

NEWS TODAY

Karnataka Issues Platform-Based Gig Workers (Social Security and Welfare) Ordinance 2025

The ordinance seeks to address gaps in protections for Gig Workers.

- A gig worker is defined in Code on Social Security, 2020 as a person who works in an arrangement outside of a traditional employer-employee relationship.
 - ⊕ They can be broadly classified into **platform (like Zomato) and non-platform-based workers.**
- As per NITI Aayog the number of gig workers and platform workers in India was **7.7 million** in 2020-21, which is expected to rise to **23.5 million** by 2029-30.

Key features of the ordinance

- **Welfare Board:** Provides for establishment of 'Welfare Board' at state-level.
- **Welfare fee:** Aggregator platforms like Zomato, Ola, Swiggy, Amazon and others will pay a **welfare fee ranging from 1 to 5 percent** of every transaction made with a gig worker.
 - ⊕ Welfare fee will be deposited into **the welfare fund**, which will also have workers contribution and government grants.
- **Other Features:** Provides safeguards against unfair dismissals, unique ID valid across platforms, and **more transparency with regards to automated monitoring and decision-making systems** deployed by platforms.

Other Initiatives taken for gig-workers in India

- **Rajasthan passed the Rajasthan Platform Based Gig Workers (Registration and Welfare) Act, 2023.**
- **Jharkhand released a draft Bill** to provide for the welfare of platform-based gig workers in 2024.
- **E-shram portal** was launched in **2021** to create a database of unorganised workers across sectors (including gig workers) to facilitate social security benefits.

Challenges to gig workers: Lack of Social Protection, Algorithmic management, Uncertain Nature of Job, Lack of Social Protection, etc.

Prime Minister laid the foundation of City Gas Distribution (CGD) project in Alipurduar and Cooch Behar, West Bengal

It would help promote **gas-based economy**, **reduce environmental pollution**, offer **cost effective fuel** ensuring **overall economic development**.

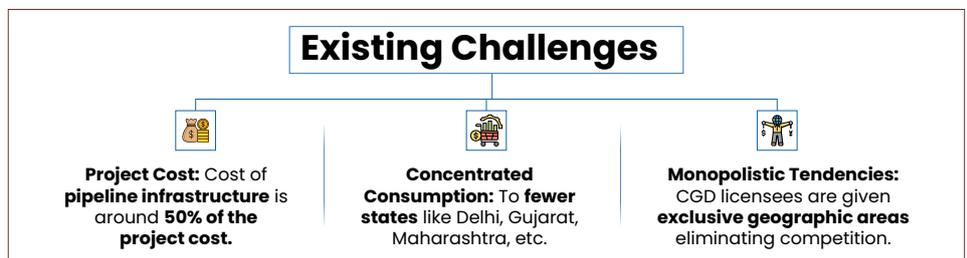
- It would also aid in realizing the vision of "One Nation One Gas Grid" along with increasing the share of **natural gas** in India's primary energy basket to **15% by 2030**.

CGD Network

- **About:** It is an **interconnected system of underground natural gas pipelines** for supplying **Piped Natural Gas (PNG)** and **Compressed Natural Gas (CNG)** through PNG connections, CNG stations and pipeline infrastructure.
 - ⊕ **CNG** is used as **auto-fuel**, while **PNG** is used in **domestic, commercial and Industrial segments.**
 - ⊕ **Natural gas**, a **fossil fuel energy source**, is an **odourless, gaseous** mixture of **hydrocarbons**—predominantly **methane (CH₄)**.
- **Role of Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB):** Grants the **authorization** to the entities for developing CGD network in a **specified Geographical Area (GA)**.
 - ⊕ **PNGRB** was constituted under the **PNGRB Act, 2006**, to protect the interests of those engaged in activities relating to **petroleum, petroleum products and natural gas.**
- **Key Achievements:**
 - ⊕ **CGD Network:** PNGRB has authorized CGD network development in **307 GAs**, covering entire country. (Post 12/12A CGD bidding round).
 - ◆ It has expanded to **550 districts** from 66 (2014).

