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Guiding Dreams, Empowering Future

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EXCLUSIVE CURRENT AFFAIRS BULLETIN

Newsletter | 2nd Week August 2026

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PREVENTION OF INSULTS TO National Honour (Amendment) Bill, 2026

Historical Context

- Constituent Assembly (24th January 1950): Dr. Rajendra Prasad accorded Vande Mataram a status equal to Jana Gana Mana, recognising its historic role in the freedom struggle.
- Legal Gap: Despite this honour, the National Song lacked specific statutory protection compared to the National Anthem under the 1971 Act.
- 150th Anniversary: The Bill was introduced amid the commemoration of the 150th anniversary of Vande Mataram's composition.

The Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971 (The Parent Act)

- Section 2 – National Flag & Constitution:
  - Prohibition: Insults to the National Flag and the Constitution (burning, defacing, desecrating).
  - Punishment: Up to 3 years imprisonment, a fine, or both.
  - Exception: Criticism of the Constitution or Flag for lawful amendment is not an offence.
- Section 3 – National Anthem:
  - Prohibition: Intentionally preventing the singing of Jana Gana Mana or causing disturbance.
  - Punishment: Up to 3 years imprisonment, a fine, or both.
- Section 3A – Repeat Offences (Added by 2003):
  - Provision: Minimum imprisonment of 1 year for second and subsequent convictions.

Why in News?

- **Parliament has passed the Prevention of Insults to National Honour (Amendment) Bill, 2026.**
- **The Bill extends legal protection to Vande Mataram, the National Song, by prescribing penalties for obstructing or disrespecting its singing.**
- **This places Vande Mataram on the same statutory footing as the National Anthem (Jana Gana Mana).**

Highlights of the Amendment Bill, 2026

- Scope: The Bill amends the 1971 Act to include Vande Mataram.
- Substitution: Substitutes Section 3 to cover both the National Anthem and the National Song.
- New Offence: Intentionally preventing the singing of Vande Mataram or causing disturbance is now a criminal offence.
- Punishment: Imprisonment up to 3 years, a fine, or both.
- Repeat Offenders: Minimum imprisonment of 1 year for repeat offences (Section 3A) applies here as well.

Vande Mataram: Background and Significance

- Composition: Composed by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay in Sanskritised Bengali.
- First Publication: Bangadarshan (1875); later included in novel Anandamath (1882).
- Music: Set to music by Rabindranath Tagore.
- Adoption: First two stanzas adopted as National Song by Congress Working Committee in 1937.
- Role in Freedom Struggle:
  - Rallying cry of the Swadeshi Movement and Anti-Partition Movement (1905).
  - Banned frequently by the British; singers arrested.
  - Tagore sang it at the 1896 Calcutta Session of INC.
  - Madam Bhikaji Cama unfurled tricolour with "Vande Mataram" at Stuttgart (1907).
- Constitutional Position:
  - The Constitution does not explicitly recognise a National Song.
  - Article 51A(a) makes it a Fundamental Duty to respect the National Flag and the National Anthem.

MHA Protocol on Vande Mataram and Jana Gana Mana

- Order: When performed together, Vande Mataram must be sung before Jana Gana Mana.

· Mandatory Respect: People must stand to attention during official rendition (duration: 3 minutes 10 seconds).
· Exception: Standing not required when played in films, documentaries, or newsreels.
· Occasions: Played at Presidential/Gubernatorial functions, Flag ceremonies, and official cultural events.

Significance of the Amendment

· Fills Legal Vacuum: Provides statutory protection to the National Song, closing a long-standing gap.
· Strengthens National Honour: Reinforces commitment to respect national symbols and upholds the spirit of the 1950 Constituent Assembly decision.
· Deters Disrespect: Penal provisions act as a deterrent against intentional obstruction.
· Promotes Heritage: Recognises Vande Mataram's historical and cultural importance.

Criticism & Concerns

· Constitutional Debate: Critics argue that Article 51A mentions only the National Flag and Anthem, not the National Song. Extending penal provisions lacks a direct constitutional mandate.
· Religious Imagery: Later stanzas personify India as Hindu goddesses. Critics contend criminalising disrespect could alienate non-Hindu communities, which is why the 1937 Congress resolution restricted it to the first two stanzas.
· Enforcement Issues: The existing Act has low conviction rates and high pending cases, raising concerns about efficacy and potential misuse of the new provisions.

Conclusion

The Prevention of Insults to National Honour (Amendment) Bill, 2026, is a significant legislative move to formally elevate the legal status of Vande Mataram, placing it on par with the National Anthem for penalising intentional disrespect. While the government cites the historic 1950 Constituent Assembly declaration to justify the amendment, the Bill has re-ignited debates about the secular character of national symbols and the limits of criminal law in a pluralistic democracy.

Previous Year Question (PYQ) - Prelims

Question: Who among the following is associated with 'Songs from Prison', a translation of ancient Indian religious lyrics in English? (2021)

(a) Bal Gangadhar Tilak
(b) Jawaharlal Nehru
(c) Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi
(d) Sarojini Naidu

Answer: (c)

Why in News?

• The Cauvery Water Management Authority (CWMA) endorsed the Cauvery Water Regulation Committee (CWRC) order directing Karnataka to release 3,500 cusecs (around 4.5 TMC) of water to Tamil Nadu, despite a 60% shortfall in reservoir inflows.
• Karnataka opposed the order, citing inadequate rainfall and low reservoir storage.
• Tamil Nadu considered the allocated quantity insufficient and demanded release of 9.8 TMC, reigniting the long-standing dispute amid deficient monsoon rainfall.
• Simultaneously, Tamil Nadu opposed Karnataka's proposed Mekedatu Balancing Reservoir Project, urging the Prime Minister to withhold statutory approvals.

