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The VB-G RAM G Act 2025 Fixes Structural Gaps

Context

- The Viksit Bharat–Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) Act, 2025 marks a significant reform in India’s rural employment and livelihood framework.
- By expanding the statutory **employment guarantee from 100 to 125 days and restructuring implementation** around planning, convergence, and accountability, the Act seeks to strengthen rural livelihoods while enhancing long-term productivity.
- Criticism that the **reform weakens employment rights**, undermines decentralisation, or signals fiscal withdrawal rests on a flawed assumption that welfare and development are competing objectives.
- The Act is grounded in the principle that **welfare and development are mutually reinforcing**, and embeds this understanding within its statutory and institutional design.

Key Features of the VB- G RAM G Act

- **Strengthening the Statutory Right to Employment**

- A key feature of the Act is the **expansion of the guaranteed employment** entitlement from 100 to 125 days, reinforcing the legal right to work.
- The Act also **strengthens enforceability** by removing procedural dis-entitlement clauses that previously rendered unemployment allowances ineffective.
- **Time-bound grievance redress** mechanisms have been reinforced, addressing the gap between statutory promise and lived reality.
- The employment guarantee remains **statutory, justiciable, and substantively stronger** than before.

- **Demand-Based Employment and Participatory Planning**

- The Act retains the **demand-driven nature of employment**, with workers continuing to initiate requests for work.
- The reform lies in **anticipatory, participatory village-level planning**, ensuring that employment is available when demanded rather than being denied due to administrative unpreparedness.
- **Planning operationalises demand instead of replacing it**, shifting the framework from reactive distress response to proactive livelihood assurance.

- **Decentralisation and Institutional Architecture**

- Decentralisation remains central to the Act's architecture. Gram panchayats continue as the primary planning and implementing authorities, while **gram sabhas retain approval powers over local plans**.
- The introduction of **Viksit Gram Panchayat Plans** institutionalises decentralised planning rather than diluting it.
- Aggregation of plans at higher administrative levels enables **coordination, convergence, and visibility**, while **decision-making authority remains local**. Centralisation is limited to coherence, not control.

- **Consultation and Cooperative Federalism**

- The Act reflects the principles of **cooperative federalism**, having been shaped through **extensive consultations with State governments**, technical workshops, and multi-stakeholder discussions.
- Key design elements, such as structured village planning, convergence mechanisms, and digital governance, are informed by **State-level feedback and implementation experience**.
- States are positioned as **development partners**, not merely implementing agencies.

Fiscal Commitment and Addressing Structural Weakness

- **Fiscal Commitment and Equity in Allocation**

- Claims of fiscal withdrawal are inconsistent with budgetary trends. **Central allocations have increased to nearly ₹95,000 crore**, demonstrating sustained fiscal commitment.
- The **60:40 funding model**, with a **90:10 ratio for northeastern and Himalayan States and Jammu and Kashmir**, follows established norms.
- **Rule-based, normative allocation ensures equity**, while flexibility provisions allow States to seek relaxations during **natural disasters** or extraordinary circumstances, balancing accountability with responsiveness.

- **Addressing Structural Weaknesses of Earlier Frameworks**

- Implementation experience under earlier frameworks revealed **episodic employment, weak enforceability of unemployment allowances**, fragmented asset creation, and vulnerability to corruption and duplication.
- These weaknesses became evident during **droughts, migration surges, and the COVID-19 pandemic**.
- The Act responds by **integrating livelihood security** with durable asset creation, agricultural stability, and productivity enhancement, treating income support and development outcomes as a continuum.

Comparative Perspective: Lessons from the UPA Era

- **Wage freezes ignored inflation**, budgetary allocations declined despite rising demand, and **worker participation fell**.
- **Delayed fund releases and administrative apathy** weakened the employment guarantee.
- The **Comptroller and Auditor General's 2013 report documented widespread corruption**, including fake job cards, financial irregularities, delayed wages, and poor record-keeping, particularly in States with high rural poverty.
- These failures underscored the necessity of **structural correction rather than policy stagnation**.

