



EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS –APRIL 1, 2023

TAMIL NADU

- The Tamil Nadu government - plans to set up Sports Schools of Excellence across the State to ensure that amenities for sports training are easily accessible to government school students
- ✓ This was announced by school education minister Anbil Mahesh Poyyamozi in the assembly on March 31



- ✓ In every district, two Sports Schools of Excellence would be set up at an estimated cost of Rs 9 crore
- ✓ The proposed Schools would facilitate the participation of government school students in district, state, national and international sporting events
- ✓ Replying to the debate on demand for grants for the school education department, the minister announced administrative skill training for all 35,847 headmasters in government, government-aided primary and middle schools.
- ✓ The department is also set to launch a **Tamil language learning scheme, "Tamil Mozhi Karpom"**, to help children of migrant workers learn to fluently speak, read and write the language without any hassles.
- ✓ Further, the Minister said that hi-tech labs will be established in 2,996 government middle schools and 540 high schools in the state at an outlay of Rs 175 crore.
 - ✓ Once this announcement is implemented, all the middle schools and high schools will also have hi-tech labs

- ✓ The department will also build smart classrooms at Rs 150 crore in 7,500 government primary schools across the state
 - ✓ While model schools are functioning in 25 districts, Rs 250 crore has been allocated to form 13 model schools in the remaining districts as well.
 - ✓ This apart, Rs 10 crore has been allocated to conduct a mega reading movement to inculcate reading habits among the students and Rs 8 crore has been allocated for buying teaching and learning materials for the Ennum Ezhuthum scheme in government-aided schools.
 - ✓ The other major announcements include creating minimum of five posts for schools that have more than 100 students in classes 6 to 8, appointing physical education teachers in all schools, mental health training for students in classes 9 to 12 and administrative skill development training for teachers.
 - ✓ In addition, an 'Awareness Week' would be observed in State-run schools at the start of the academic year, which would teach students the importance of cyber security and also help them detect hate news and misinformation.
 - ✓ In all government schools, 'Annual Day' functions would be held so that students can exhibit their arts, literary and sports skills, and Rs 15 crore has been allocated for the events.
 - ✓ The department is planning to provide accessible digital textbooks to visually-impaired students of classes 1 to 12.
 - ✓ Tamil Nadu Textbook and Educational Services Corporation will be revamped and its objectives will be upgraded as per the growing needs of the sector.
- **Tamil Nadu - has made wearing masks mandatory in all hospitals in the state from April 1, amidst the increasing number of Covid-19 cases**
- ✓ The government has made it mandatory for doctors, medicos, interns, nurses, technicians, administrative staff, patients and attenders to wear masks at all times in both inpatient and outpatient wards of all primary, secondary and tertiary hospitals
 - ✓ Further, the directorate of public health also asked district health officials and the city health officer at Greater Chennai Corporation to ensure masks are made mandatory at all healthcare facilities.
 - ✓ The directorate has asked them to use provisions under the Tamil Nadu Public Health Act, 1939 which can also fine people for violations to enforce this.
- **Water technology firm Va Tech Wabag - has secured a Rs.4,400 crore contract to design, build and operate a reverse osmosis desalination plant at Perur on the East Coast Road.**
- ✓ Once the 400 million litres a day (MLD) plant goes on stream, Chennai will get 750 MLD, bringing drinking water security to residents, especially in southern suburbs.
 - ✓ The design, engineering, construction, testing and commissioning of the plant will take place over a period of 42 months.

- ✓ It will be operated and maintained for 20 years by Wabag.
- ✓ The project is set to be executed by Wabag in joint venture with Metito Overseas and will create jobs for over 100 people
- ✓ It is being funded by Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

NATIONAL

- **On March 31, Union Commerce, Industry and Textiles Minister Piyush Goyal - unveiled a new foreign trade policy (FTP), which is expected to boost exports amid slowing global trade.**



- ✓ Unlike the previous practice of announcing 5-year FTP, the new policy does not have an end date and will be updated periodically as per the requirement.
- ✓ The new foreign trade policy has highlighted the vision to take India's goods and services exports to \$2 trillion by 2030
- ✓ The policy proposes to shift from an incentives-based regime to a remission and entitlement-based one to achieve this goal.
- ✓ It will focus on export promotion through collaboration with exporters, states, districts, and Indian Missions.
- ✓ The policy will promote ease of doing business and focus on emerging areas like e-commerce and export hubs.
- ✓ FTP 2023 announced four new Towns of Export Excellence (TEE) – Faridabad for apparel, Moradabad for handicrafts, Mirzapur for handmade carpets, and Varanasi for handloom and handicrafts – which are in addition to the already existing 39 towns of export excellence.
 - ✓ Towns producing goods worth Rs 750 crore or more can be recognised as TEE.
 - ✓ However for TEE in handloom, handicraft, agriculture and fisheries sector, threshold limit is Rs 150 crore.