Historical Timeline of the Dispute

• 1807: First recorded disagreement – Mysore state initiated development projects on the river; Madras government disapproved.
• 1892: First agreement between Mysore and Madras.
• 1924: Second agreement; lapsed in 1974.
• 1974: Karnataka began diverting water without Tamil Nadu's consent.
• 1990: CWDT constituted under the Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956.
• 2007: CWDT final award.
• 2018: Supreme Court modified award.
• 2018: CWMA and CWRC established.

Core Issues and Points of Conflict

• Water sharing during deficit years.
• Mekedatu Balancing Reservoir Project.
• Institutional non-compliance.

Institutional Framework: CWMA and CWRC

CWMA:
• Established: 2018.
• Headquarters: New Delhi.
• Regulates water releases, distress

Cauvery (Kaveri) River: Facts at a Glance:

Feature	Details
Nickname	"Ganga of the South"
Origin	Talakaveri, Brahmagiri Hills, Kodagu district, Karnataka
Course	Flows through Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, drains into Bay of Bengal near Poompuhar
Drainage Basin	Covers ~81,155 sq. km across Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Puducherry
Unique Feature	Perennial river – upper basin gets Southwest Monsoon, lower basin gets Northeast Monsoon
Left Bank Tributaries	Harangi, Hemavati, Shimsha, Arkavati
Right Bank Tributaries	Lakshmana Tirtha, Kabini, Suvarnavathi, Bhavani, Noyyal, Amaravati
Major Dams	Krishna Raja Sagara (Karnataka), Mettur Dam (Tamil Nadu).

sharing, monitoring and efficient water use.

CWRC:
- Technical body under CWMA responsible for regulation of releases.

Recent Developments (July–August 2026)

- CWRC ordered Karnataka to release 3,500 cusecs.
- CWMA upheld the order.
- Tamil Nadu approached the Supreme Court.
- Karnataka decided to challenge the plea.
- Farmers' and political protests continued.

Supreme Court's Position (2018)

- Karnataka allocation increased to 284.75 TMC.
- Tamil Nadu allocation reduced to 404.25 TMC.
- CWMA/CWRC implementation framework upheld.

Significance

- Federalism.
- Water security vs agriculture.
- Institutional effectiveness.
- Climate change.
- Precedent for other river disputes.

Concerns

- No distress-sharing formula.
- Weak enforcement.
- Political exploitation.
- Ecological concerns.
- Delayed adjudication.

Way Forward

- Develop a distress-sharing formula.
- Strengthen CWMA.
- Promote water efficiency.
- Permanent tribunal.
- Cooperative dialogue.

Conclusion

The Cauvery dispute reflects the complex balance between federalism, water security, agriculture and climate variability. Sustainable resolution requires stronger institutions, scientific water management, legal clarity and cooperative federalism.

Prelim PYQ Question:

1. CWDT was constituted under the Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956.
2. The Supreme Court increased Karnataka's share to 284.75 TMC in 2018.
3. CWMA was established in 2018 under the Cauvery Water Management Scheme.

Options:
(a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (d) 1, 2 and 3.

Pradhan Mantri Surya Sarovar Yojana

Why in News?

- Cabinet decision: The Union Cabinet, chaired by the Prime Minister, approved the Pradhan Mantri Surya Sarovar Yojana (PM-SSY) on 31 July 2026.
- Purpose: The scheme promotes Floating Solar Photovoltaic (FSPV) projects on reservoirs and suitable inland water bodies, with co-located Energy Storage Systems (ESS).

Objectives of the Scheme

- Accelerate solar capacity: Add 5 GW of floating solar capacity and scale a segment that was only around 700 MW at the time of approval.
- Use water surfaces productively: Deploy solar installations on reservoirs and industrial ponds without acquiring large tracts of land.
- Improve grid reliability: Require at least two hours of storage so part of daytime solar output can be shifted to periods of higher demand or lower solar generation.
- De-risk project preparation: Support bathymetry, hydrography, environmental assessment and other feasibility work that determines whether a water body is suitable.
- Strengthen self-reliance: Create demand for domestically manufactured PV cells, modules, flotation structures and storage equipment.
- Advance climate goals: Reduce emissions and support India's non-fossil capacity and emission-intensity commitments.

Understanding Floating Solar Photovoltaic Technology

3.1 What is FSPV?

Floating solar photovoltaic technology places solar modules on buoyant platforms anchored or moored on the surface of a water body. The electricity-generation principle is the same as land-based solar PV; the difference lies in the floating structure, anchoring, cabling, water-body assessment and operation-and-maintenance environment.

3.2 Main Components

- PV modules: Convert sunlight directly into electricity.
- Floats and supporting structure: Keep the modules above water and resist wind, waves and changes in water level.
- Mooring and anchoring system: Maintains the array's position while allowing safe movement with changing reservoir conditions.
- Inverters and transformers: Convert direct current to alternating current and step up voltage for grid supply.
- Cables and evacuation system: Carry electricity to the onshore substation or nearby grid connection.
- Monitoring and safety systems: Track generation, equipment condition, weather, insulation, fire risk and water-related hazards.

How PM-SSY is Designed to Work

- Project identification: States, UTs and implementing entities identify reservoirs, industrial ponds or other suitable inland water bodies.
- Feasibility stage: Detailed studies examine water depth, seasonal variation, wind and wave conditions, environmental sensitivity, access, grid connectivity and project economics.
- Project development: Eligible FSPV capacity is developed with a co-located ESS meeting the minimum two-hour requirement.
- Commissioning-linked assistance: The ₹1 crore-per-MW CFA becomes available after successful commissioning, encouraging completion and performance rather than merely sanctioning proposals.
- Preparatory support: Up to ₹50 lakh per project is available for studies that can reduce technical, environmental and financial uncertainty.

