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1. Polity & Governance

1.1 Swachhta Udyami Yojana Promotes Mechanised Sanitation and Livelihoods

Context:

The Swachhta Udyami Yojana (SUY), one of the components of the NAMASTE Scheme, supported a five-member sanitation-worker group in Guntur, Andhra Pradesh, to procure a 3-in-1 Jetting, Grabbing and Rodding Machine. The intervention highlights the shift towards mechanised sanitation, safer working conditions and livelihood enhancement.

Explanation

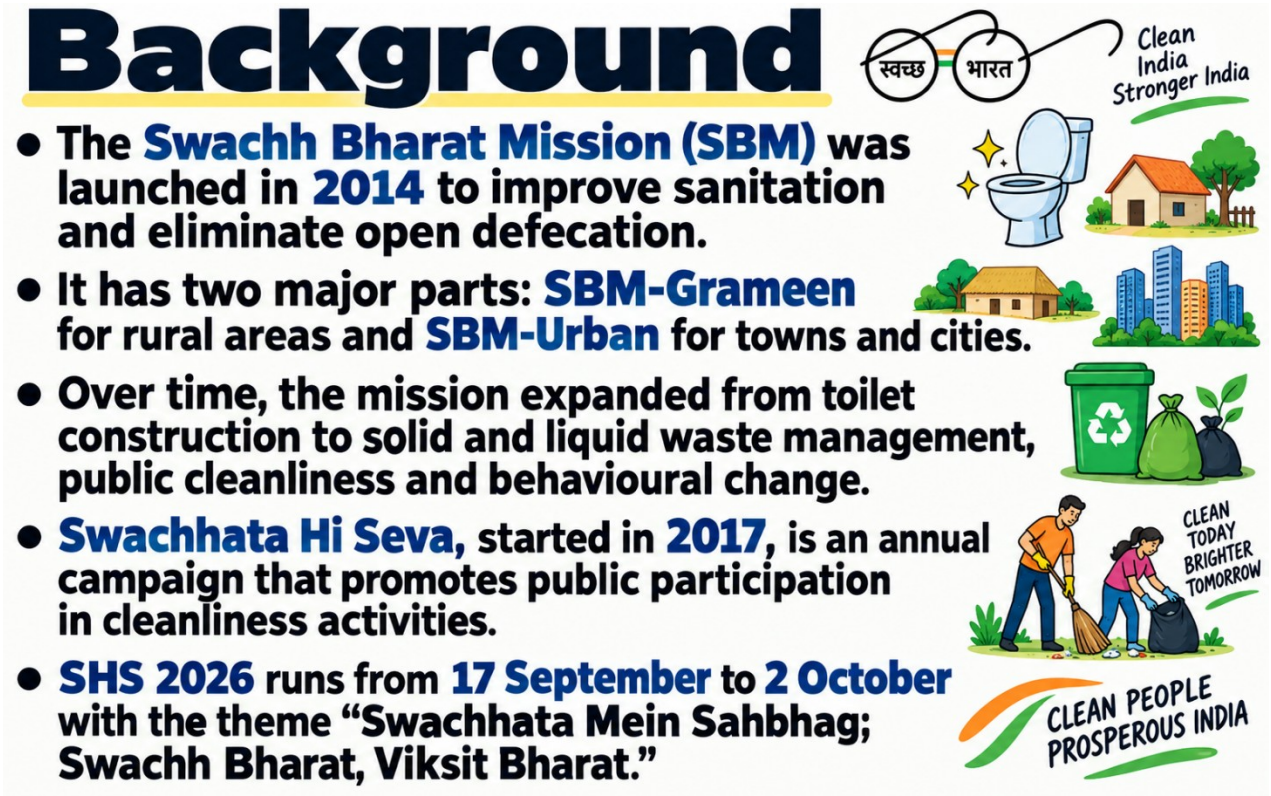


- **NAMASTE (National Action for Mechanised Sanitation Ecosystem)** aims to ensure the **safety and dignity of sanitation workers** and eliminate hazardous manual cleaning through mechanisation.
- It is a **Central Sector Scheme** jointly implemented by the **Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment** and the **Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA)**.
- **National Safai Karamcharis Finance and Development Corporation (NSKFDC)** plays an important role in implementing livelihood and financial-support interventions.
- **Swachhta Udyami Yojana (SUY)** promotes **sanitation-based entrepreneurship** by providing financial assistance for sanitation equipment and vehicles.
- Support can facilitate machines such as jetting, grabbing and rodding equipment, reducing direct human exposure to hazardous waste.
- The broader approach combines mechanisation, occupational safety, social protection, skill development and alternative livelihoods.
- It contributes to the objective of eliminating hazardous manual cleaning of sewers and septic tanks.

1.2 Swachhata Hi Seva 2026 and Citizen Participation

Context:

India's cleanliness programme is no longer only about building toilets or conducting occasional cleaning drives. The focus is increasingly shifting towards waste management, clean public spaces, hygiene and behavioural change. Swachhata Hi Seva (SHS) 2026 seeks to make cleanliness a shared responsibility involving citizens, governments, schools, institutions and sanitation workers.



What Is the Focus of SHS 2026?

1. Cleaning Neglected Public Places

- The campaign identifies **Cleanliness Target Units (CTUs)**.
- These are places such as **garbage dumps, dirty public spaces and locations that repeatedly become unclean**.
- Such places are cleaned, beautified and brought under regular maintenance.