- ✓ The policy also recommends restructuring of the Department of Commerce to make it future ready.
- ✓ Under the policy, a special advance authorisation scheme has been extended to apparel, and clothing, while the dairy sector has been exempted from maintaining average export obligation
- ✓ The FTP 2023 will encourage e-commerce export, which is expected to grow to \$200-300 billion by 2023.
- ✓ It has introduced an amnesty scheme for one-time settlement of default cases in export obligation
 - ✓ Under the amnesty scheme, an online portal will be launched for registration and a six-month window till September 30 will be available to exporters to avail the scheme
 - ✓ Cases under investigation for fraud and diversion are not eligible under this scheme.
- ✓ Under the new policy, the value limit for exports through courier services increased to Rs 10 lakh from Rs 5 lakh per consignment.
- ✓ Under the new FTP 2023, designated zone with warehousing facility will be created to help e-commerce aggregators for easy stocking, customs clearance and returns processing.
- ✓ The policy for the export of dual-use items under the Special Chemicals, Organisms, Materials, Equipment and Technologies (SCOMET) has been consolidated in one place for ease of understanding and compliance by the industry.
- ✓ Battery Electric Vehicles (BEV) of all types, vertical farming equipment, wastewater treatment and recycling, rainwater harvesting system and rainwater filters, and green hydrogen have been added to green technology products
 - ✓ These products will be now eligible for reduced export obligation requirement under the Export Promotion Capital Goods (EPCG) scheme.
- ✓ The qualifying thresholds for star ratings of exporters have also been lowered to \$800 million from \$2 billion earlier to enable more exporters with higher status.
- ✓ The government also sought to provide a thrust to 'merchanting' that will allow businesses to purchase goods from one country and export to another, without hitting Indian shores.
- ✓ Under the new policy, India's total exports in FY 2023 is projected to cross \$760 billion as against \$676 billion in 2021-22.
- ✓ The current FTP 2015-20 – which expires on March 31, 2023 after having extended several times on demand of the industry because of global uncertainties such as Covid-19 pandemic and the Ukraine war.
- ✓ The previous foreign trade policy for 2015-2020 had targeted exports of \$900 billion by 2020 and this target was extended along with the policy for three years till March 2023.
- ✓ The new FTP comes into effect from April 1, 2023.

- **On March 31, the Comptroller & Auditor General of India - launched full digitisation of its audit process at the CAG office in New Delhi**
- ✓ The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India will start using its own operating system, nicknamed OIOS (One IAAD One System) from April 1
- ✓ This will bring all operations of the federal auditor's 130-odd offices under one OS, while putting an end to physical paper-based workflow
- ✓ The OIOS is an end-to-end operating system where the application provides solutions for the entire audit process with offline functionality and a mobile app with support in multiple languages.
- ✓ The One IAAD (Indian Audit and Accounts Department) One System (OIOS) involves master data, audit design, audit execution, legacy data migration, knowledge management system, quality assurance, quality control, audit products, communication and follow-up.
- ✓ It covers all types of audit - compliance, financial and performance.
- ✓ The auditor had earlier digitized the accounting system, and adopted data analytics in audits.
- ✓ CAG has been the auditor of many UN organisations and has taken several initiatives in the area of responsible use of AI.
- ✓ It is currently formulating data policy, governance principles, access protocols and security policy to give assurance to auditees of data safety and legitimate use.
- **On March 31, the government - announced an increase in interest rates on small savings schemes by up to 70 basis points.**

What small savings schemes will earn now

(In %)	Jan-Mar 2023	Apr-June 2023
Savings deposit	4	4
1-year FD	6.6	6.8
2-year FD	6.8	6.9
3-year FD	6.9	7
5-year FD	7	7.5
5-yr Recurring Deposit	5.8	6.2
Sr Citizen Savings Scheme	8	8.2
Monthly Income Scheme	7.1	7.4
NSC	7	7.7
PPF	7.1	7.1
KVP	7.2	7.5
Sukanya Samriddhi	7.6	8

Source: Govt


 > SBI fixed deposits (400 days) fetches 7.1%
 > EPF deposits are likely to earn 8.15% in 2022-23
 > Kisan Vikas Patra will mature in 115 months, instead of 120

- ✓ The increase in interest rates will be applicable to schemes such as National Savings Certificate, Kisan Vikas Patra, Sukanya Samriddhi accounts and some post office deposit schemes,
- ✓ However, the returns on public provident fund remain unchanged at 7.1%.