Why Floating Solar is Important for India

5.1 Land–Energy–Water Link

- Land conservation: Utility-scale solar requires considerable land. Using suitable water surfaces can reduce pressure on agricultural land, forests, habitats and densely populated areas.
- Existing public infrastructure: Reservoirs and industrial ponds may already have access roads, substations or transmission links, although each site requires verification.
- Complementarity with hydropower: Where deployed on hydropower reservoirs, solar and hydro can potentially share evacuation infrastructure, while flexible hydropower can help balance solar variability.
- Possible water benefit: Partial surface coverage may reduce evaporation at some sites, but the actual benefit depends on climate, coverage, design and reservoir operation; it should not be assumed uniformly.

5.2 Energy Security

- Domestic renewable source: Solar generation reduces dependence on imported fossil fuels and exposure to international

price volatility.
- Peak support through ESS: Storage can supply electricity after sunset or during demand peaks, subject to dispatch design and available stored energy.
- Distributed national opportunity: Eligibility of every State and UT broadens the geographic base of clean-energy investment.

Major Implementation Challenges

- Higher capital and O&M complexity: Floating structures, anchors, specialised cables, boats and water-based maintenance may cost more than conventional solar.
- Site-specific engineering: Wind, waves, depth, siltation and water-level fluctuations differ widely; standard land-solar designs cannot simply be copied.
- Extreme weather: Cyclones, storms, floods and rapid drawdown can damage floats, moorings and electrical systems.
- Corrosion and humidity: Electrical insulation, connectors and metal parts require marine-grade or site-appropriate protection.
- Grid connectivity: A reservoir may have solar potential but insufficient evacuation capacity or transmission access.
- Storage cost and lifecycle: Battery replacement, degradation, thermal management, fire safety and recycling affect long-term economics.
- Institutional coordination: Projects may involve MNRE, State governments, reservoir owners, dam authorities, DISCOMs, environmental bodies and local users.
- Financing and bankability: Lenders need reliable generation data, water-use rights, long-term power-offtake certainty and risk allocation.
- Seasonal variation: Reservoir surface area and shoreline location can change sharply between monsoon and summer.
- Data gaps: India needs open, standardised data on performance, environmental impacts, failures and lifecycle costs.

Way Forward

- Scientific site screening: Create a national geospatial inventory combining solar resource, reservoir purpose, ecology, water-level range, grid access and disaster risk.
- Cumulative-impact assessment: Evaluate ecological effects at basin and reservoir scale, not only project-by-project.
- Coverage limits: Use evidence-based limits for percentage of water surface covered, adapted to reservoir ecology and operating needs.
- Technical standards: Develop strong standards for floats, anchoring, electrical safety, fire safety, extreme weather, dam safety and emergency response.
- Competitive procurement: Use transparent bidding and clear performance obligations to combine affordability with quality.
- Storage optimisation: Choose battery chemistry and duration based on grid need, climate, safety, recyclability and total lifecycle cost—not only upfront price.
- Domestic R&D: Support corrosion-resistant materials, recyclable floats, high-efficiency modules, safer batteries, forecasting and robotic inspection.

Conclusion

The Pradhan Mantri Surya Sarovar Yojana can become an important pillar of India's clean-energy transition by adding 5 GW of land-efficient floating solar with storage. Its real value lies in combining renewable generation, grid reliability and domestic manufacturing. However, durable success requires scientifically chosen sites, strong environmental safeguards, resilient engineering, responsible recycling and meaningful participation of communities that depend on the same water bodies.

Prelims Previous Year Question

With reference to the Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency Limited (IREDA), which of the following statements is/are correct? (UPSC Civil Services Prelims, 2015)
1. It is a Public Limited Government Company.
2. It is a Non-Banking Financial Company.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:
- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Answer: (c) Both 1 and 2

IREDA is a Government of India enterprise under the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy and functions as a non-banking financial institution supporting renewable-energy and energy-efficiency projects.

150TH BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF PINGALI VENKAYYA

News Context

- India observed the 150th birth anniversary of Pingali Venkayya on 2 August 2026.
- Prime Minister paid tributes to him, remembering his invaluable role in giving the nation the Tricolour.
- The occasion highlighted the enduring role of the National Flag in inspiring patriotism and nation-building.

Early Life & Military Service

- Born on 2 August 1876 in Bhatlapenumarru village near Machilipatnam, Krishna District, Andhra Pradesh.
- He joined the British Army at the age of 19.
- Served as a soldier in the Second Boer War (1899-1902) in South Africa.
- It was during this time in South Africa that he first met Mahatma Gandhi and formed a lasting association with him.
- Passed away on 4 July 1963 at the age of 86.

Design of the National Flag

- In 1916, after extensive research, Venkayya published a book titled "A National Flag For India".
- During numerous meetings, he stressed the need for a single national flag for the country.
- 1921 Presentation: During the Indian National Congress session in Vijayawada (then Bezwada), Venkayya presented a rudimentary design of the Swaraj Flag on Khadi to Mahatma Gandhi.
- Original Design: The draft featured two horizontal bands – red and green – representing the Hindu and Muslim communities respectively, with a spinning wheel (Gandhi Charkha) at the centre.
- Gandhi's Suggestion: Mahatma Gandhi modified the design by adding a white band to represent peace and the rest of India's communities. The Charkha symbolised Swaraj and self-reliance.
- 1931 Adoption: The design was officially

adopted by the Indian National Congress in 1931, becoming the basis of the modern Indian Tricolour.

