



CURRENT AFFAIRS



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THE RAJASTHAN PLATFORM BASED GIG WORKERS BILL, 2023

This article covers “Daily Current Affairs” and the topic details “The Rajasthan Platform Based Gig Workers Act, 2023”. The topic “The Rajasthan Platform Based Gig Workers Act, 2023” has relevance in the “Governance” section of the UPSC CSE exam.

For Prelims:

*What is The Rajasthan Platform Based Gig Workers Bill, 2023?
Who are platform workers? Who are gig workers?*

For Mains:

GS2: Governance

Why in the news?

The Rajasthan Assembly recently passed a bill to provide social security to gig workers.

Key Points of the Bill

The Rajasthan Platform Based Gig Workers (Registration and Welfare) Bill is designed to provide essential rights and protections to gig workers. It ensures that gig workers are registered with the state and granted access to various social security schemes. Moreover, they will have a platform to address their grievances and concerns.

- **Registration:** The bill aims to register all gig workers and aggregators in the state, maintaining a comprehensive database and issuing unique IDs to each worker.
- **Welfare Board:** A key aspect of this legislation is the establishment of the Platform Based Gig Workers Welfare Board.
 - The Welfare Board will consist of State officials, five representatives each from gig workers and aggregators, and two additional members from Civil Society and other fields.
 - At least one-third of the nominated members must be women.
- **Workers Fund and Welfare Fee:** One of the crucial highlights of the Rajasthan Bill is the creation of the “Platform Based Gig Workers Fund and Welfare Fee.”
 - This will establish a social security and welfare fund dedicated to supporting gig workers.
 - Funding for this initiative will come from various sources, including a fee levied on aggregators.
 - The specific rate of this fee, based on a percentage of each transaction involving a platform-based gig worker, will be notified by the state government.
- **Penalties for violations:** To ensure compliance, the bill introduces penalties for aggregators who fail to pay the welfare fee on time.
 - They will be subject to an interest charge of 12 per cent per annum from the due date.

- Additionally, in case of violations of other provisions within the Act, the state government has the authority to impose fines ranging from Rs 5 lakh for the first contravention to Rs 50 lakh for subsequent contraventions.

Significance of Rajasthan Platform Based Gig Workers (Registration and Welfare) Bill:

- Gig workers engaged on a contract basis currently lack social security benefits and labour law coverage, thus the bill seeks to address these vulnerabilities and protect their rights.
- It introduces a formal registration process to ensure recognition and accountability for gig workers and grants them access to social security schemes, thereby enhancing their welfare.
- The establishment of the Platform Based Gig Workers Welfare Board will provide a platform to address their grievances.
- Additionally, the bill introduces the “Platform Based Gig Workers Fund and Welfare Fee” to secure social security for gig workers from the value of their transactions, rather than relying on charity from aggregators or government allocations.
- By setting a precedent for fair treatment, this bill can inspire other states and the country to prioritise worker welfare and create an inclusive gig economy.

Gig Economy

- **A gig economy is a labour market characterised by short-term contracts or freelance work as opposed to permanent jobs.**
- The Government Think Tank- Niti Aayog released a report titled ‘India’s Booming Gig and Platform Economy’ in 2022.
- In its report, **NITI Aayog defines ‘gig workers’ as individuals engaged in income-earning activities outside of the traditional employer-employee relationship and also in the informal sector.**
- Gig workers can be classified into two main categories: platform workers and non-platform workers.
- **Platform workers rely on online software apps or digital platforms for their work.**
- **Non-platform gig workers are typically casual wage workers, working either part-time or full-time.**

Sector	Description	Sub-Sectors Included	Example Platforms
Asset-Sharing Services	Digital platforms that facilitate short-term P2P rentals of one owner’s (or “freelancer”) property to another individual	Home-sharing, car-sharing, boat-sharing, parking space-sharing, P2P equipment sharing	HomeAway, Airbnb, TURO
Transportation-Based Services	Digital platforms that require a freelance driver to complete the requested transport service	Ride-sharing, carpooling, restaurant delivery, and goods delivery	BlaBlaCar, Careem, DOORDASH, Uber
Professional Services	Digital platforms that connect freelancers directly with businesses to complete projects	Business work, microwork, design, tech/coding, writing/translation, administrative	Upwork, CATALANT, guru
Handmade Goods, Household & Miscellaneous Services (HGHM)	Digital platforms for freelancers to sell homemade crafts or offer on-demand services for household-related tasks	Home-services, babysitting, handmade crafts, tutoring, pet services, and misc. (DJ, events, etc.)	Care.com, Airtasker, Etsy

Significance of the Gig Economy:

- The gig economy revolves around temporary or freelance jobs facilitated through online platforms, offering adaptability to workers' needs and the demand for flexible lifestyles.
- **Time Flexibility:** Gig workers have the freedom to choose their work hours according to their preferences.
- **Income Flexibility:** The gig economy provides an appealing market for individuals seeking extra income due to its high level of flexibility.

