

PRADHAN MANTRI RASHTRIYA BAL PURASKAR

The President of India will confer the Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar, 2023 to 11 children at an Award ceremony in Delhi on 23 January 2023.



About Pradhan Mantri Rashtriya Bal Puraskar:

- It is given under two categories.
- **Bal Shakti Puraskar:** This award is given by the Government of India every year to recognize exceptional achievements of children in various fields namely innovation, scholastic achievements, social service, arts & culture, sports and bravery.
- **Eligibility criteria:** A child who is an **Indian Citizen** and residing in India and is between 5-18 years of age.
- **Award:** The award consists of a medal, a cash prize of Rs. 1,00,000, book vouchers worth Rs.10,000, a certificate and a citation.
- It was started in 1996 as the National Child Award for Exceptional Achievement, and renamed in 2018 as Bal Shakti Puraskar.
- **Bal Kalyan Puraskar:** This is given as recognition to **Individuals and Institutions**, who have made an outstanding contribution towards service for children in the field of child development, child protection and child welfare.
- **Eligibility criteria:** An individual who is an Indian Citizen residing in India and should have attained the age of 18 years or above (as of 31st August of the respective year). S/he should have worked for the cause of children for not less than 7 years.
- The institution should not be entirely funded by the government and should have been in the field of child welfare for 10 years and performing consistently in the field.
- **Award:** The awards are given in each of the two categories - Individual and Institution - along with cash prizes (Rs. 1,00, 000 and Rs. 5,00, 000 respectively).
- It was started in 1979 as the National Child Welfare Awards and in 2018 renamed it as Bal Kalyan Puraskar.

WHAT IS THE MOTOR VEHICLE ACT OF 1988?

The Delhi High Court has given the Central government a six months timeline to enforce the provisions of the Motor Vehicles Act that provide for a grant of compensation to road accident victims, even if the errant vehicle is uninsured, as well as in hit-and-run cases.



About the Motor Vehicle Act of 1988:

- It is a comprehensive Act that has replaced the Motor Vehicle Act, 1939.
- It was implemented on 1st July 1989.
- The act covers all aspects of road transport vehicles, such as registration, licensing, regulation, claims, compensation in case of accident etc.
- The act regulates all cases related to Motor Accidents all over India.
- An person injured in a motor accident or legal representatives of a person deceased in a motor accident can apply for compensation under Motor Vehicles Act, 1988.
- The act was amended in 2019 and 2022. Both these amendments deal with third-party insurance and claims management, including filing claims with the Motor Accident Claim Tribunal.

Motor Accident Claim Tribunal:

- It was created by the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988.
- It has been constituted to provide speedier remedy to the victims of accidents by motor vehicles.
- There is no time limit for filing motor vehicle accidents claims.
- A State Government can constitute one or more Motor Accidents Claims Tribunals.
- Civil Courts do not have jurisdiction in the matters which concerns the Motor Accidents Claims Tribunal.
- The appeals against the Claims Tribunals will lie before the High Courts.
- The appeal is limited by time and has to be filed in the High Court within 90 days from the date of award of the Claims Tribunal.

WHAT IS MACHU PICCHU?

The iconic tourist site Machu Picchu in Peru was shut down recently, due to the ongoing anti-government protests that are spreading throughout the South American nation.



About Machu Picchu:

- It is a **15th-century Inca site**.
- **Location:** Machu Picchu is located 50 miles (80 km) northwest of Cuzco, **Peru**, in the Cordillera de Vilcabamba of the **Andes Mountains**.
- Machu Picchu is **believed to have been built by Pachacuti Inca Yupanqui**, the ninth ruler of the Inca, **in the mid-1400s**.
- It is **made up of temples, palaces, terraces, monuments, complexes and walls**.
- The city is **divided into a lower and upper part**, separating the farming from residential areas, with a large square between the two.
- Machu Picchu was **abandoned when the Inca Empire was conquered by the Spaniards in the sixteenth century**.
- Machu Picchu was **rediscovered in 1911** by the American explorer Hiram Bingham.
- It was designated a **UNESCO World Heritage site** in 1983.

What is the Inca Civilization?

- Inca Civilization **flourished in ancient Peru between c. 1400 and 1533 CE**.
- It is the **largest empire ever seen in the Americas** and the largest in the world at that time.
- Inca **society was highly stratified**.
- Inca **technology and architecture were highly developed**.
- Their **economy was based on agriculture**.
- The **Inca language Quechua** is still spoken by around eight million people in the world.
- The **descendants of the Inca** are the present-day **Quechua-speaking peasants** of the Andes, who constitute around **45 percent of the population of Peru**.

