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Science Reporter

विज्ञान एवं प्रौद्योगिकी मंत्रालय
MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
सत्यमेव जयते



MK Yadav Sir

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STAR (*) SYMBOL BANKNOTES

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 - Economy)

Currency notes with * symbol in number panel valid: RBI

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) issued a clarification on Thursday regarding the validity and status of banknotes featuring a star (*) symbol on the number panel. The symbol is introduced on the number panel of a banknote to indicate its usage as a replacement for defectively printed banknotes in a packet of 100 pieces of serially numbered banknotes, the central bank said in a release. The inclusion of the symbol serves as an identifier that the banknote has been replaced or reprinted, but it holds the same legal value as any other standard banknote in circulation, the release said.The presence of this symbol recently sparked discussions on various social media platforms.

BS REPORTER



Context: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) issued a clarification regarding the validity and status of banknotes **featuring a star (*) symbol on the number panel.**

Key Points

- Fresh banknotes **issued by the RBI till August 2006** were serially numbered.
- Each of these banknote bears a distinctive serial number along with a prefix consisting of numerals and letter/s. The banknotes are issued in packets containing 100 pieces.
- The RBI adopted the **"STAR series"** numbering system for replacement of defectively printed banknote in a packet of 100 pieces of serially numbered banknotes.
- The Star (*) symbol is **inserted in the number panel** of a banknote that is used as replacement for defectively printed banknotes in a packet of 100 pieces of serially numbered banknotes.
- A banknote with a Star (*) symbol is **identical to any other legal banknote,** except that in the number panel a Star (*) is added between the prefix and the serial number.
- The Star (*) symbol is an **identifier that it is a replaced/ reprinted banknote.**

DIGITAL PAYMENTS INDEX

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 - Economy)

Digital Payments Grow 13.24% in FY23: RBI

Our Bureau

Mumbai: Digital payments across the country registered a growth of 13.24% in a year through March 2023, as per RBI's index that measures the adoption of online transactions.

RBI's Digital Payments Index (RBI-DPI) stood at 395.57 at end-March 2023 compared to 377.46 in September 2022 and 349.30 in March 2022.

"The RBI-DPI index has increased across all parameters driven by significant growth in payment infrastructure and payment performance across the country over the period," the Reserve Bank of India said in a statement on Thursday.



The central bank announced the construction of a composite RBI-DPI in March 2018 as a base to capture the extent of digitisation of payments across the country.

Context: Digital payments across the country registered a growth of 13. 24% in a year through March 2023, as per **RBI's Digital Payments Index (RBI-DPI)** that measures the adoption of online transactions.

Key Points

- **RBI's Digital Payments Index (RBI-DPI)** stood at 395. 57 at end- March 2023 compared to 377. 46 in September 2022 and 349. 30 in March 2022.
- The RBI-DPI index has **increased across all parameters** driven by significant growth in payment infrastructure and payment performance across the country over the period.
- The central bank announced the **construction of a composite RBIDPI** in March 2018 as a base to capture the extent of digitisation of payments across the country.

INDIAN EXPRESS

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BENEFICIARIES UNDER NFSA

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 - Food Security)

Scope for 1.24 crore more beneficiaries under NFSA: minister

HARIKISHAN SHARMA
NEW DELHI, JULY 27

THERE IS a scope for identification of 1.24 crore more beneficiaries under the National Food Security Act, 2013 by the state governments, in addition to the existing 80.11 crore beneficiaries of the food security law, show the latest data available with the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution.

If these beneficiaries are identified, they will become eligible to avail of the Centre's free foodgrains scheme — Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) — which is being implemented from January 1 to December 31 during 2024.

The NFSA provides for coverage of up to 75 per cent of rural population and up to 50 per cent of urban population, which at Census 2011 figures comes to 81.35 crore persons.

Against this intended coverage of 81.35 crore beneficiaries, the states and UTs have identified 80.11 crore beneficiaries till July 19, 2023, show the data shared by Minister of State for Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution Sadhvi Niranjan Jyoti in a written reply to a question in the Lok Sabha on Wednesday.