- Markets, schools, hospitals, parks, transport hubs and water bodies are also covered.
- Citizens can report sanitation problems through digital platforms such as the **Swachhata App**.

2. Making Young People Part of the Solution

- Students and youth are involved through **Swachh Paathshala**.
- Students can visit sanitation and waste-management facilities to understand what happens to waste after it leaves their homes.
    - Schools also promote awareness regarding: **handwashing, personal hygiene, water conservation, menstrual hygiene and safe drinking water**.

3. Protecting SafaiMitras

- **SafaiMitras are sanitation workers** involved in cleaning streets, drains, toilets and other public spaces.
    - Special camps provide them with: health check-ups, safety equipment, access to welfare schemes, and better awareness of occupational safety.
- The basic idea is that a cleanliness campaign must also protect the **health, dignity and safety of sanitation workers**.

4. Citizen Participation

- Cleanliness cannot be left only to municipal workers. Citizens are encouraged to: avoid littering, separate wet and dry waste, compost biodegradable waste, reduce single-use plastic, and keep neighbourhoods clean.
- Community rallies, cleanliness pledges and voluntary drives are used to build public participation.

5. Turning Waste into a Resource

- SHS promotes the **3Rs — Reduce, Reuse and Recycle**.
- **Kabaad Se Jugaad** encourages useful products from waste materials.
- **Kabaad Se Kala** promotes converting waste into art.
- This supports a **circular economy**, where materials are reused instead of simply being thrown away.

Conclusion:

The central idea of Swachhata Hi Seva 2026 is simple: **cleanliness should become a daily habit, not an occasional government campaign**. Its success depends on combining sanitation infrastructure with **citizen participation, responsible waste management, youth involvement and dignity for sanitation workers**.

1.3 DILRMP 3.0: Building a GIS-Enabled Digital Land Stack

Context:

Recently, the Department of Land Resources (DoLR), Ministry of Rural Development, launched the operational framework for Digital India Land Records Modernization Programme (DILRMP) 3.0 (2026–31). It aims to move beyond digitisation towards an integrated, geographic information system (GIS)-enabled Land Stack.