GIG ECONOMY IN INDIA

Why in News?

- On September 20, 2021, the Indian Federation of App-based Transport Workers, on behalf of **gig workers**, had filed a public interest litigation in the Supreme Court.
- The petition demands social security benefits be provided to the workers from food delivery platforms such as **Zomato** and **Swiggy** and taxi aggregator apps such as **Ola** and **Uber**.

What's in today's article?

- About Gig Economy (Meaning, Gig Workers, Size of Economy, Average Income, Challenges, etc.)

What is Gig Economy?

- A gig economy is a free market system in which organisations hire or contract workers for a short span of time.
- Simply put, the positions are temporary to meet the company's requirements by having short-term engagements.
- Startups like Ola, Uber, Zomato, and Swiggy have established themselves as the main source of the gig economy in India.

Who is a Gig Worker?

- According to the Code on Social Security, 2020 (India), “A **gig worker is a person who performs work or participates in work arrangements and earns from such activities, outside of the traditional employer-employee relationship.**”
- They are independent contractors, online platform workers, contract firm workers, on-call workers and temporary workers.

What is the size of Gig Economy in India?

- A NITI Aayog study on “India's Booming Gig and Platform Economy” has estimated that at present, about 47 per cent of the gig work is in medium-skilled jobs, about 22 per cent in high skilled, and about 31 per cent in low-skilled jobs.
- These figures clearly indicate the importance of the gig working community in the Indian economy.

- Research studies by Boston Consulting Group (BCG) have indicated that participation in the gig economy is higher in developing countries(5-12 percent) versus developed economies(1-4 percent).
 - Most of these jobs are in lower-income job-types such as deliveries, ridesharing, microtasks, care and wellness.
- These studies further estimate that in 2020-21, **77 lakh workers were engaged in the gig economy.**
- The gig workforce is expected to **expand to 2.35 crore workers by 2029-30.**

What is the Average Age/Income of Gig Workers in India?

- The **median age of Indian gig workers is 27 and their average monthly income is Rs 18,000.**
- Of these, about 71 per cent are the sole breadwinners of their families. Additionally, gig workers operate with an average household size of 4.4.

Challenges faced by Gig Workers:

- While platform companies have created avenues of employment, it has often been marred by **low wages, unequal gender participation, and a lack of possibility for upward mobility** within an organisation.
- This has triggered protests from workers at companies like Swiggy, Zomato, Ola, Uber, and Urban Company, among others.
- Gig workers are typically **hired by companies on a contractual basis** and are not considered their employees.
- As a result, they do not receive some of the benefits that an on-roll employee of the company may have.
 - This means they often do not receive benefits like paid sick and casual leaves, travel and housing allowances, and provident fund savings, among other things.

What needs to be done in order to improve the Living Standards of these Gig Workers?

- **Fiscal Incentives –**
 - Fiscal incentives such as tax-breaks or startup grants may be provided for businesses that provide livelihood opportunities where women constitute a substantial portion of their workers.

- This was highlighted by NITI Aayog in its report “**India’s Booming Gig and Platform Economy**”.
 - **Retirement Benefits –**
 - The report also recommended firms adopt policies that offer old age or retirement plans and benefits, and other insurance cover for contingencies such as the Covid-19 Pandemic.
 - Such plans and policies may be envisaged under the **Code on Social Security, 2020**.
 - Businesses should consider **providing income support to workers**.
 - It would be a critical step in providing assured minimum earnings and social security from income loss in the wake of uncertainty or irregularity in work.
 - It also suggested offering **paid sick leave** to workers apart from insurance cover.
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57TH DIRECTOR GENERAL OF POLICE CONFERENCE

Why in news?

- The **57th Director General of Police conference** discussed the issue of influence wielded by Chinese commercial firms.

Chinese commercial companies and India’s internal security

- A disturbing picture of Chinese Commercial Entities (CCE) has emerged after a series of actions by Indian authorities since 2020.
- The investigation began after the June 2020, incident in Ladakh’s Galwan.
- Actions by Indian authorities included busting of spying rings, tax raids on major Chinese telecom companies, a crackdown on mobile apps and a study of incoming investments into India.
- The actions by these agencies revealed a web of companies and individuals indulging in espionage, profiling of high value individuals, large-scale tax evasion and exfiltration of bulk data.
- These facts point to Beijing’s growing hunger for data and secrets.

