- This is a pre-draft of the NCF-SE which still requires several rounds of discussion within the National Steering Committee (NSC).
- Feedback from diverse stakeholders will further help NSC to look critically into different modalities and approaches that this framework is proposing,

PRELIMS

1. Tropospheric Emissions Monitoring of Pollution (TEMPO)

➢ **CONTEXT: A SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket successfully launched from Florida recently, carrying a new NASA device that can track air pollution over North America.**

- The Tropospheric Emissions Monitoring of Pollution (TEMPO) instrument will allow scientists to monitor air pollutants and their emission sources from space more comprehensively than ever before, down to the neighborhood level.
- The instrument will measure pollution and air quality across greater North America on an hourly basis during the daytime, all the way "from Puerto Rico up to the tar sands of Canada."
- The data will be used by the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and other agencies responsible for tackling atmospheric pollution.

➢ **Why is TEMPO so special?**

- The TEMPO mission is about more than just studying pollution — it's about improving life on Earth for all.
- By monitoring the effects of everything from rush-hour traffic to pollution from forest fires and volcanoes, NASA data will help improve air quality across North America and protect our planet.
- A unique feature of TEMPO, which is about the size of a washing machine and has been described as a chemistry laboratory in space, is that it will be hosted on an Intelsat communications satellite in geostationary orbit.
- Existing pollution-monitoring satellites are in low Earth orbit, which means they can only provide observations once a day at a fixed time.
- TEMPO will be able to measure atmospheric pollution down to a spatial resolution of 4 square miles (10 square kilometers), or neighborhood level.

➢ **What is geostationary orbit?**

- Geostationary orbit is a common orbit for weather satellites and communications satellites, but an air quality instrument measuring gases hadn't been there yet.
- In a geostationary orbit 22,236 miles (35,786 kilometers) above the equator, TEMPO will match the rotation of the Earth, meaning it will stay over the same location (North America) at all times.
- The great thing about TEMPO is that for the first time scientists able to make hourly measurements over North America.
- TEMPO will have multiple applications from measuring levels of various pollutants to providing air quality forecasts and helping the development of emission-control strategies.

➢ **Why is the mission important?**

- More than 40 per cent of the US population, 137 million people, live in places with unhealthy levels of particle pollution or ozone, according to the American Lung Association. Air pollution is blamed for some 60,000 premature deaths a year.
- Among the pollutants tracked by TEMPO will be nitrogen dioxide, produced from the combustion of fossil fuels, formaldehyde and ozone.
- The data will be made available online for members of the public to monitor air quality information in their local area.
- TEMPO will power up at the end of May or in early June 2023 and begin producing data in October 2023, although it will not be made available to the public until April 2024 of next year.

2. LIGO India

➢ **CONTEXT: The Union Cabinet on Thursday approved a project to build an advanced gravitational-wave detector in Maharashtra at an estimated cost of Rs 2,600 crore. The facility's construction is expected to be completed by 2030**.

- According to Union minister Jitendra Singh, it will come up in Hingoli district, where land has been acquired to the tune of 174 acres.
- The observatory will be the third of its kind, made to the exact specifications of the twin Laser Interferometer Gravitational-wave Observatories (LIGO), in Louisiana and Washington in the U.S. LIGO-India will work in tandem with them.
- The Indian government had approved the project in principle in February 2016. The project proponents have since selected a site for the detector, which needs to be flat and free of seismic disturbances; characterising it; and planning the observatory.

➢ **What is LIGO India?**

- The Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory (LIGO), India is a collaboration project between a consortium of Indian research institutes and the LIGO laboratory in the United States (led by Caltech and MIT) as well as its international partners (Germany, Australia, and the United Kingdom).
- LIGO-India, which will be the world's third gravitational-wave type observatory, 2 of them are located at Hanford in Washington, USA and the other at Livingston in Louisiana, USA.
- Currently, all 3 detectors are being upgraded; The plan under consideration is to move one of the gravitational wave detectors from Hanford to Hingoli, Maharashtra,India.