Explanation

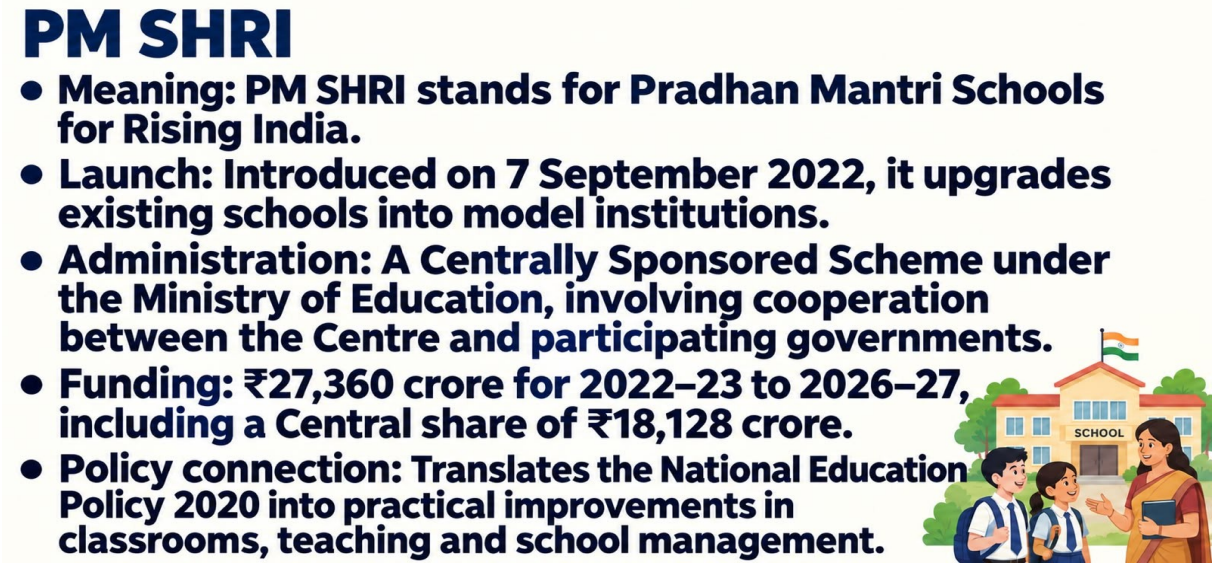


- **DILRMP 3.0** is a **Central Sector Scheme** implemented across States and UTs with an anticipated outlay of **₹565.50 crore**.
- It seeks to create a **Land Stack**, a **Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)** integrating land records, cadastral maps, registration and revenue-court cases.
- **Bhu-Aadhaar, or Unique Land Parcel Identification Number (ULPIN),** provides a **14-digit unique identification number** to each land parcel based on its geographical coordinates.
- **Georeferencing** links digitised cadastral maps with precise geographic coordinates, improving identification of land parcels.
- Paperless property registration and a Registration Repository aim to provide end-to-end digital services.
- **Revenue Court Case Management System (RCCMS)** will integrate land-dispute information with land records.
- **NAKSHA** focuses on modernising urban land surveys and records.
- Secure **Application Programming Interface (API)-based interoperability** can reduce physical visits, duplication, land disputes and transaction costs while improving transparency.

1.4 PM SHRI: Improving Quality and Equity in School Education

Context:

PM SHRI completed four years in September 2026. By July 2026, 13,092 schools had been selected towards a target of over 14,500 model schools, strengthening efforts to improve educational quality and inclusion.



Education and Human Resource Development

- **Quality of education:** Teaching through experiments, discussions and projects strengthens conceptual understanding, critical thinking and problem-solving.

- **Practical application:** Students could measure their classroom and calculate the tiles needed to cover its floor, connecting mathematical concepts with everyday life.
- **Learning outcomes:** Assessments emphasise what children understand and can apply, helping teachers identify learning gaps.
- **Human capital formation:** Academic learning, sports, arts and vocational exposure support the development of knowledgeable, skilled and confident citizens.

Social Justice and Inclusive Development

- **Equality of opportunity:** Support for children from disadvantaged backgrounds seeks to reduce disparities in access to quality education.
- **Disability inclusion:** Accessible infrastructure and appropriate learning support enable children with disabilities to participate meaningfully.
- **Linguistic inclusion:** Teaching in the mother tongue or local language, particularly in early grades, supports comprehension and participation.
- **Gender equity:** Safe facilities and inclusive school practices help create an enabling environment for girls' education.

Technology and Environmental Sustainability

- **Digital education:** Smart classrooms, internet connectivity and digital resources can expand learning opportunities and strengthen digital literacy.
- **Sustainable development:** Water conservation, waste management, nutrition gardens and energy efficiency connect environmental education with daily behaviour.
- **Preservation of culture:** Exposure to local arts, crafts and traditions links education with India's cultural heritage.