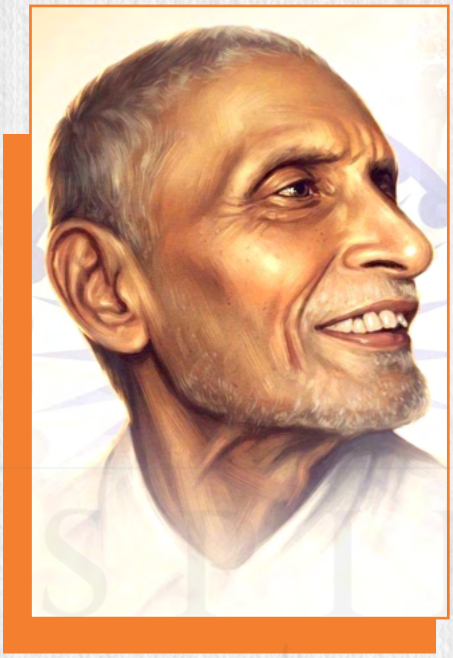
- 1947 Finalisation: An ad hoc committee of the Constituent Assembly recommended retaining the 1931 tricolour while replacing the Charkha with the Ashoka Chakra.
- The Constituent Assembly adopted the present National Flag on 22 July 1947, and it officially became India's National Flag on 15 August 1947.

Role in the National Movement

- He was an active participant in the freedom struggle from 1906 to 1922.
- Engaged in significant campaigns like the Vande Mataram movement and the Home Rule movement.
- He remained a true Gandhian, committed to Gandhian ideals throughout his life.

A Renowned Polymath

- Venkayya possessed diverse expertise across multiple fields, earning him several historical monikers:
- 'Japan Venkayya': He was a gifted linguist who delivered a full-length speech in Japanese in 1913 at Bapatla, Andhra Pradesh.
- 'Patti (Cotton) Venkayya': He earned this name for his dedicated agricultural research, specifically regarding Cambodia Cotton.
- 'Diamond Venkayya': A geology graduate, he set records in diamond mining in Andhra Pradesh. He authored the 1955 book "The Mother of Diamonds" and served as an advisor to the Government of India's Mineral Research Department post-independence.



- He also worked briefly as a plague inspector in Madras and Bellary.
- He set up an educational institution in Machilipatnam.

Legacy & Recognition

- He was honoured with a commemorative postage stamp in 2009.
- In 2015, the government recognised his contributions through various initiatives.
- His legacy continues to be celebrated through events like the "Har Ghar Tiranga" movement, which urges citizens to unfurl the tricolour.

Conclusion

Pingali Venkayya was not merely the designer of India's National Flag but a multifaceted freedom fighter, soldier, linguist, agriculturist, and geologist whose contributions extended far beyond the Tricolour. From his early military service in South Africa where he met Mahatma Gandhi, to his relentless pursuit of a single national flag for India, Venkayya embodied the spirit of selfless patriotism. His 1921 design, later modified with Gandhi's input, laid the foundation for the Tiranga that India adopted in 1947.

Previous Year Question (Prelims)

Q. Consider the following statements:

1. The design of the Indian National Flag was first presented to Mahatma Gandhi by Pingali Venkayya in 1921 at the Indian National Congress session in Vijayawada.

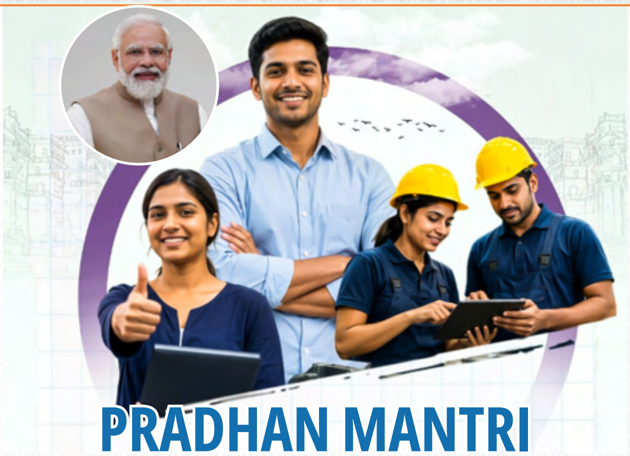
2. The original design by Pingali Venkayya featured three horizontal bands of saffron, white and green.

3. The Ashoka Chakra replaced the Charkha on the National Flag in 1947 on the recommendation of an ad hoc committee of the Constituent Assembly.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (b) 1 and 3 only



PRADHAN MANTRI VIKSIT BHARAT ROJGAR YOJANA (PM-VBRY)

News Context

- Completes one year of implementation on 1 August 2026.
- Launched by the Prime Minister in August 2025.
- Implementation period: 1 August 2025 to 31 July 2027 (two years).
- Total budgetary outlay: ₹99,446 crore.

Nature and Objectives of the Scheme

- It is an Employment-Linked Incentive (ELI) scheme.
- Overall objectives:
- Promote first-time employment and support generation of additional jobs.
- Expand social security coverage by bringing more workers into the organised workforce.
- Incentivise employers to create new formal job positions.
- Employment target: aims to create jobs for over 35 crore persons, including 1.92 crore first-time job seekers.
- Sectoral focus: specifically targets labour-intensive manufacturing and also supports emerging and expanding industries.

· Alignment with national missions: complements the national manufacturing mission by encouraging formal job creation.

Dual Incentive Framework of the Scheme

The scheme is administered through the EPFO (Employees' Provident Fund Organisation) and provides incentives to both employees and employers.

(A) Incentive for First-Time Employees
· Eligibility: first-time employees with monthly salary not exceeding ₹1 lakh.
· Incentive amount: a one-time lump sum equal to one month's EPF wage, capped at ₹15,000.
· Payment mode: disbursed in two instalments –
· First instalment after 6 months of continuous service.
· Second instalment after 12 months of continuous service, subject to completion of a financial literacy programme.
· Additional condition: a portion of the amount is credited to a designated savings instrument to encourage long-term financial security.