➢ **What is LIGO (Laser Interferometer Gravitational-wave Observatory)?**

- The LIGO is a giant L-shaped instrument. Each arm of the 'L' is 4 km long. Two laser pulses are shot through each arm at the same time, and they bounce off a mirror at the end to return to the vertex. A detector checks whether the pulses return at the same time.
- When a gravitational wave passes through the detector, the pulses are slightly out of time. Researchers use this and other signals to detect, record, and study gravitational waves.
- LIGO is the world's largest gravitational wave observatory and is the result of precision engineering. Combining two giant laser interferometers located 3000 kilometers apart, LIGO uses the physical properties of light and space to detect and understand the origin of gravitational waves (GW).
- LIGO is a remarkable mega-physics experiment on the scale and complexity of some of the world's largest particle accelerators and nuclear physics laboratories.
- However the mission's major task is to detect gravitational waves from some of the most violent and energetic processes in the universe, using the data collected by LIGO. It will be useful for better understanding of many areas of physics, including gravity, astrophysics, cosmology, relativity, particles of atomic physics.

➢ **LIGO India Project**

- LIGO-India will be built by the Department of Atomic Energy and the Department of Science and Technology, with a memorandum of understanding with the U.S. National Science Foundation and several national and international research institutions. The U.S. will provide key components for the lab worth around Rs 560 crore.
- The LIGO-India Observatory will enable the dramatic astronomy and astrophysics returns eagerly anticipated from the global network of LIGO Gravitational wave detectors in the coming decade

➢ **Importance Of LIGO India**

- Impact on Indian science & Research: The proposed LIGO-India project will help the Indian scientific community to be a major player in the emerging research frontier of GW astronomy.
- The main objective of setting up an observatory in India is to establish distances between observatories so that gravitational waves can be detected accurately.
- From information extracted by LIGO India transmitted wave, India will get an opportunity to solve the unresolved questions of space and the mysteries of physics & gravitational wave sciences.
- A major initiative like LIGO-India will further inspire frontier research and development projects in India.
- Impact on Indian Education and public outreach: A cutting edge project in India can serve as a local focus to interest and inspire students and young scientists.

ANSWER WRITTING

Q. What are the challenges of upholding ethical standards in public service?

Introduction

- Public service is the backbone of any democratic society, and ethical conduct is crucial for the effectiveness and integrity of public service delivery. Ethical standards ensure that public officials act in the best interest of the public, with transparency, accountability, and integrity.
- However, upholding ethical standards in public service is a daunting task, especially in developing countries such as India, where corruption and political interference are rampant.

➢ **Challenges of Upholding Ethical Standards in Public Service:**

Political Interference:

- Political interference is one of the major challenges of upholding ethical standards in public service in India.
- Political leaders often interfere with the functioning of public institutions, including the bureaucracy, judiciary, and law enforcement agencies, for personal or political gains.
- This interference undermines the independence and impartiality of public officials and erodes public trust in public institutions.
- For instance, in the 2011 Commonwealth Games scam, political leaders allegedly interfered in the allocation of contracts and inflated costs, resulting in a loss of public funds. This scandal highlighted the impact of political interference on ethical conduct in public service.

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- **Corruption:**
- Corruption is another major challenge of upholding ethical standards in public service in India. Corruption occurs when public officials use their position for personal gain or engage in unethical practices such as bribery, nepotism, and favoritism.
- Corruption is pervasive in India and has a significant impact on public service delivery, particularly in areas such as healthcare, education, and law enforcement.
- For instance, in the 2019 Vyapam scam, public officials allegedly accepted bribes to admit candidates to medical colleges, compromising the merit-based admission process. This scandal highlighted the impact of corruption on ethical conduct in public service.
- **Lack of Accountability:**
- Lack of accountability is another challenge of upholding ethical standards in public service in India. Public officials often act with impunity, knowing that they are unlikely to face consequences for their actions.
- This lack of accountability erodes public trust in public institutions and hinders the effective implementation of ethical standards.
- For instance, in the 2014 Nirbhaya gangrape case, public officials were criticized for their delayed response and inadequate measures to prevent sexual violence.
- This case highlighted the impact of lack of accountability on ethical conduct in public service.
- **Inadequate Training and Awareness Programs:**
- Inadequate training and awareness programs are another challenge of upholding ethical standards in public service in India. Public officials often lack the necessary knowledge and skills to implement ethical standards effectively.
- Moreover, public officials may not be aware of the importance of ethical conduct or the consequences of unethical behavior.
- For instance, in the 2013 Saradha chit fund scam, public officials allegedly failed to detect the fraudulent activities of the chit fund company, leading to a loss of public funds. This scandal highlighted the impact of inadequate training and awareness programs on ethical conduct in public service.