As per the data, there is a scope to identify 1.24 crore additional beneficiaries under the food security law across 21 states and UTs — Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Assam, Odisha, Jammu and Kashmir, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Tripura, Andaman and Nicobar islands, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Sikkim, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Manipur, Himachal Pradesh, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu and Chandigarh.

Of the total 36 states and UTs, 15 have identified 100 per cent beneficiaries. These are — Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Goa, Haryana, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Meghalaya, Punjab, Uttarakhand, West Bengal, Lakshadweep, Puducherry and Ladakh.

The NFSA, which was enacted by the then UPA government, entitles beneficiaries covered under it to buy foodgrains at a subsidised rate — rice Rs 3/kg, wheat Rs 2/kg and nutria-cereals Rs 1/kg. However, the NDA government, last year, decided to provide foodgrains free of cost to eligible households for a year.

"Every person belonging to priority households, identified under sub-section (1) of Section 10, shall be entitled to receive 5 kilograms of foodgrains per person per month at subsidised prices specified in Schedule I from the state government under the Targeted Public Distribution System: Provided that the households covered under Antyodaya Anna Yojana shall, to such extent as may be specified by the Central government for each State in the said scheme, be entitled to 35 kilograms of foodgrains per household per month at the prices specified in Schedule I," states the Section 3(1) of the NFSA.

Context: There is a scope for identification of 1.24 crore more beneficiaries under the **National Food Security Act, 2013** by the state governments, in addition to the existing 80.11 crore beneficiaries of the food security law, show the latest data available with the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution.

Key Points

- If these beneficiaries are identified, they will become eligible to avail of the Centre's free foodgrains scheme - **Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY)** - which is being implemented from January 1 to December 31 during 2024.
    - **PMGKAY provides 5 kg of rice or wheat** (according to regional dietary preferences) per person and 1 kg of dal to each family holding a ration card.
- The **NFSA entitles beneficiaries** covered under it to buy food grains at a subsidised rate - rice Rs 3/kg, wheat Rs 2/kg and nutria-cereals Rs 1/kg. However, the NDA government, last year, decided to provide food grains free of cost to eligible households for a year.

STATES WITH SCOPE OF MAXIMUM BENEFICIARIES

States	Intended coverage (in lakh)	Actual coverage (in lakh) as on July 19, 2023	Scope for identification additional beneficiaries (in lakh)
Gujarat	382.84	344.15	38.69
MP	546.42	511.32	35.1
UP	1520.61	1497.77	22.84
HP	36.82	28.64	8.18
Rajasthan	446.62	440.01	6.61

Source: Lok Sabha Question reply

CINEMATOGRAPH BILL 2023

(Syllabus: GS Paper 2 - Governance)

Cinematograph Bill aimed at curbing piracy passed by RS

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Rajya Sabha on Thursday passed the Cinematograph (Amendment) Bill, 2023 that introduces stringent anti-piracy provisions, expanding the scope of the law from censorship to cover copyright also.

The Bill proposes a jail term of up to three years and a fine up to 5% of a film's production cost for persons who "use any audiovisual recording device in a place licensed to exhibit films with the intention of making or transmitting ... an infringing copy of" a film, or trying to do so.

The Bill seeks to amend the Cinematograph Act, 1952, which authorises the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) to require cuts in films and clear them for exhibition in cinemas and on television.

Union Minister Anurag Thakur said, "The government will not have revisional powers [over the CBFC's decisions] even after this Bill."

The Bill introduces three age ratings for films requiring adult supervision. Such films now get a U/A rating, but this has been split into U/A 7+, U/A 13+ and U/A 16+. Films rated for adults have largely been prohibited on television, following a 2004 Bombay High Court order. Broadcasters often cut films voluntarily, and reapply with the CBFC for a U/A rating. The Bill formalises this practice.

It will now have to be passed by the Lok Sabha.

Context: The Rajya Sabha passed the **Cinematograph (Amendment) Bill, 2023** that introduces stringent anti-piracy provisions, expanding the scope of the law from censorship to also cover copyright.