(B) Incentive for Employers
· Eligibility: employers who create jobs for eligible new employees (salary ≤ ₹1 lakh) and retain them for at least 6 months.
· Incentive amount: up to ₹3,000 per month per eligible new employee for a period of two years.
· Special provision for manufacturing: in the manufacturing sector, support can be extended to the third and fourth years as well.
· Purpose: reduces hiring costs and sustains continuous job creation.

Impact & Achievements in the First Year

· Employment and formalisation: encouraged job creation across sectors, promoted first-time hiring, expanded EPFO-based social security, and strengthened India's organised labour market.
· Beneficiary coverage:
· Over 72 lakh first-time employees joined the formal workforce.
· More than 15 lakh beneficiaries have received the employment-linked incentive.
· Women participation: nearly 30% of beneficiaries are women, supporting greater female participation in formal employment.
· Disbursement of incentives: on 19 June 2026, the Prime Minister released about ₹2,400 crore as incentive payments.

Digital Implementation and Technology Architecture

The scheme operates through a fully digital EPFO-linked platform:
· Aadhaar-based authentication for identity verification and beneficiary confirmation.
· Universal Account Number (UAN) as a unique identifier for each employee.
· Electronic Challan-cum-Return (ECR) filing for employer compliance and reporting.
· Face authentication via UMANG App for convenient beneficiary verification.
· Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) – incentives are directly credited to Aadhaar-linked bank accounts.
· PM-VBRY portal provides real-time monitoring of beneficiary and sector-wise progress.

Outreach and Support Mechanisms

· Nationwide awareness campaigns were conducted to ensure grassroots participation.
· Cross-departmental teams comprising officers from EPFO, Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC), and Chief Labour Commissioner (CLC) work together for effective implementation.

Comparison with Previous Schemes

· Replaces the earlier Atmanirbhar Bharat Rojgar Yojana (ABRY).
· Distinctive feature: unlike previous single-direction employment schemes, PM-VBRY simultaneously incentivises both employees and employers.

Conclusion

Pradhan Mantri Viksit Bharat Rojgar Yojana (PM-VBRY) is a significant step towards expanding formal employment and securing India's workforce. By providing direct financial support to first-time job seekers and bearing part of the hiring cost for employers, the scheme effectively promotes job creation, social security, financial inclusion, and formalisation of the labour force. Its EPFO-linked digital backbone, powered by Aadhaar, UMANG, and DBT, ensures transparency and efficient delivery.

Previous Year Question (Prelims)

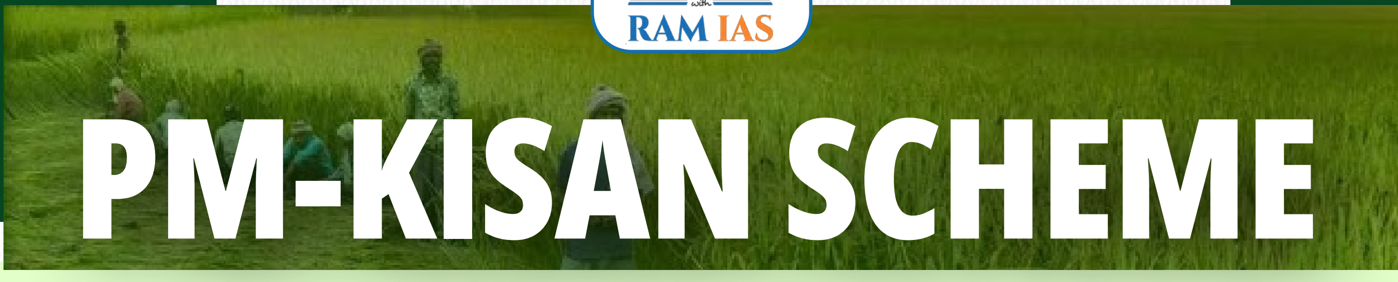
Q. With reference to casual workers employed in India, consider the following statements: [2021]

1. All casual workers are entitled for Employees Provident Fund coverage.
2. All casual workers are entitled for regular working hours and overtime payment.
3. The government can by a notification specify that an establishment or industry shall pay wages only through cheque or digital payment.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Answer: (c) 3 only



PM-KISAN SCHEME

Why in News?

- The Union Cabinet approved the continuation of PM-KISAN for five financial years, from 2026-27 to 2030-31, with a total outlay of ₹3.15 lakh crore.
- The annual assistance remains ₹6,000 per eligible landholding farmer family. It is paid in three equal instalments through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT).
- By the 23rd instalment, more than ₹4.47 lakh crore had been transferred. The 23rd instalment benefited over 9.49 crore farmers and released more than ₹18,984 crore.
- The continuation shows that direct income support has become a permanent component of India's agricultural welfare architecture.

Background and Evolution

- PM-KISAN was introduced to provide predictable income support to cultivators and help them meet agricultural input and household expenses.
- The scheme became operational from 1 December 2018 and was formally launched in February 2019.
- Initially, it covered small and marginal farmer families having cultivable land up to two hectares.
- From June 2019, coverage was expanded to all eligible landholding farmer families, subject to exclusion criteria based on higher economic status.
- The scheme represents a shift from only price support and input subsidies towards direct, portable and technology-enabled income support.

Objectives of PM-KISAN

- To supplement the financial needs of eligible landholding farmer families.
- To support timely purchase of seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, irrigation services and other agricultural inputs.
- To reduce dependence on informal moneylenders and high-cost credit.
- To provide a basic income cushion against seasonal and market-related uncertainties.
- To strengthen rural consumption and local economic activity through regular cash transfers.
- To improve transparency in welfare delivery by transferring money directly into verified bank accounts.