Governance and Institutional Capacity

- **Capacity building:** Teacher training and leadership development strengthen classroom instruction and school management.
- **Cooperative federalism:** Selection involves agreements with participating governments, identification of eligible schools and competition against prescribed standards.
- **Accountability:** Physical verification and the School Quality Assessment Framework support monitoring; selection alone does not establish completed transformation.
- **Community participation:** Engagement with parents and local institutions can improve responsiveness to children's needs.
- **Institutional collaboration:** Selected schools mentor neighbouring institutions, spreading effective practices beyond individual campuses.

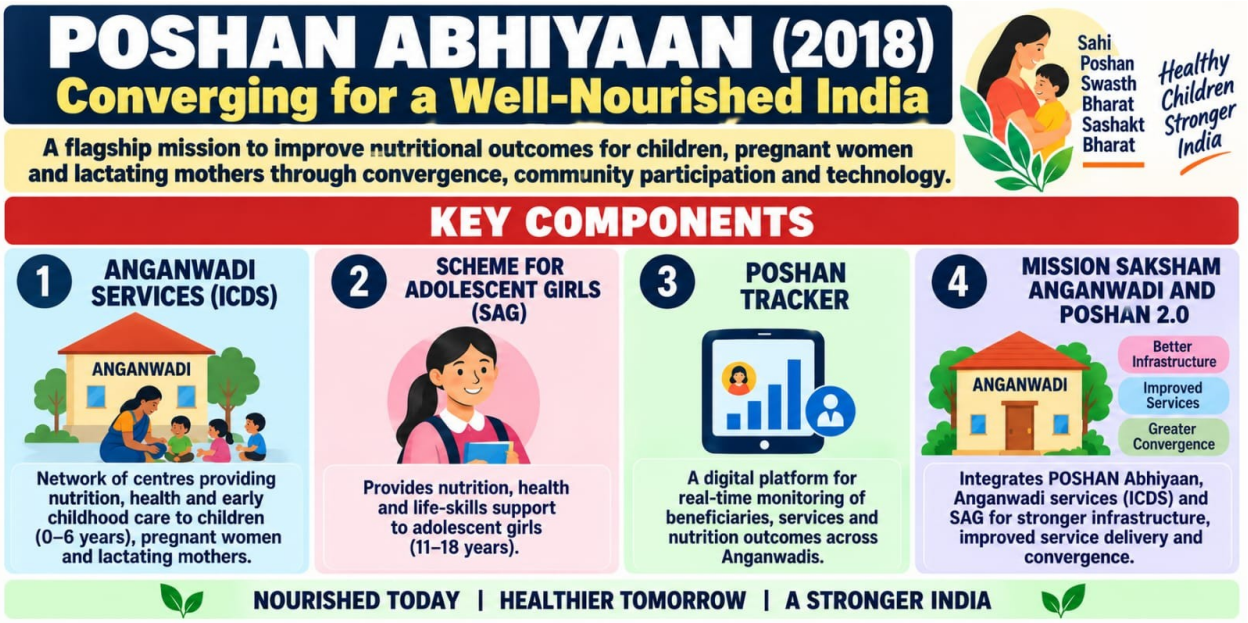
Conclusion:

PM SHRI can advance social justice and human resource development through better schooling. Its success depends on measurable learning gains, effective teacher support and sustained inclusion of disadvantaged children.

1.5 9th Rashtriya Poshan Maah

Context:

India is observing the **9th Rashtriya Poshan Maah in September 2026** to deepen community participation in improving maternal and child nutrition. Its central message, **"Hamari Anganwadi, Hamari Jimmedari" (Our Anganwadi, Our Responsibility)**, emphasises that better nutrition requires participation by families and communities alongside government efforts.



Key Focus Areas

Community Ownership of Anganwadis

- **Anganwadi Management Committees (AMCs)** seek to involve parents and local communities in Anganwadi functioning.
- Communities can monitor **food quality, cleanliness, attendance and service delivery**.
- Displaying **weekly food menus** allows families to know what beneficiaries are supposed to receive.
- This strengthens **transparency, accountability and local ownership**.