What were the findings of investigating agencies?

- The assessment by agencies found that the Chinese commercial entities operate in India with five primary objectives:

- influencing minds,
- build economic control,
- acquisition of data,
- espionage and
- target scientists to compromise innovation and intellectual property rights (IPRs).
- The objective of counterintelligence is pursued through top officials of Chinese companies in India.
- Small-size shell companies were also used as financial conduits to fund espionage rings and resident agents.

What is the modus operandi of these entities?

- Hundreds of small companies controlled by Chinese nationals have dummy Indian directors and managers for a show of legitimacy.
- Many of these companies did not physically exist at their registered offices. However, their banking accounts were active and being operated from abroad.
- A cheap (and sometimes below production cost) pricing model that has given them control of a large chunk of the telecom and hardware markets in India.
- Investigations also show that some senior Chinese employees of these companies are documented members of the Chinese Communist Party.
- Hence, Beijing has a strong leverage on their operations in India.
- Agencies also found a seamless flow of data to Chinese servers through remote access of modems, switches, routers and networks sold and installed by these companies in India.
- Similarly, a seamless data link through Chinese origin mobile phones was also established during investigations.
- The data collected has helped Chinese artificial intelligence (AI) engines create portraits, with biometric details of millions of Indians.

BIMODAL NUCLEAR PROPULSION

Recently, as part of the NASA Innovative Advanced Concepts (NIAC) program for 2023, NASA selected a bimodal nuclear propulsion concept for Phase I development which could reduce transit times to Mars to just 45 days.



About Bimodal nuclear propulsion:

- Bimodal nuclear propulsion is a two-part system that includes; Nuclear Thermal and Nuclear Electric Propulsion (NTP /NEP).
- It uses a wave rotor topping cycle.

How will nuclear propulsion work?

- The Nuclear Thermal system includes a nuclear reactor that will **heat liquid hydrogen** (LH₂) propellant and turn it into **ionised hydrogen** gas (plasma) that will then be channelled through a nozzle to generate thrust.
- Nuclear Electric Propulsion depends on a nuclear reactor to provide electricity to a Hall-Effect thruster (ion engine), which will generate an electromagnetic field that will ionise and accelerate an inert gas to create thrust.
- **Advantages:** Fuel efficiency, a higher specific impulse, rating and unlimited energy density.

HAIDERPUR WETLAND

The Union Environment Ministry has recently directed Uttar Pradesh to immediately stop the further draining of the Haiderpur wetland and ensure that dewatering the protected Ramsar site for farming needs takes place only when migratory birds are not nesting at the location.



About Haiderpur wetland:

- It is a **human-made wetland** that was **formed in 1984** by the **construction of the Madhya Ganga Barrage** on a floodplain of the River Ganga.
- **Location:** Muzaffarnagar-Bijnor border in Uttar Pradesh.
- It is located within the boundaries of Hastinapur Wildlife Sanctuary.

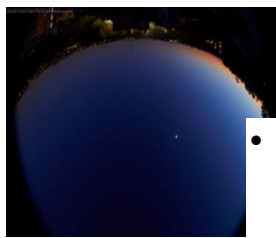
- This provides habitat for various animal and plant species, including around **30 species of plants, 300 species of birds (102 waterbirds), 40 fish and more than ten mammal species.**
- It supports **more than 15 globally threatened species**, such as the **critically endangered gharial and the endangered hog deer, black-bellied tern, steppe eagle, Indian skimmer and gold mahseer.**
- It has been recognised as the **47th Ramsar site of India in 2021.**

About Ramsar Convention (Convention on Wetlands of International Importance):

- It is an **intergovernmental treaty** that provides the framework for the **conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources.**
- The Convention was **adopted in the Iranian city of Ramsar in 1971** and came into force in 1975.
- It is the **only global treaty that focuses specifically on wetlands.**
- One key instrument of the Convention is its **List of Wetlands of International Importance** (the “Ramsar List”).

WHAT IS PLANET PARADE?

Recently, over the past few nights, Venus and Saturn have been gradually coming together in the sky which was visible through the naked eye.



About Planet Parade:

- This is the phenomenon wherein the planets Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn were visible to **the naked eye from Earth.**
- This planetary meet-up, also known as a **conjunction**, makes the two planets appear close together or even touch in the Earth's night sky.
- Despite being millions of kilometres apart, the planets seem to occupy the same space in the night sky because of their alignment.
- Just after sunset in the west, a conjunction of Venus and Saturn were 0.4 degrees apart as seen from earth.