- It seeks to amend the **Cinematograph Act 1952.**

Highlights of the bill

- **Film Classification**: It has **provisions to classify films on the basis of age group** instead of the current practice of rating them "U" (unrestricted public exhibition), "A" (restricted to adult audiences), and "UA" (unrestricted public exhibition subject to parental guidance for children below the age of 12).
  - The amendments seek to add new classifications – 'UA-7+', 'UA-13+', and 'UA-16+' in place for 12 years.
  - It also seeks to bring about uniformity in categorisation of films and content across platforms.
- **Stricter Laws Against Piracy:** The Bill holds **stricter punishment for those responsible for piracy.** This includes three years of imprisonment and a Rs 10 lakh penalty for those engaged in piracy.
  - Once the Bill is released, the act of piracy will be considered an offence legally and will include even transmitting pirated content punishable.

Cinematograph Act 1952

- It was enacted by the Parliament to **ensure that films are exhibited in accordance with the limits of tolerance of Indian society.**
- It establishes **Central Board of Film Certification** (CBFC, popularly known as the censor board) appointed by the Central Government to sanction and certify films.
- The Board scrutinizes the film in its entirety and based on the contemporary standard of Indian society following the **procedure laid down under the Act.**
- **Board can either make a speaking order of rejection** or grant the certificate, which shall be valid for ten years.
- The Act also **authorizes the police to conduct search and seizure** if the film is being exhibited in contravention of any of the provisions of the Act.

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JAN VISHWAS BILL 2023

(Syllabus: GS Paper 2 - Govt. Policies & Intervention)

Lok Sabha passes Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2023 in Parliament

Context: The **Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2023** was passed in Lok Sabha.

- The Bill was first introduced in Lok Sabha on 22nd December 2022. Subsequently, it was referred to the Joint Committee of the Parliament.

Highlights of the Bill

- The **Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2022 amends 42 laws**, across multiple sectors, including agriculture, environment, and media and publication. Acts being amended include the Indian Post Office Act, 1898, the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, the Public Liability Insurance Act, 1991, and the Information Technology Act, 2000.
- The **Bill converts several fines to penalties,** meaning that court prosecution is not necessary to administer punishments. It also removes imprisonment as a punishment for many offences. All offences under the Post Office Act, 1898 are being removed.
- **Fines and penalties for certain offences** in specified Acts are being increased. These fines and penalties will be increased by 10% of the minimum amount every three years.
- The Bill amends some Acts to provide for the appointment of Adjudicating Officers to decide penalties. It also specifies the appellate mechanism.

Key Issues

- The Bill omits all offences under the **Indian Post Office Act, 1898**. This raises two questions.
  - First, since several offences under this Act can only be committed by post office officials, it is not clear how deleting those offences is relevant to the stated objective of improving ease of living and doing business.
  - Second, the omitted offences include the unlawful opening of postal articles. Removing punishments for this offence may lead to unjustified invasions of privacy.
- The **Adjudicating Officers** appointed to award penalties for environmental offences are senior officials of the Executive branch. They may lack the required technical and judicial competence to decide on such penalties.
- The Bill **creates an Environmental Protection Fund for education**, awareness, and research for environment protection. The reasons for creating this fund are unclear given the overlap between its purpose and that of existing funds of the Central and **State Pollution Control Boards.**
- The Bill **decriminalises offences under the High Denomination Bank Notes (Demonetisation) Act, 1978**. This Act was used to remove high-value banknotes as legal tender on January 16, 1978.
- This deadline also applied to regulatory compliances under that Act. Therefore, amending punishments under this Act after 45 years may not be relevant.



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Page 1

INDIA AND IRAN DEAL

(Syllabus: GS Paper 2 - IR)

India, Iran set to ink long-term deal on Chabahar port

Shashank Mattoo & Subhash Narayan

NEW DELHI

India and Iran are expected to sign a long-term deal for the development of Iran's Chabahar Port by September before the Global Maritime India Summit 2023 scheduled in New Delhi in October, two people familiar with the matter said.