Dietary Diversity and Protein

- The focus is shifting from merely providing sufficient calories towards ensuring a **balanced and nutritious diet**.
- Children should receive diverse locally available foods such as **millets, cereals, pulses, vegetables, fruits, nuts, milk and eggs**, as appropriate.
- Particular attention is being given to **adequate protein**, essential for children's growth and development.

Improving Hot Cooked Meals

- Meals provided at Anganwadis should be **fresh, nutritious, hygienic and locally acceptable**.
- **Weekly menu rotation** can improve dietary diversity.
- Regular **food-quality and safety testing**, including coordination with food-safety authorities, can strengthen standards and accountability.

Nutrition + Early Childhood Development

- The **first 1,000 days - from conception to around two years of age - are crucial** for physical growth and brain development.
- Hence, nutrition should be combined with **early stimulation, play and learning**.
- Anganwadi workers can monitor **developmental milestones**, identify possible delays and facilitate appropriate referrals.
- The approach therefore moves beyond simply **"feeding the child" towards "nurturing the child."**

Strengthening Maternal Support

- Greater efforts are being made to enroll eligible women under the **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)**.
- PMMVY is a **maternity-benefit scheme providing financial assistance through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT)** to eligible beneficiaries.
- Timely support can help women meet nutrition and health needs during pregnancy and after childbirth.

Conclusion:

The emerging approach to nutrition goes beyond food distribution. **Nutritious diets, maternal support, early childhood development, community participation and accountable Anganwadis can together improve health, learning and human capital across generations.**

1.6 National Commission for Safai Karamcharis: New Appointments and Mandate

Context:



Recently, the Department of Social Justice and Empowerment appointed the Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and three Members of the National Commission for Safai Karamcharis (NCSK). Their tenure will continue until 31 March 2028, the remaining tenure of the present Commission.

Explanation:

- **NCSK** was originally established under the **National Commission for Safai Karamcharis Act, 1993** for safeguarding the interests and welfare of **Safai Karamcharis**.
- The **1993 Act ceased to have effect in 2004**; since then, NCSK has continued as a **non-statutory body** through government resolutions, with its tenure periodically extended.
- It functions under the **Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment**.
- NCSK studies and recommends measures for improving the **social and economic conditions** of Safai Karamcharis and investigates grievances concerning welfare schemes.
- Under the **Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013**, NCSK monitors implementation and advises governments regarding effective enforcement.
- The 2013 Act prohibits **manual scavenging** and provides for identification and **rehabilitation of manual scavengers**.
- **Article 17** of the Constitution abolishes **untouchability**, providing an important constitutional linkage to dignity and elimination of caste-based discriminatory practices.

1.7 NCPCR's Pan-India Campaign against Child Labour

Context:

The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) rescued over 3,800 children and facilitated registration of more than 575 FIRs during its Pan-India Rescue and Rehabilitation Campaign, conducted from June 12 to August 31, 2026.

Explanation:



- **NCPCR** is a **statutory body** established under the **Commissions for Protection of Child Rights Act, 2005** and functions under the **Ministry of Women and Child Development**.
- It monitors protection of the rights of **children below 18 years** and reviews safeguards provided under laws and policies concerning children.
- **Article 24** of the Constitution prohibits employment of children below 14 years in factories, mines and other hazardous employment.
- **Article 21A** guarantees free and compulsory education to children aged **6–14 years**, while **Article 39(e) and (f)** provide Directive Principles concerning child protection.
- The **Child and Adolescent Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986**, as amended in 2016, prohibits employment of children below 14 years, subject to specified exceptions, and prohibits adolescents aged **14–18 years** from hazardous occupations/processes.
- Rescue must be followed by rehabilitation, educational mainstreaming, restoration and compensation, alongside action against offenders.

2. International Relations

2.1 BRICS Summit 2026

Introduction:

The BRICS Summit, held in New Delhi on September 12-13, 2026, adopted a joint declaration covering peace, trade, technology and development. Its central message was that developing countries should have a greater say in global decisions. However, disagreements among members showed how difficult it is to turn shared demands into collective action.