- ✓ During the June quarter, NSC will see the steepest increase of 70 basis points (100 bps=1 percentage point), with five-year term deposits in post offices fetching 7.5%
- **The Government - has launched a new Centrally Sponsored Scheme namely, New India Literacy Programme for implementation during the financial year 2022-23 to 2026-27.**
 - ✓ The Programme has a financial outlay of Rs.1037.90 crore, out of which Rs.700.00 crore is Central share and Rs.337.90 crore is State share
 - ✓ The Scheme has five components - Foundational Literacy and Numeracy, Critical Life Skills, Vocational Skills Development, Basic Education and Continuing Education.
 - ✓ The scheme is mainly based on volunteerism for teaching and learning, implemented predominantly through online mode
 - ✓ The teaching learning material and resources have been made available on DIKSHA platform of NCERT and can be accessed through the mobile-apps.
 - ✓ It aims to cover a target of five crore non-literates in the age group of 15 years and above
 - ✓ The beneficiaries under the scheme are identified through door to door survey on Mobile App by the surveyors in the States and union Territories
 - ✓ The non-literates can also avail the benefit of the scheme through direct registration from any place through mobile app.
 - ✓ The information on the new Programme was given by the Minister of State for Education, Annpurna Devi in a written reply in the Rajya Sabha on March 30.
- **The National Dairy Research Institute (NDRI), Karnal - has produced the country's first cloned female calf of the desi breed Gir named 'Ganga', which can produce more than 15 litres of milk per day.**



- ✓ The NDRI, Karnal is working on a project on cloning of indigenous cow breeds such as Gir and Sahiwal

- ✓ The programme was started by National Dairy Research Institute (NDRI), Karnal in collaboration with Uttarakhand Livestock Development Board (ULDB), Dehradun.
- ✓ Indigenous cattle breeds such as Gir, Sahiwal, Tharparkar, and Red-Sindhi, play a pivotal role in milk production and the growth of the Indian dairy industry.
- ✓ Gir cattle are very hardy and well-known for their tolerance to conditions of stress and resistance to various tropical diseases.
- ✓ They are also very popular and have been exported to Brazil, the United States, Mexico, and Venezuela for the development of zebu cows

INTERNATIONAL

- **Former American President Donald Trump - has been indicted by a Manhattan grand jury in a case pertaining to hush money payments to the adult film actress Stormy Daniels during his 2016 election campaign**



- ✓ He faces more than 30 counts related to business fraud in an indictment from a Manhattan grand jury.
- ✓ The indictment makes the 76-year-old the first-ever former US president to be charged with criminal charges
- ✓ It comes on the back of the 2024 presidential race, where Trump is a leading contender.
- ✓ In 2016, when Trump was the Republican presidential nominee, his personal lawyer and fixer Michael Cohen paid a \$130,000 'hush money' payment to Daniels in exchange for her silence about a sexual encounter she had with Trump in 2006.
- ✓ Daniels has written her encounter with Trump in her book "Full Disclosure", which was published in 2018
- ✓ Trump has denied any wrongdoing and has repeatedly assailed the investigation and called the indictment "political persecution".
- ✓ The indictment of former US president Donald Trump does not bar him from running for president.