Measures taken to propel CGD Network

- **Urja Ganga Project:** Extension of **gas pipelines** to connect the eastern states.
- **Others:** **Allocating** domestic natural gas to CGD sector, **Grant of Public Utility Status** to CGD Projects, **Guidelines** for use of PNG in **Defense and Public Sector Undertakings' residential areas**, etc.



Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Annual Report for 2024-25 Released

The report provides information on the RBI's functioning through the fiscal year as well as the state of the economy.

Key highlights of the report

- **Increase in RBI asset:** It was due to rise in gold, domestic investments and foreign investments.
 - ⊕ Income for the year increased by **22.77%** and expenditure rose by **7.76%**.
- **Higher Savings:** Net household savings rose to 5.1% of gross national disposable income in FY24.
 - ⊕ **National Disposable Income** = Net National Product at market prices (Gross National Product-Depreciation) + Other current transfers from the rest of the world
- **Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) or e-rupee:** It has jumped to ₹1,016 crore at the end of March 2025.
 - ⊕ The RBI is exploring the commencement of CBDC pilots on cross-border payments.
 - ⊕ RBI will be expanding CBDC pilots for retail and wholesale.
 - ⊕ CBDC is the digital form of India's physical currency issued by the RBI.
- **Lowest Debt ratio:** India's external debt to GDP ratio stood at **19.1% in December 2024**, the lowest among emerging markets.
- **Fastest growing economy:** RBI has projected real GDP growth for 2025-26 at **6.5 per cent**.
- **Headline inflation:** It is projected to ease and gradually move closer to the RBI's target in 2025-26.
- **Currency deposit ratio:** It has declined to **15.4% by March 2025**, driven by growth in digital transactions.



Central government started process of appraisal and approval of CSSs and the CSs

Appraisal and Approval of the Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSSs) and the Central Sector Schemes (CSs) is done for their continuation over the next five years.

- The **new five year cycle** will start on 1st April 2026 and is aligned with the **16th Finance Commission (FC) cycle**.
- There are **54 CSSs and 260 CSs** which have their terminal date of approval till 31.03.2026 and are likely to be submitted for re-appraisal.

About appraisal and approval

- **Mandated by:** The **2016 Union Budget**, each scheme must have a **sunset clause** and undergo **outcome-based review** before continuation.
- **Evaluation by:** The **Development Monitoring Evaluation Organisation (DMEO)** in NITI Aayog for CSSs and **third-party agencies** selected by the Ministries concerned for CSs.
- **Significance:** Remove **redundancies and ineffective suboptimal interventions**, merge schemes and close schemes which have either outlived their utility, enable **optimum deployment of scarce public resources**, etc.

 About Centrally Sponsored Schemes	 About Central Sector Schemes
<ul style="list-style-type: none">  Schemes that are jointly funded by the Central and State Government.  Implemented through the State Governments  These are in sectors falling in the State and Concurrent List.  These are categorised into: Core of the Core Schemes, Core schemes and Optional schemes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  Schemes that are funded 100% by the Union Government  Directly implemented by the Central Ministries/Department or its agency.  Ordinarily, these are in sectors falling in the Union List

South Asia's largest Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) inaugurated at Delhi

The **20-MW (40 MWh) BESS** installed at the BRPL (BSES Rajdhani Power Limited) substation is also India's "first commercially approved" utility-scale energy storage system.

- It leverages advanced **Lithium Iron Phosphate (LFP) technology** known for superior safety, thermal stability and durability.
 - ⊕ In **Lithium-iron phosphate (LiFePO₄)** batteries, cathode is made of **lithium metal phosphate** instead of lithium metal oxide.

Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS)

- **About: Electrochemical Energy Storage Systems** that stores electrical energy from renewables in the form of **chemical energy** to be used during peak demand.
- **Significance:** Cater to Future needs (**236 GWh BESS** would be required by **2031-32** as per **National Electricity Plan, 2023**); smooth renewable energy fluctuations, etc.
- **Two Main Categories**
 - ⊕ **Traditional Solid Rechargeable Batteries:** Stores Energy in **solid metal electrodes**, Examples:
 - ◆ **Lead Acid Batteries** (Anode- lead, Cathode- Lead dioxide)
 - ◆ **Lithium Ion Batteries** [Anode- Graphite, Cathode- Lithium Oxide (LiMO₂; M=Co, Ni)]
 - ◆ **Zinc Air Batteries** (Anode- Zinc, Cathode- Air/Oxygen).
 - ◆ **Sodium Sulphur (NaS)** (Anode- Sodium, Cathode- Sulfur).
 - ⊕ **Flow batteries:** Energy is stored in **flowing liquid electrolytes** kept in tanks separately. Example, vanadium redox flow batteries, zinc-iron flow batteries, zinc-bromine batteries, etc.