Conclusion

- The Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Aajeevika Mission (Gramin) Act, 2025 represents **renewal, not retreat**, in India's rural welfare framework.
- By expanding entitlements, strengthening enforceability, institutionalising decentralised planning, and enhancing fiscal and administrative coherence, the **Act integrates welfare and development** into a unified statutory model.
- Income support and productivity enhancement are treated as interdependent goals, **laying the foundation for a resilient, self-reliant rural economy** grounded in enforceable rights, cooperative federalism, and sustainable development.

The VB-G RAM G Act 2025 Fixes Structural Gaps FAQs

Q1. What is the main objective of the Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Aajeevika Mission (Gramin) Act, 2025?

Ans. The Act aims to strengthen rural livelihoods by expanding the statutory employment guarantee and integrating welfare with long-term development.

Q2. How does the Act strengthen the legal right to employment?

Ans. The Act increases guaranteed employment from 100 to 125 days and improves enforceability through stronger grievance redress mechanisms.

Q3. Does the Act replace demand-based employment with top-down planning?

Ans. No, the Act retains worker-initiated demand while using advance participatory planning to ensure timely availability of work.

Q4. How does the Act address concerns about centralisation?

Ans. The Act preserves decentralised decision-making by keeping gram panchayats and gram sabhas as primary planning authorities while centralising coordination.

Q5. Why is the Act described as integrating welfare and development?

Ans. The Act links income support with durable asset creation and productivity enhancement, treating welfare and development as mutually reinforcing.

Source: **The Hindu**

Putin's Visit to India and the Aftermath

Context

- Russian President Vladimir Putin's visit to India in early December for the **23rd India-Russia Annual Summit** drew intense international attention.
- While India viewed the visit as part of a long-standing bilateral process, the West saw it through the prism of the **Russia-Ukraine war and the diplomatic boycott** imposed on Moscow since 2022.
- The visit ultimately reaffirmed India's commitment to **strategic autonomy**, while revealing both continuity and subtle recalibration in India-Russia ties.

Historical Foundations of a Strategic Partnership

- India-Russia relations are anchored in **deep historical trust and shared strategic interests**.
- Meetings between leaders of the two countries have often reshaped regional geopolitics, most notably the **1971 India-Soviet Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation**.
- That agreement decisively altered South Asia's strategic balance, enabling India's victory over Pakistan and the emergence of Bangladesh.
- Beyond landmark treaties, **symbolic and substantive gestures** have sustained mutual confidence, such as President Putin's 2009 decision to waive penalties to facilitate India's acquisition of its second aircraft carrier.
- Over decades, Russia's consistent support, especially during periods when the West aligned with Pakistan, cemented a relationship based on **mutual accommodation and reliability**.
- Since the Gorbachev era and under President Putin's long tenure, successive Indian Prime Ministers have **strengthened this partnership**.

Ukraine, the West, and India's Strategic Autonomy

- The **Russia-Ukraine conflict posed a critical test** for India-Russia relations.
- India maintained neutrality and refused to align with Western efforts to isolate Russia, a stance that has caused persistent friction with the U.S. and the European Union.
- Against this backdrop, President Putin's visit acquired heightened symbolic significance.
- Western expectations that **global political shifts, U.S. tariffs on Indian purchases of Russian oil**, and diplomatic pressure might weaken India-Russia ties were not borne out.
- The warmth displayed between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Putin, coupled with extensive media coverage, underscored **continuity rather than divergence**.

The Joint Statement: Continuity with Subtle Nuances

- The Joint Statement issued after the summit reaffirmed the **Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership**, marking 25 years of formal strategic cooperation.
- It reiterated **mutual trust, respect for core national interests**, and the intention to strengthen traditional areas while exploring new avenues.
- Particular emphasis was placed on **connectivity initiatives**, including the **Northern Sea Route through the Arctic** and the **Chennai-Vladivostok Eastern Maritime Corridor**, alongside enhanced **technological**

and industrial cooperation.

- The optics of the visit-public warmth, coordinated messaging, and expanded cooperation-were widely viewed as successful.