India's 2026 BRICS chairship materials list 11 members: Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, United Arab Emirates, Indonesia and Saudi Arabia.



Key Outcomes and Their Significance (Theme: "Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability")

Global Governance: A Greater Voice for Developing Countries

- **United Nations reform:** The UN Security Council makes important decisions on international peace. BRICS wants greater developing-country representation because its structure largely reflects the world after the Second World War.
- **Financial institutions:** BRICS wants changes in the International Monetary Fund and World Bank so that developing countries gain greater voting power over lending and financial decisions.



International Trade: Protecting Markets and Small Businesses

- **Trade restrictions:** Import taxes make foreign goods more expensive. Sudden increases can reduce exports, hurt businesses and threaten jobs. BRICS opposed restrictions inconsistent with World Trade Organization rules.
- **Fair dispute settlement:** Members sought restoration of an effective system through which countries can challenge unfair trade practices.
- **Small businesses:** Easier loans, faster customs clearance and better access to technology could help small enterprises sell abroad and join international production networks.

Money and Banking: Reducing Dependence on the Dollar

- **Local-currency trade:** Indian and foreign businesses could settle more transactions in their national currencies instead of first converting money into dollars.
- **Possible benefits:** This could reduce conversion costs and provide additional payment options when existing channels face disruption.
- **Practical difficulty:** If a foreign exporter receives rupees but buys little from India, it needs useful ways to spend, invest or convert those rupees. Faster payment technology alone cannot solve this problem.
- **Actual outcome:** No common BRICS currency was announced. Work on connecting payment systems remains under discussion.

Security and Peace: Terrorism and West Asia

- **Counter-terrorism:** Members condemned the April 2025 Pahalgam attack and supported action against terrorist funding, safe havens and movement across borders.
- **Digital crime:** Cooperation against online scams, money laundering and radicalisation matters because criminals can operate across several countries.
- **West Asia:** The declaration called for restraint, civilian protection and humanitarian assistance. It supported a Palestinian state alongside Israel.

Science and Technology: Making AI Accessible

- **Development opportunity:** Artificial intelligence can help doctors detect disease, farmers identify crop problems and students learn in local languages.
- **Unequal access:** Developing countries often lack powerful computers, suitable data and trained workers. BRICS supported wider access to these resources.

- **China's proposal:** Its proposed open-source AI community would encourage sharing and adapting AI models, but it was not adopted as a common BRICS programme.

Environment, Agriculture and Disaster Management

- **Climate justice:** Developing countries need financial and technological support to manage climate damage while continuing development.
- **Energy security:** Cooperation on energy supplies, electricity storage and critical minerals can support affordable power and cleaner technologies.
- **Food security:** Climate-resilient seeds and better farming practices can protect farmers against droughts and supply shortages.
- **Disaster preparedness:** Sharing early warnings and building stronger infrastructure can reduce deaths and economic losses.

Social Justice and Human Development

- **Health and education:** Cooperation covers disease prevention, mental healthcare, vocational training and digital literacy.
- **Inclusion:** Better access to finance for women and social protection for gig workers can spread development benefits.
- **Cultural cooperation:** Educational exchanges and heritage protection can improve understanding among societies.

Significance for India

- **Strategic autonomy:** India can cooperate with BRICS while maintaining strong relations with Western partners.
- **Global standing:** China and Russia supported greater roles for India and Brazil in the UN, including the Security Council, without explicitly endorsing permanent membership.
- **Economic opportunities:** Wider markets and development partnerships could support Indian exports, investment and employment.
- **Energy and diaspora:** Peace in West Asia helps protect energy supplies, shipping routes and Indians working abroad.

Limitations of the Summit and Way Forward

- **Internal differences:** Rivalries restrict collective action; sustained dialogue and border stability with China remain important.
- **Weak accountability:** Carefully worded statements preserve agreement but can obscure responsibility for conflicts.
- **Unequal dependence:** India should pursue balanced trade and strengthen domestic technology while protecting personal data.
- **Implementation gaps:** Proposals need practical pilots, clear deadlines and progress reviews across successive presidencies.