Observations of the Report:

- According to the report, 47% of gig work falls under medium-skilled jobs, 22% in high-skilled, and around 31% in low-skilled jobs.
- Drivers and salespersons constituted more than 52% of gig workers in the year 2019-2020.
- Regarding industries, approximately 26.6 lakh gig workers were involved in retail trade and sales, while around 13 lakh were in the transportation sector.
- Manufacturing and finance/insurance activities employed roughly 6.2 lakh and 6.3 lakh gig workers, respectively.

Niti Aayog's Recommendations for the Gig Economy

Niti Aayog's recommendations for the gig economy aim to create a more inclusive and secure environment for workers.

- They include providing fiscal incentives to platforms with substantial representation of women workers and those accessible to Persons with Disabilities. The report suggests promoting gender-inclusive communication by having more women managers and supervisors.
- Firms are advised to offer retirement plans, insurance coverage, and social security benefits from a corpus fund to assist gig workers during contingencies.
- The extension of social security benefits in partnership mode and offering paid sick leave are also recommended to ensure worker welfare and minimum earnings.

Sources:

Drawn from gig workers' struggles, hewn in Rajasthan – The Hindu
Infographics- World Economic Forum

Q1. With reference The Rajasthan Platform Based Gig Workers Bill, 2023, consider the following statements:

1. The Bill aims to provide gig workers with access to various social security schemes and establish a Welfare Board comprising State officials and representatives from gig workers and aggregators.
2. The Platform Based Gig Workers Fund and Welfare Fee will be funded solely by a fee levied on aggregators.
3. The bill aims to discourage gig workers from engaging in contractual work and promote traditional full-time employment with steady pay and benefits.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 3 only
- (d) None

Answer: (a)

Q2. Consider the following statements:

1. The gig economy is characterized by permanent jobs and long-term contracts, providing stability to workers.
2. NITI Aayog defines gig workers as individuals engaged in income-earning activities outside of the traditional employer-employee relationship.
3. The gig economy offers time flexibility to workers, allowing them to choose their work hours as per their preferences.
4. Non-platform gig workers typically work on short-term contracts and freelance assignments.

How many of the abovementioned statements are correct ?

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) Only three
- (d) All Four

Answer: (b)

Q3. Discuss the significance of the Rajasthan Platform Based Gig Workers (Registration and Welfare) Bill in the context of the gig economy. How does it address the vulnerabilities of gig workers and enhance their welfare?

Gaurav Nikumbh

ETHANOL BLENDING

This article covers "Daily Current Affairs" and the topic details "Ethanol Blending". The topic "Ethanol Blending" has relevance in the Energy Security section of the UPSC CSE exam.

For Prelims:

About Ethanol?

Applications of Ethanol as Fuel?

For Mains:

GS 3: Energy Security

Benefits of blending ethanol in fuel?

Feedstock Diversification in India?

Government Initiatives to Promote Ethanol Blending in India?

Why in the news?

The Prime Minister announced that India has commenced the rollout of 20% ethanol-blended petrol this year and the country's aim is to cover the entire nation by 2025.

About Ethanol:

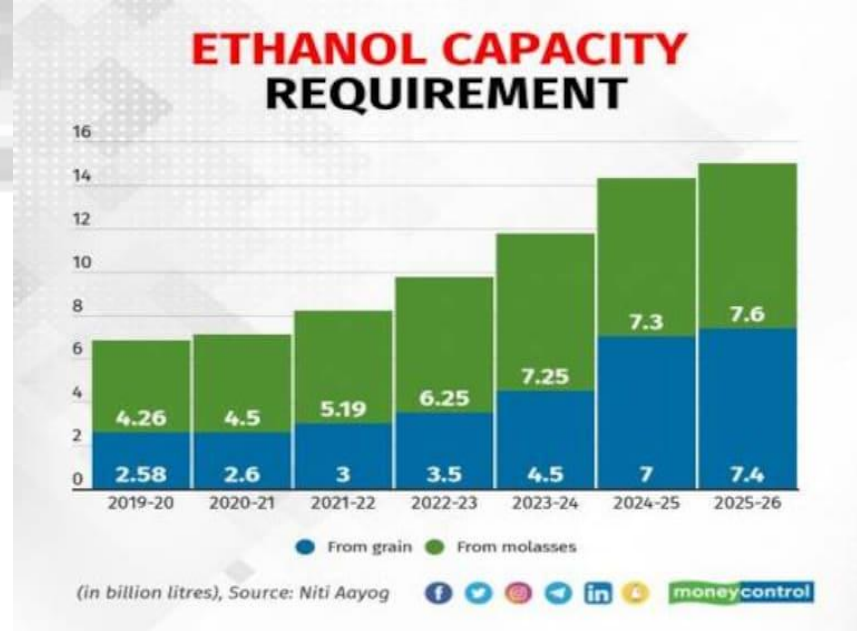
- Ethanol, also referred to as ethyl alcohol, is a renewable biofuel derived from diverse sources such as sugarcane, corn, rice, wheat, and biomass.
- It is 99.9% pure alcohol and can be blended with petrol to create a cleaner fuel alternative.
- Byproducts of ethanol production include Distillers' Dried Grain with Solubles (DDGS), used as animal feed, and Potash from Incineration Boiler Ash, used as fertilizer.