Defence Ties: An Enduring but Questioned Pillar

- Despite these affirmations, **the conspicuous absence of defence cooperation from the Joint Statement was striking.**
- Defence has historically been the **bedrock of India-Russia relations**, especially during the Putin era.
- Whether this silence reflects deliberate diplomatic caution or a gradual shift in priorities remains open to interpretation.
- Nevertheless, **defence cooperation remains central to India's security architecture.**
- Russia has been India's **most consistent and reliable supplier of advanced military systems**, spanning land, sea, and air domains.
- Critical platforms include the **S-400 air and missile defence system**, the **jointly developed BrahMos missile**, **Sukhoi Su-30 MKI fighter aircraft**, **T-90 tanks**, and transport helicopters.
- These systems continue to form the **core of India's defence capabilities** and have significantly enhanced operational effectiveness in recent conflicts.

Western Contradictions and Strategic Realities

- A shift away from Russia towards Western defence sources carries **significant strategic risks**. Western partners have historically proven inconsistent, particularly in South Asia.
- This concern is reinforced by recent U.S. decisions to approve **major upgrade and sustainment packages for Pakistan's F-16 fighter fleet**, even as Washington publicly characterises U.S.-India ties as the defining relationship of the century.
- Such contradictions reinforce India's **strategic scepticism** and highlight why Russia continues to be viewed as a **trusted long-term partner**.

Conclusion

- President Putin's visit demonstrated the **resilience and adaptability of India-Russia relations** amid global turbulence.
- While the partnership remains robust and symbolically strong, the muted emphasis on defence suggests **nuanced recalibration rather than rupture.**
- India's foreign policy continues to prioritise **strategic autonomy, reliable partnerships, and long-term national interest**, resisting pressure to conform to transient geopolitical alignments.

Putin's Visit to India and the Aftermath FAQs

Q1. Why did President Putin's visit to India attract global attention?

Ans. The visit drew global attention because it occurred amid Western efforts to diplomatically isolate Russia after the Ukraine conflict.

Q2. What historical event significantly strengthened India–Russia relations in 1971?

Ans. The 1971 India–Soviet Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation significantly strengthened India–Russia relations.

Q3. How did India position itself during the Russia–Ukraine war?

Ans. India maintained strategic neutrality and refused to join Western sanctions against Russia.

Q4. What notable omission appeared in the Joint Statement of the summit?

Ans. Defence cooperation was notably absent from the Joint Statement despite its traditional importance.

Q5. Why does Russia remain a critical defence partner for India?

Ans. Russia remains critical because it has consistently supplied advanced and reliable military systems essential to India’s defence capabilities.

Source: **The Hindu**

SHANTI Bill - India’s Second Shot at Nuclear Energy Leadership

Context

- India’s nuclear power programme has long suffered from **policy uncertainty**, liability bottlenecks, and investor hesitation, especially after the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage **Act, 2010**.
- In this backdrop, Parliament has passed the Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India (**SHANTI**) **Bill**.
- It aims to **reset India’s nuclear governance framework** and align it with global nuclear commerce norms while strengthening energy security and decarbonisation goals.

Why the SHANTI Bill Matters

- Nuclear power is a **clean, reliable** baseload energy source, crucial for India’s **net-zero ambitions**.
- India targets **100 GW** of nuclear power by **2047**, requiring large-scale investment, global collaboration, and regulatory credibility.
- The SHANTI Bill represents India’s “**second chance**” to emerge as a credible nuclear energy leader.

Key Features of the SHANTI Bill

- **Legislative reset**
 - Replaces the Atomic Energy Act, 1962 and the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act, 2010 with a single, integrated legal framework.
 - Seeks to harmonise Indian law with global nuclear liability regimes.
- **Balanced public-private participation (PPP)**

- Allows involvement of both public and private sectors, but maintains a state-led system. Foreign-incorporated companies excluded as licensees.
- Sensitive stages such as fuel cycle, enrichment, reprocessing, spent fuel management remain exclusively with the central government.
- This balanced PPP is termed as a **cautious expansion strategy**.