Major Features & Institutional Design

- Central Sector Scheme: The entire expenditure is borne by the Union Government.
- Unit of benefit: The beneficiary unit is a farmer family, defined as husband, wife and minor children.
- Land-based eligibility: Cultivable landholding recorded in State or Union Territory land records is the basic eligibility condition.
- Amount and frequency: ₹6,000 per year in three instalments of ₹2,000, normally at four-month intervals.
- DBT architecture: Payments are made directly into Aadhaar-seeded bank accounts, reducing leakages and middlemen.
- State role: States and Union Territories identify eligible farmer families, verify land records and upload beneficiary data.
- Centre's role: The Union Government validates data, processes payment files, monitors the portal and finances the scheme.
- Technology backbone: Aadhaar authentication, Public Financial Management System, NPCI payment systems, land-record databases and the PM-KISAN portal are integrated.

Eligibility & Exclusion Categories

Eligible beneficiaries

- Landholding farmer families having cultivable land in their names in official land records, subject to prescribed conditions.
- Both male and female landholders may receive the benefit; only one eligible member per farmer family can receive it.

Major exclusions

- Institutional landholders.
- Present and former holders of constitutional posts.
- Present and former Ministers, Members of Parliament, Members of State Legislatures, Mayors of Municipal Corporations and Chairpersons of District Panchayats.
- Serving or retired officers and employees of Central or State Governments, public sector enterprises, autonomous institutions and local bodies, except eligible Group D/Class IV/Multi-Tasking Staff categories.
- Retired pensioners receiving a monthly pension of 10,000 or more, subject to specified exceptions.
- Persons who paid income tax in the latest assessment year.
- Registered professionals such as doctors, engineers, lawyers, chartered accountants and architects who are practising their profession.
- Multiple beneficiaries from the same family are not permitted. Suspected duplicate or ineligible cases may be withheld pending physical verification.

Recent Performance & Achievements

- 23 instalments had transferred more than ₹4.47 lakh crore to farmers by July 2026.
- The 23rd instalment reached more than 9.49 crore farmers, with over ₹18,984 crore released.
- More than ₹1.71 lakh crore was disbursed during the COVID-19 period, providing a timely liquidity cushion to rural households.
- Women farmers received more than ₹1.06 lakh crore; nearly one in four beneficiaries is a woman.
- The official portal reported about 9.45 crore beneficiaries for the April-July 2026-27 payment period.
- Independent evaluations reported that over 92% of beneficiaries used the assistance for agricultural activities and inputs, while around 85% reported higher agricultural income and reduced dependence on informal credit.

PM-KISAN and Digital Public Infrastructure

- The scheme uses the JAM architecture: Jan Dhan bank accounts, Aadhaar and mobile connectivity.
- Aadhaar-based verification reduces duplicate and fictitious claims, while DBT avoids layers of cash handling.
- The PM-KISAN mobile app supports registration, status checking and face-authentication-based e-KYC.
- Kisan e-Mitra, an AI-enabled voice chatbot, provides round-the-clock assistance in 11 languages and helps farmers obtain payment and eligibility information.
- Common Service Centres and India Post Payments Bank support farmers who face digital or banking barriers.
- Digitalisation improves transparency, but exclusion can arise when land records, Aadhaar details or bank data do not match.

10. Major Concerns and Limitations

- Inadequate amount: ₹6,000 per year is useful as supplementary support but covers only a small share of the annual cultivation cost of most crops.
- Land ownership bias: Tenant farmers, sharecroppers, oral lessees and many actual cultivators may be excluded because the scheme relies on formal land titles.
- Women's exclusion: Women perform a major share of farm work but own a relatively small proportion of agricultural land, limiting their direct access.
- Outdated land records: Delayed mutation, inheritance disputes and poor digitisation can exclude genuine beneficiaries or create duplicate claims.

Way Forward

- Gradually index the transfer amount to inflation and rising cultivation costs, while preserving fiscal sustainability.
- Create legally verifiable mechanisms to include tenant farmers, sharecroppers and women cultivators without weakening safeguards against duplication.
- Complete digitisation, mutation and interoperability of land records under the Digital India Land Records Modernization Programme.
- Use assisted e-KYC and grievance camps in villages to prevent digital exclusion.
- Publish regular State-wise data on rejection, delayed payment, grievance resolution and exclusion errors.

Conclusion

PM-KISAN has developed into India's largest direct income-support programme for landholding farmers. Its transparent DBT system, wide reach and predictable instalments provide useful liquidity for agricultural and household needs. However, the modest benefit amount and dependence on formal land records leave important groups—especially tenants, sharecroppers and many women cultivators—outside its effective coverage. The next phase should therefore combine clean digital delivery with updated land records, stronger grievance redressal, broader cultivator inclusion and convergence with credit, insurance, irrigation and market reforms.