Applications of Ethanol as Fuel:

- Ethanol is used as a renewable biofuel alternative to gasoline in the transportation sector.
- It can be blended with petrol in various proportions, such as E10 and E20, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and air pollutants.
- India has implemented the Ethanol Blending Programme to promote the use of ethanol and reduce dependence on imported crude oil.

Benefits of blending ethanol in fuel?

- **Renewable Energy Source:** Ethanol is produced from renewable plant-based sources, such as sugarcane and corn, making it a sustainable alternative to fossil fuels.
- **Reduced Greenhouse Gas Emissions:** Ethanol has a lower carbon footprint compared to conventional gasoline. When blended with petrol, it helps reduce greenhouse gas emissions, mitigating the impact of climate change.
- **Improved Air Quality:** Ethanol-blended fuels produce fewer harmful pollutants, such as carbon monoxide and volatile organic compounds, which contribute to air pollution and smog.
- **Energy Security:** Ethanol production reduces dependence on imported fossil fuels, enhancing a country's energy security and reducing exposure to volatile global oil prices.
- **Economic Benefits:** Ethanol production supports rural economies by creating jobs in agriculture and biofuel industries. It also helps diversify income streams for farmers.
- **Engine Performance and Octane Rating:** Ethanol has a high octane rating, which improves engine performance and efficiency. It can help reduce engine knocking and prolong the life of engines.
- **Cleaner Fuel:** Ethanol-blended fuels burn more cleanly, leading to less engine deposits and maintenance requirements, contributing to cleaner engines and reduced maintenance costs.
- **Encouraging Agriculture:** Ethanol production promotes the growth of crops used for feedstock, stimulating agricultural activities and providing additional income for farmers.
- **Utilization of Byproducts:** Ethanol production generates valuable byproducts like Distillers' Dried Grain with Solubles (DDGS), which is used as animal feed, and potash, which serves as a fertilizer.
- **Energy Independence:** By utilizing domestic feedstocks for ethanol production, countries can reduce their reliance on foreign oil and achieve greater energy independence.



Feedstock Diversification in India:

- India diversified its ethanol feedstocks by including rice, damaged grains, maize, jowar, bajra, and millets.
- The government's differential pricing policy incentivized the use of alternative feedstocks by fixing higher prices for ethanol produced from certain sources.
- Sugar mills installed distilleries that can operate on multiple feedstocks throughout the year.

Challenges in Feedstock Diversification:

- Processing grains for ethanol production is time-consuming compared to molasses.
- Quality variability of feedstocks can affect production.
- Environmental concerns may arise with the use of non-traditional feedstocks.

Benefits of Feedstock Diversification:

- Diversification of feedstocks minimizes supply fluctuations and price volatility.
- New demand for grains is created with the incorporation of new feedstocks.

Government Initiatives to Promote Ethanol Blending in India:

- **National Policy on Biofuels 2018:** Provides a framework for the promotion of biofuels, including ethanol, to enhance energy security and sustainability.
- **E100 Pilot Project:** A pilot project to test the use of 100% ethanol as a fuel in selected regions.
- **Pradhan Mantri JI-VAN Yojana 2019:** A scheme aimed at boosting the availability of ethanol and biofuels from various feedstocks.
- **Repurpose Used Cooking Oil (RUCO):** An initiative to collect used cooking oil to convert it into biodiesel and promote its blending with diesel.

SOURCE:

<https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-economics/the-ethanol-impetus-8856449/>

Q.1 According to India's National Policy on Biofuels, which of the following can be used as raw materials for the production of biofuels?

1. Cassava
2. Damaged wheat grains
3. Groundnut seeds
4. Horse gram
5. Rotten potatoes
6. Sugar beet

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1, 2, 5 and 6 only
- (b) 1, 3, 4 and 6 only
- (c) 2, 3, 4 and 5 only
- (d) 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6

Answer: (a)

Q.2 Which of the following are benefits of using ethanol blending in fuel?

1. Reduced greenhouse gas emissions
2. Lower engine performance and efficiency
3. Promotion of rural economies through job creation

Select the correct option(s) from the choices given below:

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

Answer: (d)

Q.3 Discuss the challenges faced in promoting ethanol blending in fuel and suggest strategies to overcome these obstacles. Evaluate the potential impact of increased ethanol blending on energy security, environment, and rural economies in India.

Rishabh