• **Regulatory architecture and safety**

- **Licensing:** Retained by the government.
- **Safety authorization:** Assigned to the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB) with enhanced statutory powers, stronger radiation safety norms, mandatory public outreach, and improved emergency preparedness.
- It ensures independent regulators, nuclear safety, institutional capacity.

• **Nuclear liability framework - The core reform**

- **Operator-centric liability:** Aligns with global practice where primary liability rests with the operator. Limits operator liability to 300 million SDR (Special Drawing Rights).
- **Curtailed of supplier liability:**
 - Operator's right of recourse limited to contractual terms, intentional wrongdoing, etc.
 - It shifts a share of responsibility beyond the operator's cap to the central government through a **Nuclear Liability Fund**.
 - It points to the Convention on Supplementary Compensation (**CSC**) for supplementary funds if claims exceed that level.
 - This indicates a shift from the expansive supplier liability introduced in 2010.
- **State as insurer of last resort:**
 - Terrorism recognised as a sovereign risk.
 - The state assumes liability in extreme cases.
 - Ensures victims are not left uncompensated after catastrophic events, assuring last-resort liability of the state.
- **Graded liability and transparency:**
 - Liability graded according to the nature of installation, risk profile.
 - No category allowed below a minimum threshold without regulator-certified rationale.
 - **Annual public disclosure** on liability and compensation financing.
- **Victim-centric compensation:**
 - **Expanded definition** of nuclear damage: long-term health impacts, environmental degradation, loss of livelihood and income, and preventive measures.
 - Claims pathway with timelines, faster disbursement via dedicated funds – establishing the principle of **speed of compensation equals justice**.
- **Intellectual property (IP) reforms:**
 - Creation of a **special nuclear inventions regime**.
 - Amendments to patent laws to encourage nuclear energy-related innovations, safety software, radiation applications, robotics and specialised manufacturing.

- **Impact:** Strengthens domestic nuclear supply chains and skilled employment.

Challenges and Concerns

- **Political and moral insensitivities:** Dilution of supplier liability may be criticised as pro-corporate, diluting victim justice and a strong emotional legacy of the Bhopal disaster.
- **Weak institutional capacity:** AERB needs more specialised inspectors, faster rule-making ability, and strong enforcement credibility.
- **Public trust deficit:** Nuclear safety concerns, limited public understanding of liability mechanisms.

Way Forward

- **Capacity building and public engagement**
 - Strengthen AERB autonomy and staffing.
 - Build insurance and reinsurance capacity.
 - Enhance public communication and transparency.
- **Use SHANTI To**
 - Deepen India-US civil nuclear cooperation.
 - Diversify nuclear partnerships beyond single suppliers.
 - Integrate nuclear energy firmly into India's climate strategy.

Conclusion

- The SHANTI Bill does not claim perfection, but it offers **credibility, clarity, and convergence** with global norms—three essentials for scaling nuclear energy.
- By balancing safety, liability, innovation, and investment, SHANTI provides India with an opportunity to move from prolonged debate to delivery, **transforming** India from a cautious nuclear outlier into a **reliable global nuclear builder**.

SHANTI Bill FAQs

Q1. How does the SHANTI Bill attempt to revive India's stalled nuclear power expansion?

Ans. By aligning India's nuclear liability regime with global norms, strengthening regulation, and enabling cautious PPP.

Q2. Why was the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act, 2010 considered a bottleneck for nuclear energy growth?

Ans. Its expansive supplier liability, shaped by the Bhopal gas tragedy, discouraged private and foreign participation in nuclear projects.

Q3. What is the significance of operator-centric liability under the SHANTI Bill?

Ans. It places primary responsibility on the nuclear operator, caps liability at 300 million SDR, and restores predictability.

Q4. How does the SHANTI Bill balance victim justice with investment certainty?

Ans. By expanding the definition of nuclear damage and ensuring faster compensation while limiting supplier liability.

Q5. In what ways can the SHANTI Bill strengthen India's energy security and climate commitments?

Ans. By enabling scalable, safe nuclear power as a clean baseload source critical for decarbonisation and long-term energy security.

Source: IE

Source: <https://vajiramandravi.com/current-affairs/daily-editorial-analysis-24-december-2025/>

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