- ✓ This is because a clean criminal record is not among the criteria the Constitution sets for who is eligible to be president.
- ✓ It only says the president must be 35 years of age, a US resident for 14 years and a natural-born citizen.
- **Finland – won the final approval to join Nato, after decades of non-alignment**
 - ✓ The Turkish parliament cast the last vote needed for Finland's entry into US-led Nato alliance on March 30
 - ✓ All 276 lawmakers present voted in favor of Finland's bid at the parliament in Ankara, Turkey.
 - ✓ Turkey became the last country in the 30-member Western military alliance to approve the Nordic country's membership
 - ✓ All NATO members must vote unanimously to admit a new country into the alliance.
 - ✓ The decision by the Turkish parliament followed Hungary's ratification of Finland's bid earlier in the week.
 - ✓ Alarmed by Russia's invasion of Ukraine a year ago, Finland and Sweden abandoned their decades-long policy of nonalignment and applied to join the alliance.
 - ✓ Finland and neighbouring Sweden jointly applied for NATO membership in May 2022.
 - ✓ Finland shares a 1,340 kilometer border with Russia
 - ✓ The Republic of North Macedonia became the latest country to join Nato on March 27, 2020
- **The World Health Organisation's (WHO) strategic advisory group of experts on immunisation (SAGE) - has recommended an additional booster of Covid-19 vaccine for the high priority group to be taken either six to 12 months after the last dose.**
 - ✓ This includes older adults, younger adults with significant co-morbidities (for example diabetes and heart disease); and people with immune-compromising conditions (for example people living with HIV and transplant recipients) and frontline health workers among others.
 - ✓ According to WHO guideline, these people remain at high risk to develop severe disease if they are infected with Covid-19.
 - ✓ For those at medium risk of developing severe disease, which includes younger adults without co-morbidities and adolescents with co-morbidities, the latest WHO guideline recommends only primary series and first booster dose.
 - ✓ Healthy children and adolescents aged six months to 17 years fall in the low priority group.

- ✓ Children with immune compromising conditions and co-morbidities do face a higher risk of severe Covid-19 and they are also included in the high and medium priority.
- **Russia - has suspended sharing information about its nuclear forces with the United States, including notices about missile tests.**
- ✓ Last month, Russian President Vladimir Putin suspended the New START treaty, charging that Russia can't accept US inspections of its nuclear sites under the agreement
- ✓ The New START was signed in 2010 by then-Presidents Barack Obama and Dmitry Medvedev
- ✓ It limits each country to no more than 1,550 deployed nuclear warheads and 700 deployed missiles and bombers.
- ✓ As part of the Russian drills that began on March 29, Yars mobile missile launchers have been deployed to maneuver across three regions of Siberia
- ✓ The Yars is a nuclear-tipped intercontinental ballistic missile with a range of about 11,000 kilometers (over 6,800 miles), which forms the backbone of Russia's strategic missile forces.
- ✓ The maneuvers involve about 300 vehicles and 3,000 troops in eastern Siberia

CONFERENCES & SUMMITS

- **The first G20 Trade and Investment Working Group (TIWG) meeting - concluded on March 30 in Mumbai.**



- ✓ Union Minister for Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal addressed the closing session of the meeting, which commenced on March 28
- ✓ During this three-day working group meeting, over 100 delegates from G20 member countries, invitee countries, regional groupings and international organizations were present in Mumbai
- ✓ The deliberations focused on accelerating global trade and investment, while simultaneously progressing towards achieving Sustainable Development Goals.

PERSONALITIES

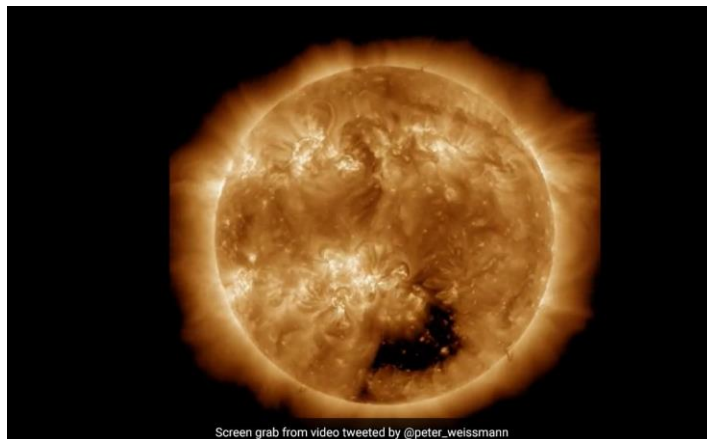
- **Amit Kshatriya, Indian-American software and robotics engineer - was appointed as the first head of Nasa's newly established Moon to Mars Programme**



- ✓ Kshatriya will serve as Nasa's first head of the office, with immediate effect.
- ✓ The new office aims to carry out the agency's human exploration activities on the Moon and Mars for the benefit of humanity
- ✓ In his new role, Kshatriya will be responsible for programme planning and implementation for human missions to the Moon and Mars.

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & ENVIRONMENT

- **Nasa scientists - have spotted a massive black region on the Sun, which is 20 times larger than Earth.**



- ✓ The appearance of the “coronal hole” has prompted US federal agency National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to sound out an alert for geomagnetic storms
- ✓ The massive hole is unleashing 1.8 million mile-per-hour solar winds towards Earth.
- ✓ The latest hole was discovered on March 23 near the Sun's South Pole.
- ✓ This was the second hole to appear in one week.