After years of negotiations, Delhi and Tehran are expected to sign a multi-year deal, allowing India to develop the Shahid Beheshti Terminal in the Chabahar port. In 2016, India Ports Global Ltd (IPGL) and Arya Banader of Iran had signed a contract to develop the port.

Spokespeople for India's ministries of external affairs, ports, shipping, and waterways, and the Iranian embassy in New Delhi did not respond to a query.

However, an official of the ports ministry said the contours of the long-term deal will be finalized next month, and an agreement will likely be signed in September.

Currently, India and Iran sign one-year contract extensions for developing and running the terminal at Chabahar Port. However, India has been urging Tehran to commit to a longer-term pact, providing certainty for investment and development plans for the port designed by India. A long-term contract for 10 years may also provide for automatic renewal.

Negotiations on the long-term contract were earlier held up due to disagreements over the arbitration clause in the deal. Iran was earlier uncomfortable with clauses on international arbitration, given constitutional restrictions on taking disputes to foreign courts. However, *Mint*

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A long-term contract for 10 years may also provide for automatic renewal AFP

Context: India and Iran are expected to sign a long-term deal for the development of **Iran's Chabahar Port** by September before the Global Maritime India Summit 2023 scheduled in New Delhi in October.

Key Points

- Currently, India and Iran sign **one-year contract extensions** for developing and running the terminal at Chabahar Port.
- However, India has been **urging Tehran to commit to a longer-term pact,** providing certainty for investment and development plans for the port designed by India.
- In 2016, India **committed $85 million for the development of the port,** along with a $150 million line of credit.
- As of 2023, India has **supplied six gantry cranes** to the tune of $25 million for the development of the port.
- However, **Iran has voiced dissatisfaction** with India's efforts in the past.
- In 2013, **India pledged $100 million** to develop the port, but matters progressed after the 2015 nuclear deal was struck between Iran and the Permanent Members of the UN Security Council, Germany and the European Union.
- In 2016, **India, Iran, and Afghanistan signed an agreement** to develop Chabahar as a trade and transport corridor to bind their economies together.
- The **resumption of US sanctions in 2019** and the fall of Afghanistan in 2021 have complicated matters and slowed work on the port.

DTE

July 28

HONEYBEE DIETS

(Syllabus: GS Paper 3 - Env & Eco)



Do honeybees tightly regulate their diet? Researchers trying to find out

Research findings might equip beekeepers with valuable insights, enabling them to provide essential dietary supplements

By Arya Rohini

Published: Thursday 27 July 2023

Context: Researchers is seeking insights into the impact of pollen diversity on the **nutritional quality of honeybee diets.**

- They will also examine how bees **regulate the collection and consumption of pollen.**

Key Points

- Honeybees balance their **protein-lipid** intake, ensuring they do not over consume either nutrient beyond what is required.
- This balanced approach ultimately contributes to their overall health and well-being.
- **Inadequate nutrition and landscape transformations** are two significant contributors to the decline of over 40 per cent of managed honeybees in the United States annually.
- **Brood food,** a milky fluid produced by nurse bees to feed bee larvae, is where much of the damage of poor nutrition begins.
- **Deficiencies in an important nutritional components** in brood food, particularly protein and critical lipids, can result in poor physiological development, resulting in undersized adults, deformities and immune system damage, he added.
- Honeybees tightly regulate their protein and lipid intake, and the fatty acid composition of lipids could play an essential role in the bees' nutritional choices.

Honey Bee

- There are **almost 20,000 different species** of bees in the world.
- **Bees live in colonies** and in each colony, there are three types of bees, the queen bee, the worker bee, and the drone.
- The **worker and the queen bee** both are females, but only the queen bee can reproduce. All drones are male.
- The **worker bees clean the hive,** collect pollen and nectar to feed the colony and take care of the offspring. The drone only mates with the queen bee.
- **India is home to four** of the seven known bee species.
- **Two of these are domesticated,** Apis cerana (oriental honey bee) and Apis mellifera (European honey bee), and the other two are wild, Apis dorsata (giant/rock honey bee) and Apis florea (dwarf honey bee).