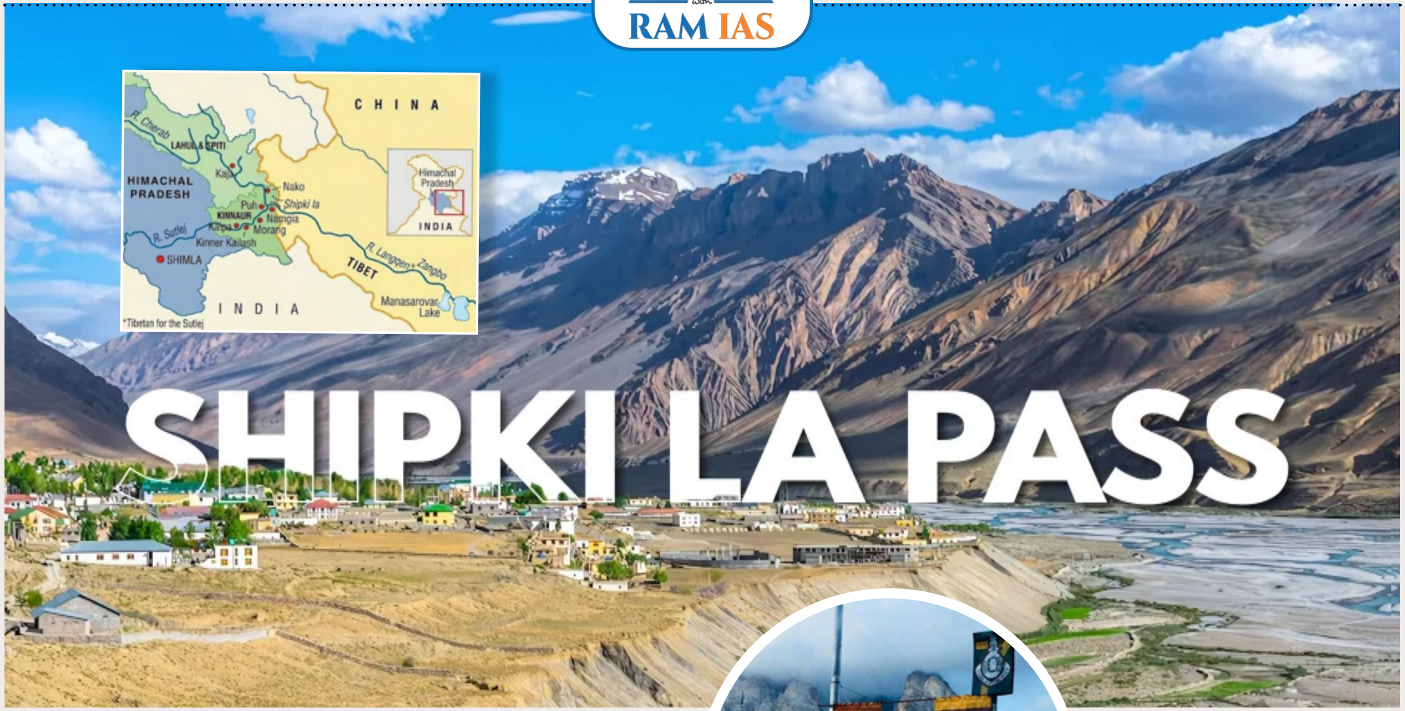
Prelims Question (UPSC Prelims 2020)

Q. Under the Kisan Credit Card scheme, short-term credit support is given to farmers for which of the following purposes?

- 1. Working capital for maintenance of farm assets
- 2. Purchase of combine harvesters, tractors and mini trucks
- 3. Consumption requirements of farm households
- 4. Post-harvest expenses
- 5. Construction of family house and setting up of village cold storage facility

(a) 1, 2 and 5 only
(b) 1, 3 and 4 only
(c) 2, 3, 4 and 5 only
(d) 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

Answer: (b) 1, 3 and 4 only.



SHIPKI LA PASS

News Context

- Cross-border trade through Shipki La Pass between India and China resumed on 1 August 2026.
- The resumption came after a six-year suspension due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Overview

- Location: Shipki La is a high-altitude pass situated in Kinnaur district of Himachal Pradesh, at an elevation of over 4,000 metres. It lies on the India-China border with the Tibet Autonomous Region.
- Former Names: The pass was earlier known as Pema La or Shared Gate. It was renamed Shipki La by the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) after 1962.
- River Feature: The Sutlej River (known as Langqen Zangbo in Tibet) enters India through the Shipki La region.
- Terrain: The 28-kilometre stretch from the last Indian village Namgia to Shipki La is a barren zone. The pass remains closed during winter due to heavy snowfall.

Strategic Importance

- Height Advantage: The Indian positions on this pass are situated at a higher altitude compared to the Chinese side, offering a tactical geographical edge.
- Security Presence: Several buildings in the area are used by Indian security agencies.

Historical Significance

- Ancient Trade Route: The pass was part of the ancient Silk Route, and trade between Tibet and present-day Himachal Pradesh has continued for centuries.
- Pre-Independence Trade: Before Independence, Tibetan traders used Shipki La and the old India-Tibet road to reach Rampur Bushahr, especially during the Lavi fair.
- Closure in 1962: The route was closed after the 1962 Sino-Indian War.
- Reopening in the 1990s: It was reopened in the early 1990s under bilateral agreements.
- Current Trade Season: Trade usually begins in June after snow melts and lasts for a few months.

Trade Details

- Imports from Tibet: Wool, livestock, yak products, religious items, and minerals.
- Exports from India: Cereals, spices, tobacco, timber, and metal tools.
- Unique Exchange Mode: Shipki La is the only border trade route with China where trade is conducted through barter system rather than monetary transactions. In contrast, trade at Lipulekh Pass (Uttarakhand) and Nathu La Pass (Sikkim) uses cash/currency settlement.

Comparison with Other Border Passes

- Shipki La (Himachal Pradesh): Barter trade; recently resumed after COVID-19.
- Lipulekh Pass (Uttarakhand): Currency-based trade; remains active.
- Nathu La Pass (Sikkim): Currency-based trade; remains active.

All three passes are important India-China border trading points, but Shipki La stands out due to its exclusive barter system

and its location in Himachal Pradesh.

Conclusion

Shipki La Pass is a vital high-altitude gateway on the India-China border, carrying immense historical, strategic, and economic significance. As part of the ancient Silk Route, it witnessed centuries of cross-border exchanges. Its unique barter trade system distinguishes it from other border passes. After being closed following the 1962 war, it was reopened in the 1990s, only to be suspended again during the pandemic and finally restored in August 2026. The pass's elevated terrain gives India a tactical advantage, while the Sutlej River entering through this region adds to its geographical importance. Shipki La is not just a trade corridor but also a reflection of the evolving India-China border dynamics, balancing historical ties with modern strategic realities.