Conclusion:

BRICS offers India opportunities to influence global rules and expand development partnerships. Its success should ultimately be measured by better jobs, affordable services and greater security for ordinary people.

3. Economy

3.1 Directorate of Revenue Intelligence Busts Pan-India Gold Smuggling Network

Context:

The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) busted a pan-India syndicate allegedly smuggling foreign-origin gold through the India–Bangladesh border and distributing it through courier networks. The operation resulted in the seizure of 6.61 kg of gold and arrests across several cities.



Explanation:

- **DRI** is India's apex **anti-smuggling intelligence and enforcement agency** under the **Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC)**, Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance.
- It investigates customs-duty evasion, commercial fraud and organised smuggling, including gold and narcotics.
- **CBIC** administers customs through the **Customs Act, 1962** and related laws.
- Smuggled goods can be **confiscated**, while persons involved may face penalties, prosecution and arrest subject to statutory provisions.
- Gold smuggling commonly seeks to circumvent **customs duties and import regulations**.
- DRI operates through intelligence gathering and **inter-agency coordination** across India.

3.2 Digital Insurance Push for Livestock and Aquaculture Farmers

Context:

The government has launched a Livestock Insurance Portal to digitise livestock insurance services and is promoting aquaculture insurance under the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Kisan Samridhi Sah-Yojana (PM-MKSSY). Both initiatives seek to reduce production risks and strengthen income security for livestock and fish farmers.

Explanation



- **The Livestock Insurance Portal,** developed by the Department of Animal Husbandry & Dairying (DAHD), provides integrated policy issuance, claim processing, monitoring and reporting.
- It supports animals insured under **DAHD's Livestock Insurance Scheme** and offers services in 11 regional languages plus Hindi and English.
- **PM-MKSSY, approved in 2024,** provides **aquaculture insurance support** under Component 1-B.
- Eligible farmers receive a one-time incentive of **up to 40% of insurance premium for one crop cycle,** capped at ₹25,000 per hectare and ₹1 lakh per farmer for up to four hectares of pond-based aquaculture.
- For intensive systems such as cage culture and biofloc, the 40% incentive is capped at ₹1 lakh for a maximum eligible unit size of 1,800 cubic metres.
- Implementation occurs through th**e National Fisheries Digital Platform (NFDP)** with Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT).
- Aquaculture coverage includes risks such as disease, floods, cyclones and other specified perils.
- Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe and women beneficiaries receive an additional incentive equal to 10% of the general-category incentive.

3.3 Bharat Taxi: Cooperative Model Enters India's Mobility Sector

Context:

Bharat Taxi, a cooperative-based mobility service, has been formally launched in Lucknow, Gorakhpur, Varanasi, Kanpur and Prayagraj. Based on the principle "Driver is the Owner," it seeks to make drivers stakeholders in the platform rather than merely service providers.

Explanation



- **Bharat Taxi** extends the **cooperative model** into the app-based mobility sector.
- Drivers, called **Saarthis**, are both service providers and stakeholders/owners in the cooperative ecosystem.
- Unlike conventional aggregators, it aims to maximise drivers' earnings by avoiding the usual **commission-based model** and crediting earnings directly to them.
- It reflects the broader **"Sahkar Se Samriddhi"** approach of expanding cooperatives beyond agriculture, dairy and credit into new sectors.
- **Cooperative societies** are based on voluntary association, democratic participation and collective economic benefit.
- The **Ministry of Cooperation** was created in **July 2021** to strengthen India's cooperative movement.
- **Cooperatives** are specifically mentioned in **Article 43B** and **Part IXB** of the Constitution.

3.4 PM Vishwakarma Scheme Completes Three Years, Reaches 30 Lakh Registrations

Context:

The PM Vishwakarma Scheme completed three years on 17 September 2026, with 30 lakh traditional artisans and craftspeople registered after the prescribed verification process. The scheme provides integrated support through skill training, modern tools, concessional credit, digital incentives and market linkages.



