27/04/2026 Daily Current News

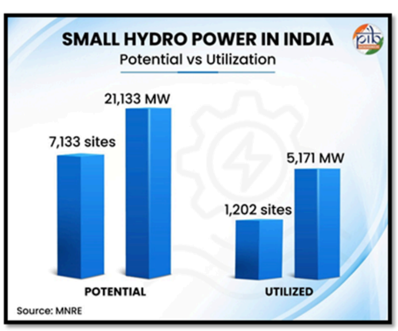
Prelims articles:

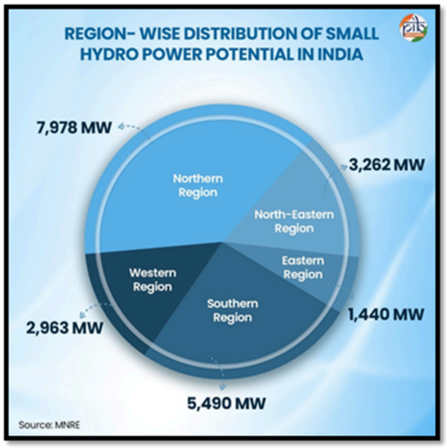
1. *Small Hydro Power Development Scheme:*

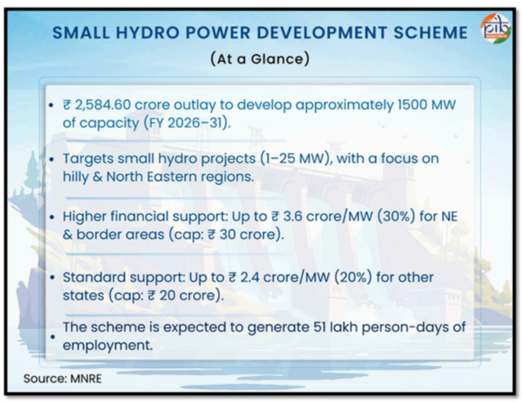
Context: Union Cabinet approved Small Hydro Power Development Scheme with ₹2,584.60 crore outlay.

More details about the scheme:

- Union Cabinet has approved the Small Hydro Power (SHP) Development Scheme that will support small hydro projects (between 1-25 MW capacity) to come up in different states.
- The scheme will especially benefit hilly and North Eastern states with high potential for such projects.
- The approval is for the period FY 2026–27 to FY 2030–31, with a total outlay of ₹2,584.60 crore.
- The scheme aims to unlock approximately 1,500 MW of new SHP capacity, with a strong focus on hilly regions and the North Eastern States rich in untapped small hydro potential and often constrained by energy access challenges.
- Financial assistance to North Eastern States & International Border Districts of ₹3.6 crore per MW or 30% of project cost (whichever is lower), subject to a ceiling of ₹30 crore per project.
- Financial assistance to other locations of ₹2.4 crore per MW or 20% of project cost (whichever is lower), with a cap of ₹20 crore per project.
- **Northern Region:** Backbone of India's SHP sector due to mountainous terrain and perennial rivers; major potential in Himachal Pradesh (3,460 MW), Uttarakhand (1,664 MW), and Jammu & Kashmir (1,312 MW), with large untapped capacity despite moderate utilisation.
- **North-Eastern Region:** High-growth frontier for renewable energy in hilly and tribal areas, led by Arunachal Pradesh (2,064.92 MW); SHP can enhance decentralised power access, local employment, and reduce dependence on conventional fuels.
- **Southern Region:** Strong infrastructure and river basins make it a major SHP contributor; Karnataka dominates with 3,726.49 MW, while better utilisation reflects efficient execution and grid connectivity.
- **Eastern Region:** Moderate but strategically important SHP potential for rural and tribal development, led by Bihar and West Bengal; suitable for decentralised energy access and livelihood support.
- **Western Region:** Offers significant scope through irrigation and canal-based SHP projects; Maharashtra leads regional potential, with further expansion opportunities in Gujarat and Rajasthan.







2. *Vibrant Village Programme:*

Context: The Central Government has included six border villages in Jammu and Kashmir’s Kathua district under the Vibrant Village Programme-II to improve infrastructure and ensure full delivery of welfare.

About Vibrant Village Programme:

- Vibrant Villages Programme-I (VVP-I) approved on 15 Feb 2023 for development of northern border villages.
- Covers 662 villages across 46 blocks in 19 districts of Arunachal Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Uttarakhand and Ladakh.
- Focus on livelihood generation including tourism, agriculture, skill development, and entrepreneurship.
- Provides infrastructure support like roads, health, education, energy, and telecom connectivity.
- Aims to reduce migration by creating incentives for people to stay in border villages.
- 2558 projects sanctioned under VVP-I with an outlay of ₹3431 crore.
- Vibrant Villages Programme-II (VVP-II) approved on 2 April 2025 as a Central Sector Scheme.
- Total outlay of ₹6839 crore till FY 2028–29.

- Expands coverage to strategic villages along other international borders beyond the northern region.
- Implemented across multiple states including Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Gujarat, J&K, Ladakh, and others.

Mains specific articles:

1. Summer as a source of income shock for gig workers: (GS paper 3)

Heatwaves Becoming a Long-Term Economic Risk

- Heatwaves in India are becoming more frequent and prolonged.
- Focus is shifting from whether heatwaves will occur to whether India is prepared economically.
- Gig and delivery workers remain largely excluded from adaptation planning.

Growing Gig Workforce at High Risk

- India had about 7.7 million gig workers in 2020-21, projected to exceed 23 million by 2029-30.
- Food delivery riders, app-based drivers, and logistics workers are highly exposed to extreme heat.
- Their livelihoods depend on continuous outdoor mobility.

Heat Directly Reduces Earnings

- Gig workers earn based on trips, deliveries, or hours logged.
- Extreme heat slows movement, increases fatigue, and raises health risks.
- Taking breaks means immediate income loss because there is no paid leave or work-from-home option.
- Workers are forced to choose between health and income.

Current Preparedness Measures Are Inadequate

- India has improved Heat Action Plans and early warning systems.
- Existing policies mainly treat heat as a public health issue rather than an economic risk.
- Advisories like staying indoors are impractical for gig workers.
- Cooling centres and water kiosks are rarely designed for mobile platform workers.

Institutional Gaps in Governance

- Responsibility is fragmented among health, labour, disaster management, and platform authorities.
- Labour protections for gig workers remain weak due to ambiguous employment status.
- Digital platforms prioritise delivery efficiency with limited climate-risk integration.
- Women gig workers face additional health, safety, and unpaid care burdens.

Key Policy Recommendations

- Treat heat as a labour and productivity issue, not only a health emergency.
- Provide shaded rest points, drinking water access, and rest norms during peak heat hours.
- Introduce mechanisms to reduce income volatility caused by extreme heat.
- Include digital platforms in heat preparedness through heat-responsive work design and flexible performance targets.
- Strengthen coordination among labour departments, urban bodies, disaster authorities, and platform regulators.

Need for Inclusive Climate Resilience

- Urban economies increasingly depend on gig and delivery workers.
- Climate resilience should include safe working conditions and income security during heatwaves.
- Ignoring gig workers in heat adaptation policies leaves a major workforce vulnerable.

Quick Bites:

- ☐ India and New Zealand will sign a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) on April 27, 2026, marking a major step in strengthening bilateral economic ties.
- ☐ Sri Lanka has called for Expressions of Interest to run its loss-making international airport in Mattala, in the southern Hambantota district, with a Cabinet-appointed committee tasked with negotiating the deal with prospective domestic and foreign investors.

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