Other Initiatives taken

- **Viability Gap Funding (VGF) Scheme** to support **13,200 MWh BESS**.
- **National Framework for the Promotion of Energy Storage Systems 2023**.
- **Waiver of Inter State Transmission System Charges** on BESS Projects commissioned up to 30.06.2025 for **12 years**.

Indian Space Situational Assessment Report (ISSAR) for 2024 Released

Report is compiled **annually** by **ISRO System for Safe and Sustainable Space Operations Management (IS4OM)** under ISRO's Space Situational Awareness (SSA) activities.

- SSA involves the **knowledge of the space environment, assessment of threats**, and implementation of **mitigation measures**.

Key Highlights on India

- **Spacecrafts Launched and Operational:** Total of **136 spacecrafts** were launched.
 - ⊕ **Operational Satellites owned by Government:** **22** in LEO (Low Earth Orbit) and **31** in GEO (Geo-synchronous Earth Orbit).
 - ⊕ **Active Deep Space Missions: Chandrayaan-2 Orbiter (CH20)** and **Aditya-L1** at Sun-Earth Lagrange's point.
- **Collision Avoidance Manoeuvres (CAM):** **10 CAMs** were carried out by ISRO in 2024.
- **Atmospheric Re-Entry:** **9 Indian satellites** re-entered the atmosphere in 2024 including the Cartosat-2.
- **Spacecraft Decommissioning: Scatsat-1** was de-orbited as part of post mission operations, along with INS-2B and EOS-7.
- **PSLV Orbital Experimental Module (POEM):** Technology demonstration missions, POEM-3 and POEM-4 saw de-orbiting of their upper stages to **350 km altitude**.
- **Space Leadership:** India currently chairs the **UN working group** on the **Long-term Sustainability** of outer space activities.
 - ⊕ ISRO chaired the **Inter-Agency Debris Coordination Committee (IADC)** for **2023-24** and hosted the **42nd annual IADC meet**, where it contributed to:
 - ◆ Revision of **IADC space debris mitigation guidelines**.
 - ◆ Declaration of **Debris Free Space Mission (DFSM)** to be achieved by all Indian space actors, both governmental and non-governmental, by **2030**.

Global Scenario

- **Launches:** 2024 witnessed **254 successful launches**, placing a total of **2963 objects** on space.
- **3 Major On-Orbit Break Up Events:** Major being the **Fragmentation of Long March rocket stage (CZ-6A)**, adding around **650 catalogued objects**.

Also In News



Tianwen-2 probe

China launched **Tianwen-2 probe** to return samples from an asteroid, **2016H03**.

- Earlier, **Tianwen-1 probe** consisting of an orbiter, a lander and a **rover (Zhurong)** landed on mars' surface in **2021**.
- **Tianwen-3**, scheduled for (launch) around 2028, aims to collect and bring samples back to Earth from Mars while **Tianwen-4** aims to explore **Jupiter** around 2030.

About Tianwen-2 probe

- **Launch Vehicle:** Long March 3-B rocket.
- **Aim:** Collect samples from the **asteroid 2016H03** and explore the **main-belt comet 311P**, which lies even further from the Earth than Mars.
- **Duration:** End of 2027.



Viksit Krishi Sankalp Abhiyan

Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare launched the **Viksit Krishi Sankalp Abhiyan (VKSA-2025)** at the **ICAR-Central Institute of Freshwater Aquaculture (ICAR-CIFA)**, Bhubaneswar, Odisha.

- He also released a **novel fish vaccine - CIFA Argu VAX-I**, developed by ICAR-CIFA, targeting **parasitic infections in fish**.