Previous Year Question (Prelims)

Q. Consider the following pairs:
Pass & State
1. Shipki La - Himachal Pradesh
2. Nathu La - Sikkim
3. Lipulekh - Uttarakhand
Which of the pairs given above is/are correctly matched?
(a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3

Answer: (d) 1, 2 and 3.

GLAW LAKE

India's 101st Ramsar Site and Arunachal Pradesh's First

Why in News?

- Ramsar designation: Glaw Lake in Arunachal Pradesh was designated India's 101st Ramsar Site—a Wetland of International Importance under the Convention on Wetlands.
- State milestone: It is the first Ramsar Site in Arunachal Pradesh.
- Announcement: The Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change announced the addition on 3 August 2026.
- National context: India's Ramsar network increased from 26 sites in 2014 to 101 sites in 2026.
- Importance: The designation highlights biodiversity conservation, water security, climate resilience and sustainable livelihoods in the Eastern Himalayas.

Geographical Setting

- Eastern Himalayas: Glaw Lake lies in a mountainous, high-rainfall and biologically rich part of north-eastern India.
- Catchment-fed system: Perennial mountain streams maintain the lake, linking its ecological condition to the health of the surrounding forested catchment.
- Protected landscape: Its position inside a tiger reserve and wildlife sanctuary provides an additional layer of habitat protection.
- Steep terrain: The Kamlang landscape contains steep hills, valleys, rivers and streams with strong altitudinal variation.
- Map connections: Arunachal Pradesh borders Bhutan, China and Myanmar; Kamlang lies in eastern Arunachal Pradesh near the Namdapha landscape.

Ecological Significance of Glaw Lake

- Freshwater refuge: The lake provides aquatic habitat and dependable water within a forested mountain ecosystem.
- Floral diversity: The site and catchment support more than 150 tree species and 49 orchid species.
- Wildlife support: The wetland, streams and forest edges supply water, food and shelter for mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, fish and invertebrates.
- Landscape connectivity: Protected forests connect Glaw Lake with the larger Kamlang–Namdapha–Mishmi Hills biodiversity landscape.
- Genetic and species conservation: Isolated freshwater and montane habitats can support specialised species and locally adapted populations.
- Ecological indicator: Changes in water level, water quality and aquatic communities can reveal catchment disturbance and climate stress.

Kamlang Tiger Reserve and Wildlife Sanctuary

- Location: Kamlang is situated in Lohit district of Arunachal Pradesh and is named after the Kamlang River.
- Area: The protected landscape covers about 783 sq km, including core and buffer components of the tiger reserve.
- Landscape link: It shares ecological connectivity with Namdapha and adjoining forests, creating a large conservation mosaic in eastern Arunachal Pradesh.
- Vegetation gradient: The reserve includes tropical and subtropical forests and, at higher elevations, temperate to alpine elements.
- Important fauna: The broader landscape supports tiger, common leopard, clouded leopard, marbled cat, leopard cat, Asian elephant, deer, primates and other forest wildlife.
- Primates: Species reported from the landscape include capped langur, Assamese macaque, stump-tailed macaque,

rhesus macaque, hoolock gibbon and Bengal slow loris.
- Conservation value: The combination of a Ramsar wetland, tiger reserve, wildlife sanctuary and forest catchment enables landscape-scale conservation.

What is a Ramsar Site?

- Definition: A Ramsar Site is a wetland designated as being of international importance under the Convention on Wetlands.
- Convention name: The treaty is commonly called the Ramsar Convention after Ramsar, an Iranian city on the Caspian Sea where it was adopted.
- Adoption: The Convention was adopted on 2 February 1971.
- World Wetlands Day: Observed every year on 2 February to mark the adoption of the Convention.
- India's membership: India became a Contracting Party on 1 February 1982.
- Nodal ministry: The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change is the nodal ministry for implementation in India.
- Core philosophy: The Convention promotes conservation and the 'wise use' of wetlands and their resources.

Significance of the Ramsar Recognition

- International visibility: The designation draws attention to Glaw Lake's ecological importance and conservation needs.
- Management priority: It encourages ecological-character monitoring, boundary clarity, catchment protection and a long-term management plan.
- Research: The status can promote systematic inventories of water quality, hydrology, flora, fauna and climate impacts.
- Community participation: Local and indigenous knowledge can be integrated into conservation and livelihood planning.
- Sustainable tourism: Carefully regulated nature tourism may generate local income without damaging the site.
- Landscape approach: Because the lake depends on streams and forests, conservation must extend beyond the open-water boundary to the entire catchment.

Conclusion

The designation of Glaw Lake as India's 101st Ramsar Site gives international recognition to a pristine Eastern Himalayan freshwater ecosystem and marks Arunachal Pradesh's entry into India's Ramsar network. Its long-term protection will depend on safeguarding perennial streams, forested catchments and wildlife connectivity; controlling tourism and pollution; building reliable ecological data; and ensuring that local communities share both responsibility and benefits.

Prelims Practice Question

Q. Consider the following statements regarding Glaw Lake:

1. It is located within Kamlang Tiger Reserve and Wildlife Sanctuary.

2. It is Arunachal Pradesh's first Ramsar Site.

3. It is a freshwater lake fed by perennial mountain streams.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

- **(a) Only one**
- **(b) Only two**
- **(c) All three**
- **(d) None**

Answer: (c) All three

Glaw Lake is a freshwater lake within Kamlang Tiger Reserve and Wildlife Sanctuary and became Arunachal Pradesh's first Ramsar Site and India's 101st.