- ✓ Both holes were captured by Nasa's Solar Dynamics Observatory.
- ✓ The "hole" isn't really a hole, but a large region much cooler than the rest of the Sun, causing it to appear black.
- ✓ Geomagnetic storms are classified using a five-level NOAA space weather scale.

DEFENCE

- **The Ministry of Defence - signed a Rs 3,000-crore contract with NewSpace India Limited (NSIL), the commercial arm of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), for an advanced communication satellite, GSAT 7B.**



- ✓ Indian Army is the only one among the other armed forces - IAF and Indian Navy - who doesn't have its own communication satellite.
- ✓ The Army is set to get the first-of-its-kind five-tonne geostationary satellite by 2026 and it will be developed indigenously by ISRO.
- ✓ The satellite with advanced security features will support tactical communication requirements of not only troops deployed on the ground, but also remotely piloted aircraft, air defence weapons and other mission critical and fire support platforms
- ✓ A dedicated communication satellite means the Army's vast array of radio communication equipment could come under a single platform.
- ✓ The GSAT-7 series of advanced satellites built by ISRO are designed to provide communication capabilities to users over vast expanses including oceans
- ✓ India's defence acquisition council (DAC), the government's top weapons procurement body, had cleared the army proposal for a GSAT-7B satellite in March 2022 to sharpen its operational capabilities.
- ✓ The ministry also signed two other contracts worth around Rs.2,400 crore with Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) to sharpen the air defence capabilities of the armed forces.
- ✓ The first of these, worth Rs.1,982 crore, is to implement Project Akashteer, an automated air defence control and reporting system that will allow the army's air defence units to operate in an integrated manner.
- ✓ Akashteer will enable the monitoring of low-level airspace over the battle areas of the Indian Army and effectively control the ground-based air defence weapon systems

- ✓ The second contract worth Rs.412 crore with BEL is for Sarang electronic support measure systems for Indian Navy helicopters.
- ✓ All these projects are under Buy {Indian – IDMM (Indigenously Designed Developed and Manufactured)} category.

INTERNATIONAL DAY

➤ International Day of Zero Waste – March 30



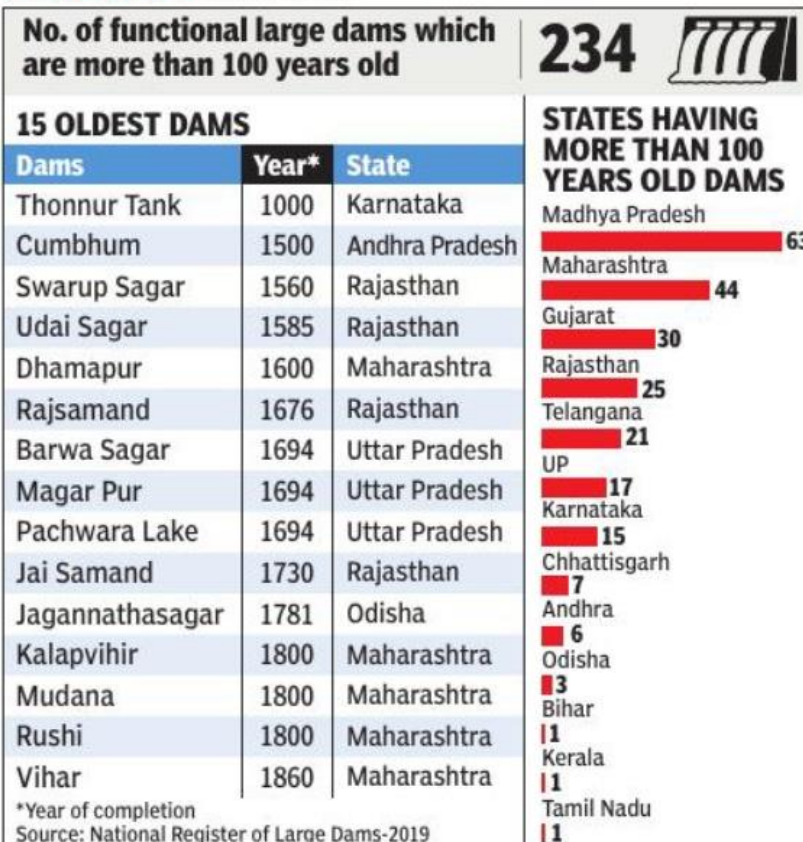
- ✓ The day aims to raise awareness about the efforts needed to prevent and minimize waste and promote a societal shift towards a circular economy.
- ✓ The United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution on December 14, 2022, designating March 30 as the International Day of Zero Waste.
- ✓ The resolution, put forward by Turkey with 105 other countries, including India, was adopted unanimously by UNGA
- ✓ Turkey launched its zero-waste project in 2017 under the leadership of Emine Erdogan, the First Lady.
- ✓ Theme 2023 – ‘Achieving sustainable and environmentally sound practices of minimizing and managing waste’
- ✓ According to the UN data, around 2.24 billion tons of municipal solid waste are produced each year, out of which only 55% is being disposed of in managed facilities.
- ✓ Further, an estimated 931 million tons of food are either lost or wasted every year, while approximately 14 million tons of plastic waste enters aquatic ecosystems each year.

