

Aadhaar-based payment system (ABPS) becomes mandatory for MGNREGS workers

- ▶ **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS)** gives a **legal guarantee of a hundred days of wage employment** in a year to adult members of a rural household willing for unskilled manual work.
- ▶ **MGNREGS has utilized APBS since 2017** and is made mandatory now (from 1st January).
 - ⊕ Government may consider exemption on a case-to-case basis if any Gram Panchayat has either a technical problem or an Aadhaar-related problem.
- ▶ **ABPS working**
 - ⊕ ABPS uses the worker's **unique 12-digit Aadhaar number** as their financial address.
 - ⊕ To be paid under ABPS,
 - ◆ A worker's **Aadhaar details must be seeded to her job card;**
 - ◆ Her Aadhaar details must be **seeded to her bank account;**
 - ◆ Her Aadhaar must be **mapped with the National Payments Corporation of India (NCPI) database.**
- ▶ **Significance of the move**
 - ⊕ **Curbing corruption by weeding out fake beneficiaries.**
 - ⊕ **Will ensure speedy payments and reduce rejection** (due to change of bank account of beneficiaries).
- ▶ **Other changes in recent times to make MGNREGS efficient**
 - ⊕ **National Mobile Monitoring System (NMMS) app** to capture the attendance of MGNREGS workers
 - ⊕ **SECURE** application for estimating **preparation and approval for MGNREGS works.**
 - ⊕ **Geo-MGNREGA** for geo-tagging of all completed works under MGNREGS.
 - ⊕ Project **"UNNATI"** to upgrade the skill base of the MGNREGS workers and other **changes to make MGNREGS efficient.**

More than 1100 government schemes and programs run by Center and States have been notified to use Aadhaar. Some of them are

- ▶ Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana
- ▶ Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojna Pradhan
- ▶ Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana Atal
- ▶ Pension Yojana

ISRO's PSLV-C58 Successfully Launched XPoSat (X-ray Polarimeter Satellite) and 10 other Payloads from Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota

- ▶ **With XpoSat's successful launch,** India has become **second country after United States** to send an observatory to study astronomical sources, such as **black holes, neutron stars etc.**
- ▶ **XPoSat Mission**
 - ⊕ **About:** First dedicated scientific satellite from ISRO designed to investigate the **polarisation of intense X-ray sources in space.**
 - ◆ **Polarization is a characteristic of waves,** including electromagnetic waves like X-rays, that describes the **orientation of the oscillations of the wave** in a particular direction.
 - ◆ **In the context of X-rays,** polarization can provide valuable information about the properties of the source and the **environment through which the X-rays have travelled.**
 - ⊕ **Orbital Details:** XPoSat operates in a **Low Earth Orbit** at an altitude of **about 650 km**, with a low inclination of around 6 degrees.
 - ⊕ **Payloads:** It carries two payloads namely **POLIX (Polarimeter Instrument in X-rays)** and **XSPECT (X-ray Spectroscopy and Timing).**
 - ⊕ **Mission Life:** Satellite is expected to be **operational for approximately 5 years.**
- ▶ During the mission, the **PSLV Orbital Experimental Module-3 (POEM-3)** experiment was executed to meet the objective of 10 other payloads.

ISRO's PSLV Orbital Experimental Module-3 (POEM-3) Experiment

- ▶ **PSLV is a four-stage rocket** where the first three spent stages fall back into the ocean, and the **final stage (PS4)** –after launching the satellite into orbit - ends up usually as space junk.
- ▶ However, **POEM allows in-orbit scientific experiments** using spent final stage (PS4) as a "stabilised platform" to perform experiments.
 - ▶ This is **third time the ISRO** has used the **POEM platform** to demonstrate space technologies.

The government of India constitutes the Sixteenth Finance Commission

- ▶ It was constituted with the approval of the **President of India in pursuance of Article 280(1) of the Constitution.**
 - ▶ The government appointed **Arvind Panagariya (former vice-chairman of NITI Aayog) as the chairman** and members would be notified separately.
 - ▶ The Commission's work involves redressing the **vertical imbalances between the taxation powers and expenditure responsibilities** of the center and the States respectively and **equalization of all public services across the States.**
 - ▶ **The commission shall make recommendations on the following**
 - Distribution between the Union and States of the **net proceeds of taxes and allocation** between the States of such proceeds.
- Principles for governing the grants-in-aid and revenues** of the state under Article 275 of the Constitution.
- Measures needed to **augment the Consolidated Fund of a State** to supplement the resources of the Panchayats and Municipalities based on **state finance commission recommendation.**
- The commission may review present arrangements for **financing Disaster Management initiatives**, concerning the funds constituted under Disaster Management Act, 2005.
- ▶ The 16th FC recommendations, upon acceptance by the government, **would cover the period of five years commencing April 1, 2026.**

15th FC, chaired by NK Singh, set up in 2017, made recommendations for 2020-21 and 2021-22 to 2025-26. Its recommendations include:

- **For vertical devolution**, the share of states in central taxes is to be **41%.**
- **Criteria for horizontal devolution include** income distance, area, population (2011), demographic performance, forest and ecology, and tax and fiscal efforts.
- Suggested to reduce **fiscal deficit to 4% of GDP by 2025-26.**

▶ **About Tsunami**

Tsunami is a **Japanese** term meaning "**harbour wave**".