Conclusion

- In India, various challenges hinder the effective implementation of ethical standards in public service, such as political interference, corruption, lack of accountability, and inadequate training programs.
- To overcome these challenges, there is a need to promote a culture of ethical conduct, enforce laws and regulations, and enhance transparency and citizen engagement.
- Strengthening institutional independence, improving accountability mechanisms, and providing comprehensive training and awareness programs for public officials are also necessary to enhance the credibility and effectiveness of public service delivery and promote sustainable development.

MCQs

1. Recently, the Ministry of Education released a "pre-draft" version of the National Curriculum Framework for School Education. Consider the following statement regarding the focus on Pramanas:
   1. Pratyaksa
   2. Upamana
   3. Anupalabdhi

   Choose the correct option from the codes given below:
   a) 1 and 2 b) 2 and 3 c) 1 and 3 **d) 1, 2 and 3**
2. According to a recent study, North India accounts for 95 per cent of the country's groundwater depletion. Consider the following statement:
   1. Excessive pumping cannot be the cause of ground water depletion.
   2. The decline in precipitation and the rapid increase in tube wells.
   3. Irrigation of rice and wheat crops during the pre and post-monsoon seasons.

   Choose the correct option from the codes given below:
   a) 1 and 2 **b) 2 and 3** c) 1 and 3 d) 1, 2 and 3
3. Consider the following statements with respect to LIGO project, which is sometimes seen in news
   1. LIGO project helps to understand Earth's interior by studying seismic waves.
   2. India is a partner in LIGO project.
   3. It will help in observing the phenomenon of the explosion of giant stars, the collision of ultradense dead ones and the coming together of black holes.

   Which of the above statements is/are correct?
   a) 1 only b) 1 and 2 only **c) 2 and 3 only** d) 3 only
4. With reference to Tropospheric Emissions Monitoring of Pollution (TEMPO) instrument consider the following

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1. TEMPO is not the first spacecraft to look at air quality.
2. The device will collect hyperspectral data on sunlight reflected off of Earth's atmosphere which will use by the scientist to study the concentration of different pollutant in air with the help of wavelengths of light.

Which of the above statement/s is/are not correct?

a) 1 only b) 2 only c) Both 1 and 2 d) Neither 1 nor 2

5. With reference to Indian economy, consider the following:
   1. Bank rate
   2. Open market operation
   3. Public debt
   4. Public revenue

   Which of the above is/are component/components of Monetary Policy?

   a) 1 only b) 2, 3 and 4 **c) 1 and 2** d) 1, 3 and 4
6. With reference to Standing Deposit Facility (SDF) consider the following
   1. Standing Deposit Facility allows the RBI to absorb liquidity (deposit) from commercial banks without giving government securities in return to the banks.
   2. Liquidity absorption through reverse repos, open market operations and the cash reserve ratio (CRR) are at the discretion of the Reserve Bank but SDF will enable banks to park excess liquidity with the Reserve Bank at their discretion.

   Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?

   a) 1 only
   b) 2 only
   c) Both 1 and 2
   d) Neither 1 nor 2
7. With reference to the term Ningaloo Eclipse often mentioned in news consider the following
   1. It is a Hybrid Solar Eclipses
   2. Hybrid solar eclipse occurs when the same eclipse changes from an annular to a total solar eclipse, and/or vice versa, along the eclipse's path.
   3. During this rare eclipse, the Sun forms a ring-like shape - known as the 'ring of fire'

   Which of the above statement/s is/are correct?

   a) 1 and 2 only
   b) 2 and 3 only
   c) 1 and 3 only
   d) 1,2 and 3
8. Consider the following protected areas often mentioned in news
   1. Dibang Wildlife Sanctuary
   2. Namdapha Tiger Reserve
   3. Pakke Tiger Reserve

   Which of the above protected areas are located in Arunachal Pradesh?

   a) 1 and 2 only
   b) 2 and 3 only
   c) 1 and 3 only
   d) **1,2 and 3**
9. Gaj Utsav 2023 recently observed in which of the following state?
   a) Assam
   b) Arunachal Pradesh
   c) Karnataka
   d) Kerala
10. Which of the following is/are the aims of Project Elephant?
    1. Elephants, their habitat, and corridors must be protected.
    2. To address man-animal conflict issues.
    3. Proper welfare of domesticated elephant.

    Choose the correct answer using the codes given below

    a) 1 and 2 only
    b) 2 and 3 only
    c) 1 and 3 only
    d) 1,2 and 3

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