SAFETY OF DAMS IN INDIA - REPORT

- **There are 234 functional large dams in India - which are more than 100 years old, while some of them are over 300 years old**
- ✓ This was flagged by a parliamentary panel, which has expressed its concerns over the safety of ageing dams in the country

- ✓ The standing committee on water submitted its report to Parliament on March 20

UNSAFE DAMS?



- ✓ However, none of these dams have been decommissioned till now, even though the dams are normally designed for 100 years of useful age
- ✓ Dam decommissioning is a very long process which includes removal of hydro-electric generation facilities and recontouring of river channels through ecologically viable interventions in the catchment areas.
- ✓ Since dams have a life span, few countries, including the USA have decommissioned their dams and restored the natural flow of rivers.
- ✓ The parliamentary panel recommended the 'Jal Shakti' (water resources) ministry take suitable measures to decommission those dams which have outlived their lifespan and may pose a threat to life and infrastructure in case of failure.
- ✓ India's National Register of Large Dams (2019) shows that Madhya Pradesh has the highest number (63) of more than 100 year old dams followed by Maharashtra (44), Gujarat (30), Rajasthan (25) and Telangana (21).
- ✓ The country has nearly 5,300 large operational dams with the highest 2,354 of them being in Maharashtra followed by 906 in Madhya Pradesh and 632 in Gujarat.
- ✓ A large dam is classified as one with a maximum height of more than 15 metre from deepest foundation to the crest.

NEW REGULATIONS FROM APRIL 1- REPORT

For individuals

New Tax Regime | The new income tax regime will become the default option. Individuals will have the **option to choose the older regime**

Home Loan Rates | Special home loan rates offered by SBI, HDFC will come to an end, leading to **higher interest rates**

Sr Citizen FD | SBI's 'We Care' deposit scheme offering **50 basis points** more for senior citizens over the standard rates will end. HDFC Bank & IDBI Bank schemes will cease as well

Costlier Cars | New vehicles have to comply with the **phase 2 of BS6** emission norms and this is likely to lead to a hike in prices among auto majors

Debt MFs | Debt mutual funds with less than 35% investment in equity shares will be taxed according to slab rate — **indexation benefits end**

Sr Citizen Savings Scheme | Maximum deposit limit for senior citizen savings scheme will be increased to **Rs 30 lakh from Rs 15 lakh**

Tax Rebate | Rebate under section 87A will be hiked to **Rs 25,000** for taxable income up to Rs 7 lakh. So if you opt for new regime, you will pay zero tax if income is under **Rs 7 lakh**

Leave Encashment | Limit for tax exemption on leave encashment on **retirement** of non-govt staff increases to **Rs 25 lakh from Rs 3 lakh**

Insurance Investment | Insurance policies (other than ULIPs) with annual **premiums exceeding Rs 5 lakh** will become taxable

Capital Gain Exemption | For HNIs availing high-value capital gain exemption by reinvesting in **luxury apartments**, tax deduction will be capped at **Rs 10 crore**

For businesses

Online Gaming | Online gaming cos must **deduct tax at source** on net winnings of users (money earned net of entry fees) at a rate of **30% on every winning**

Audit Trail | Accounting software used by cos to maintain books of accounts must have mandatory audit trail facility with features to **create edit logs** of each change made

Insurance Commissions | Life, general and health insurance cos will get the **flexibility to pay commissions** to agents according to board-approved policies within the overall expenses of management ceiling

Home Loan Capital | Home loan providers need to **provide more capital** on their portfolio. Earlier, RBI had rationalised risk weight to give a fillip to the sector

— Compiled by **Sindhu Hariharan**