About Viksit Krishi Sankalp Abhiyan

- **Goal:** Reach over **1.5 crore farmers** across India through technology dissemination, capacity building, and grassroots engagement.
- **Lab to Land:** Teams consisting of scientists, experts, officials, and progressive farmers will travel across **700+ districts** and **reach millions of farmers across villages**, providing information about **modern agriculture** to farmers.



Operation Chakra-V

Recently, **CBI (Central Bureau of Investigation)** arrested alleged members of a transnational cybercrime syndicate under **Operation Chakra- V**.

About Operation Chakra-V

- It aims to **curb transnational Organized Cybercrime/ Digital Arrests**.
 - ⊕ Digital arrest is a scam to extort money from victims using **fear, deceit, and intimidation** where fraudsters **impersonate law enforcement officials**, using threats of arrest, frozen bank accounts, and passport cancellations, etc.
- **Other measures to curb cybercrime:** Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre' (I4C), Cyber Surakshit Bharat, Cyber Swachhta Kendra, Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In), etc.



Biostimulants

Centre notified 34 biostimulants to spur manufacturing.

About Biostimulants

- Biostimulants are **natural or biologically derived substances** that **enhance plant/crops growth, nutrient absorption, and stress tolerance**.
 - ⊕ **E.g.:** Sea weed (Saragassum, Ulva etc), Humic and Fulvic acid etc
- They are registered under **Fertilizer Control Order (FCO) 1985**.



PM-Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana

Diu became the **first district** in India to meet the entire power demand with solar energy with the implementation of **PM-Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana**.

About PM-Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana

- **Type:** Central Sector Scheme.
- **Ministry:** The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE).
- **Under the scheme,**
 - ⊕ Households will be provided with a subsidy to **install solar panels on their roofs**.
 - ⊕ The subsidy will cover up to **40% of the cost of the solar panels**.
 - ⊕ It is expected to benefit **1 crore households across India**.
 - ⊕ It will create more than **3 lakh skilled manpower, through fresh skilling, and up-skilling**.



Exercise Nomadic Elephant

17th edition of **India- Mongolia Joint Military Exercise Nomadic Elephant** is to be conducted in **Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia**.

- Conducted **annually and alternatively in India and Mongolia**.
- Last edition (2024) was conducted at **Umroi, Meghalaya**.
- Aims to **enhance interoperability** between the two forces, employing joint task force in **semi conventional operations** in semi urban/ mountainous terrain under **United Nations mandate**.



Pro-Active Governance and Timely Implementation (PRAGATI)

Recently, Prime Minister chaired the **PRAGATI meeting** to review various projects.

About PRAGATI

- **Genesis:** 2015 as a unique **multi-purpose, multi-modal platform**.
- **Aim:** Addressing common man's grievances, simultaneously monitoring and reviewing important programmes and projects of the **Government of India** as well as projects flagged by **State Governments**.
- **Three-Tier System:** PMO, Union Government Secretaries, and Chief Secretaries of the States.
- **Key Features:** **Tackles bottlenecks** in projects caused by **interdependencies** across government bodies, maintains decisions for follow up and continuous review.
- **Achievements:** **By June 2023**, the platform had reviewed **340 projects** valued at ₹17.05 lakh crore (\$205 billion).



Thirukkural

The Central Institute of Classical Tamil (CICT) has commissioned translation of **Thirukkural into four Medium or Major Dravidian languages** i.e. Kurukh, Gondi, Malto and Brahui.

About Thirukkural

- **Written by:** Thiruvalluvar.
- **Period :** Between 2nd century BCE and 5th century CE.
- The text of **Tirukkural is divided into three major sections- Aram (Virtue), Porul (government and society), and Inbam (Love)**.
- It is a **collection of 1,330 couplets (kural)**.

Place in News



Panama (Capital: Panama City)

Panama backed India for a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council.

Political Features

- **Location:** Central America, on the Isthmus of Panama, the narrow bridge of land that connects North and South America.
- **Territorial Boundaries:** Costa Rica (West) and Colombia (East).
- **Maritime Boundaries:** Caribbean Sea (North) and Pacific Ocean (South).

Geographical Features

- **Panama Canal:** It is a man-made waterway connecting the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, making it one of the world's most **strategic canals**, alongside the **Suez Canal**.