◆ **Tsunamis are often incorrectly called tidal waves;** they have no relation to the daily ocean tides.

Tsunami is a series of enormous waves created by an underwater disturbance usually associated with **earthquakes** occurring **below or near the ocean.**

◆ **Volcanic eruptions, submarine landslides, and coastal rock falls** can also generate a tsunami, as can a large **asteroid** impacting the ocean.

They originate from a vertical movement of the sea floor with the consequent displacement of water mass.

▶ **Earthquakes induced Tsunami**

Most strong earthquakes occur in **subduction zones** where an **ocean plate slides under a continental plate** or another **younger ocean plate.**

All earthquakes do not cause tsunamis. There are few conditions necessary for an earthquake to cause a tsunami:

- ◆ Earthquake must be strong, **at least magnitude 6.5 on the Richter scale.**
- ◆ **Earthquake must occur at shallow depth** - less than 70 km below the surface of the Earth.

▶ **Tsunami Risk Management In India**

- ⊕ **Early Warning System** for mitigation through **Indian National Center for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS), Hyderabad.**
- ⊕ **Tsunami Risk Management Guidelines** by the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA).

BRICS expanded its membership to include five new nations

- ▶ **BRICS is an important group** comprising of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa.
- ▶ New members include **Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.**
 - ⊕ **Argentina has decided to withdraw** from its planned entry to BRICS.
- ▶ The last expansion of the BRICS occurred in 2010 when **South Africa joined the group.**
- ▶ **Significance of expansion**
 - Will **increase multipolarity** and will challenge the **established Western-led order.**
 - Will **raise South-South cooperation** among developing countries.
 - ◆ This will help India in **advancing its claim as the leader of global south.**
 - Will help to make a **collective voice for the restructuring of global institutions.** Increase in oil production **among its members due to the inclusion of oil-producing countries.**
- ▶ **Challenges with the BRICS**
 - The divergence between countries with respect to **their world view for example** India sees BRICS as non-western whereas China sees it as anti-western).
 - Various economic and political sanctions** on members may cause economic disruptions.
 - Internal trust deficit** among the member states and **lack of common understanding of standards, criteria, and procedure of expansion.**
 - Overlapping with other groups** like IBSA (India, Brazil, and South Africa).

India and Pakistan Exchanged list of Nuclear Installations

- ▶ Exchanges of list happened under **Agreement on the Prohibition of Attack against Nuclear Installations and Facilities between India and Pakistan.**
 - ⊕ **The agreement was signed in 1988** and entered into force in 1991.
- ▶ **Agreement mandates two countries** to inform each other of nuclear installations and facilities to be covered under the agreement on first of January of every calendar year.
- ▶ This is **33rd consecutive exchange** of such lists, the first one having taken place on **January 1, 1992.**

Union Finance Minister (FM) Chairs Meeting to Review Public Sector Banks (PSBs)

- ▶ FM asked PSBs to concentrate on **fraud prevention activities and wilful defaults.**
- ▶ **FM Suggested Following Fraud Prevention Activities :**
 - ⊕ **Consumer education** for protection from malicious fraud calls. Efforts for
 - ⊕ **timely identification of accounts** as fraud and investigation. **Effort in recovery** from accounts declared as fraud.

Monitor early warning signals to check potential frauds.

With respect to Wilful Defaults FM called for :

- **Performance review** of counsel representing PSBs to ensure **better legal action** against defaulters.
- **Adopt responsible lending** practices.
- **Enhanced due diligence** before loan disbursement, **regular monitoring** of large loan accounts, and **undertake swift and thorough legal action.**

Measures Taken to Curb Incidence of Frauds and Wilful Defaults in Banks :

- **“Framework for timely detection, reporting, investigation etc. relating to large value bank frauds”** for comprehensive checking of PSB’s non-performing assets (NPAs).
- **Central Fraud Registry** set up by RBI as searchable online central database.
- **Fugitive Economic Offenders Act, 2018** to deter economic offenders. **Establishing National Financial Reporting Authority** for enforcement of auditing standards.
- **Publishing photographs of wilful defaulters**, in terms of RBI’s instructions.