DTE

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SHRINKING ANTARCTICA'S SEA ICE

(Syllabus: GS Paper 1 - Geography)





Context: As the northern hemisphere shatters new temperature records, **Antarctica** in the southern hemisphere is also bearing the brunt of warm temperatures.

Key Points

- Despite it being peak winter in the southern hemisphere, the sea ice cover in **Antarctica has deviated** from the 1991-2020 average by over six standard deviations (SD).
    - One SD is a measure of how much an observation deviates from the mean.
- The **Southern Ocean that encircles Antarctica** freezes to form sea ice every year, reaching its maximum at the end of winter, which is September or early October in the Southern Hemisphere.
- In the summer months, which last from December to February, the **sea ice melts due to warmer temperatures** and longer hours of sunlight.
- The **lack of sea ice** is causing temperatures to warm further.
- The **bright surface of sea ice** is known to reflect incoming sunlight into space.
- **Winds from the north** are transporting warm air to Antarctica. This could be contributing to the low ice condition.

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PARKACHIK GLACIER

(Syllabus: GS Paper 1 - Geography)

3 new lakes may form in Parkachik Glacier in Ladakh due to glacial retreat

Context: The **Parkachik Glacier in Ladakh** is likely to have three lakes of different dimensions due to subglacial over-deepening - a characteristic of basins and valleys eroded by glaciers, shows a new study.

- Parkachik Glacier is a mountain glacier in **Kargil, Ladakh, India.**
- Parkachik Glacier, **located at Parkachik,** is a mass of ice moving slowly down the Nun-Kun slopes. This ice mass falls finally into the Suru River, providing views of the huge ice-fall.

Key Points

- Scientists carried out a study that describes the **morphological and dynamic changes** of Parkachik Glacier, Suru River Valley, Ladakh Himalaya, India.
- Considering their **sensitivity and as a most direct and apparent visible indicator** of regional climate change, Himalayan glaciers have been subjected to numerous studies, from field-based investigations to the modern state-of-the-art remote sensing approach, for more than a century.
- In contrast, **understanding the ice thickness** and distribution is foremost required for the Himalayan glaciers.
- However, existing approaches, like **remote sensing, cannot directly estimate the glacier thickness.**
- Based on ground penetrating radar, very few studies have been carried out on glacier thickness in the Indian Himalaya.

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LITERARY PROGRAMS UNDER SAHITYA AKADEMI

(Syllabus: GS Paper 1 - Art & Culture)

Ministry of Culture encourage regional dialect and language through various literary programs under The Umbrella of Sahitya Akademi

Context: The Ministry of Culture through its autonomous body, Sahitya Akademi holds **literary programmes for promotion of the north eastern tribal languages** such as Mizo, Ao, Garo, Chakma, Rabha, Karbi, Hmar, Lepcha, Khasi, Tangkhul, Missing, Tenydie, Kokborok, Jaintia, etc.

Key Points

- The Akademi **encourages regional dialects and languages** through Bhasha Samman for outstanding contribution in the field of classical and medieval literature and in unrecognized languages.
- Programmes such as **Gramalok** to reach out to the literary lovers belonging to non-urban places across the nation.
- Celebration of the **International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples** on 9 August by organising an All India Tribal Writers' Meet.
- The **North East Centre for Oral Literature (NECOL),** established in Agartala to cater the regional languages which bring out related publications.
- **Translation of books from regional languages** into English which would help translations into other languages for the dissemination of this unknown literature into other linguistic communities.
- An **Oral and Tribal Literature Centre** in Delhi established in December 2014 to cater to the Oral and Tribal Literature for other parts of the country and for preserving oral tradition.
- Program called "**Loka**: The Many Voices" consisting of lectures and demonstrations to protect and preserve the folk and tribal art and culture of the country.
- **Annual Festival of Letters** that includes All India Tribal Writers' Meet to promote tribal literature. Publication of invaluable works, both original and translated, and conducts book exhibitions and sales across the nation.
- The Ministry of Education through the **National Education Policy, 2020** focuses on promotion of all Indian languages including regional languages.
    - The policy provides, wherever possible, for medium of instruction in local language up to at least class 5, and preferable up to class 8.

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