Wilful Default Broadly Cover the Following:

- **Deliberate non-payment of the dues** despite adequate cash flow.
- Siphoning off of funds** to the detriment of the defaulting unit.
- Fraudulent transactions** by the borrower etc.
 - **Assets financed** either not been purchased or been sold and **proceeds have been misutilised. Misrepresentation or falsification of records. Disposal of securities** without bank’s knowledge.

New Packaging Rules

- ▶ Recently, **Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution** has made **printing of 'date of manufacturing' and 'unit sale price' mandatory** on all packaged commodities effective from January 1, 2024.
 - ⊕ **For example**, a packaged wheat flour of 2.5 kg will **have a unit sale price per kg**, along with the **Maximum Retail Price (MRP).**
- ▶ **Earlier, companies were given the option** to either print the 'date of manufacturing' or 'date of import' or date of packaging on the packaged commodities.



Railway for Persons with Disabilities(PwDs)

- ▶ The government has released **draft guidelines** to make Railways more user-friendly for PwDs as part of “Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan”.
 - ▶ They comply with the **Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016**.
 - ▶ **Guidelines suggestions in the draft**
 - ⊕ Accessibility features such as **text-to-speech and user-friendly pictograms** for website.
 - ⊕ Low-height ticket counters with accessibility signage and accessible help booths manned by “**Divyangjan Sahayaks**”.
- Development of a dedicated mobile app and a **one-click template**.

Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)

- ▶ DRDO celebrated the **66th foundation Day on 1st January**

Defence Research and Development Organisation

New Delhi

Genesis: It is the R&D wing of the Ministry of Defence, formed in 1958.

Vision: To empower India with cutting-edge defence technologies.

Mission: To achieve self-reliance in critical defence technologies and systems.

DRDO indigenously developed -

Agni and Prithvi series Missiles

Pinaka: Multi-barrel rocket launcher

Akash: Air defence system

Tibetan Thangka Paintings

- ▶ The painting is part of ‘**Rahul Collection**’, a provisional gift made to Patna Museum by prominent scholar.
- ▶ Thangka painting is an ancient **Tibetan Buddhist** art form which depicts **Buddhist deities**.
- ▶ **Thangkas have a variety of uses**, as a means of gaining merit, in deity rituals, during meditation, and in Buddhist ceremonies.
- ▶ It is believed that it **flourished about 1000 years back** in Tibet as culmination of confluence of **Indian, Nepalese and Chinese traditions**.

Vikram Sarabhai (1919-1971)

- ▶ Born in **Ahmedabad**.
- ▶ Considered as the **Father of the Indian Space Program**.
- ▶ **Contributions**
 - The establishment of the **Indian National Committee for Space Research (INCOSPAR, later ISRO)** under his **chairmanship**.
- ▶ **Some institutions established by him:**
 - Physical Research Laboratory** in Ahmedabad.
 - Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad. Vikram**
- ⊕ **Sarabhai Space Centre, Thiruvananthapuram**
- ▶ **Awards and Honours:** In 1974, the **International Astronomical Union** decided that a Moon Crater **BESSEL** in Sea of Serenity would be known as **Sarabhai Crater**.
- ⊕ Received **Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Award, Padma Bhushan, Padma Vibhushan** Values:
- ▶ Scientific temper, visionary, Social service.



Health tax

Public health researchers recommended implementing a **health tax** ranging from **20% to 30%**, in addition to the Goods and Services Tax (GST).

⊕ Currently, sugar is taxed at 18% GST, sugar-sweetened beverages attract 28% GST and a 12% additional cess,

Need

⊕ India is the **largest consumer of sugar** in the world.

An average Indian consumes **five times the WHO recommended threshold** for free sugar intake per year.

Impact of imposing health tax: It will help control obesity, tooth decay, risk of **type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease**, and certain cancers.

Reverse Flip

Many Startups are reverse flipping i.e. moving their overseas holding entities to India.

‘**Reverse flipping**’: It is a term used to describe the trend of overseas start-ups shifting their domicile to India and **listing on Indian stock exchanges**.

Reasons for Reverse Flipping:

Capitalise on India’s large and growing economy

Access to deeper pools of venture capital

The **Economic Survey 2022-23** recognized the concept of reverse flipping and **proposed ways to accelerate the process**, such as simplifying corporate laws and capital movements, simplification of taxation, etc.

West Bengal Notified State Day & State Song

West Bengal government notified **Poila Boisakh** as State Day and **Banglar Mati Banglar Jal** as State Song.

Poila Boisakh is the **first day of the month of Boisakh of the Bengali calendar year** and is named as **Bangala Divas**.

Poila Boisakh is an important festival celebrated by **Bengali communities across West Bengal, Tripura, Jharkhand, and Assam**.

In 2023 it was celebrated on April 15th.

Banglar Mati Banglar Jal song is written by **Rabindranath Tagore**.