Explanation:

- **PM Vishwakarma** is a **Central Sector Scheme** launched in **2023** and implemented by the **Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME)**.
- It supports artisans and craftspeople working with their **hands and tools across 18 traditional trades**, including carpenters, blacksmiths, potters, cobblers and tailors.
- Beneficiaries receive a **PM Vishwakarma Certificate and ID Card** for formal recognition.
- Support includes basic and advanced skill training, a ₹15,000 toolkit incentive, digital-transaction incentives and marketing assistance.
- Collateral-free enterprise development loans are provided in two tranches of ₹1 lakh and ₹2 lakh at a concessional 5% interest rate.
- Implementation involves the **Ministry of MSME**, **Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE)** and **Department of Financial Services (DFS)**.
- Beneficiary identification follows a three-stage verification process, involving Gram Panchayats/Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) and government authorities.

3.5 CCPA Penalises Rapido for Dark Patterns in Ride-Booking Interface

Context:

The Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) imposed a ₹10 lakh penalty on Rapido for misleading advertisements, unfair trade practices, unfair contracts and use of dark patterns in pre-ride payment prompts. It directed Rapido to discontinue practices that steer consumers towards paying more before ride confirmation.

Explanation



- **Dark patterns** are deceptive user-interface practices designed to manipulate consumers into choices they may not otherwise make.
- The **Guidelines for Prevention and Regulation of Dark Patterns, 2023** identify specified dark patterns and operate under the **Consumer Protection Act, 2019**.

- **Confirm Shaming** uses pressure, fear or guilt to influence consumer decisions. Rapido suggested that paying more could increase the chance of securing a ride.
- **Interface Interference** manipulates interface design to favour particular choices. Rapido's colour-coded pricing slider visually encouraged higher payments.
- CCPA held that an advance payment cannot be portrayed as a genuine tip, which should remain voluntary.
- **Motor Vehicle Aggregator Guidelines, 2025** require the tipping option to be available only after completion of the ride.
- CCPA protects consumers as a class against unfair trade practices and misleading advertisements.

3.6 Hub-and-Spoke International Flight Operations from Ahmedabad

Context:

The **Ministry of Civil Aviation** has launched Hub-and-Spoke international flight operations from Ahmedabad, making it the third spoke airport after Varanasi and Amritsar. The initiative connects passengers from these airports to international destinations through **Delhi as the designated hub**.



Explanation:

- The **Hub-and-Spoke model** channels passengers from multiple **spoke airports** through a central **hub airport** for onward international connections.
- Under the present framework, **Delhi functions as the hub**, while **Varanasi, Amritsar and Ahmedabad** are the first three spoke airports.
- Passengers complete check-in, immigration and customs formalities at the originating spoke airport, which must itself be an international airport.
- At Delhi, they can transfer directly to the onward international flight without repeating these procedures; **baggage is checked through to the final destination**.
- The model aims to reduce dependence on **foreign transit hubs** and improve the competitiveness of Indian airlines and airports.
- It forms part of India's **International Aviation Hub Strategy**, targeting a preferred Indian aviation hub by **2030** and a leading global hub by **2047**.
- It can improve connectivity, airport utilisation, trade, tourism and regional economic development.

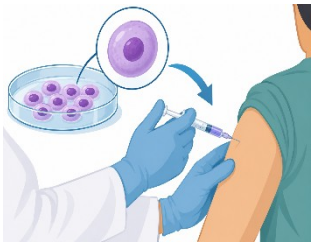
4. Science & Technology

4.1 Union Health Ministry Tightens Regulation of Stem Cell Therapy

Context:

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) has directed that stem cell therapy can be offered as standard clinical care only for officially approved disease conditions. For Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), stem cell use remains restricted to approved clinical trials and cannot be offered as routine commercial treatment.

Explanation



- **Stem cells** are unspecialised cells capable of **self-renewal** and differentiation into specialised cell types, giving them potential in **regenerative medicine**.
- In India, stem cell research is governed by the **National Guidelines for Stem Cell Research, 2017**, issued jointly by the **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)** and **Department of Biotechnology (DBT)**.
- Stem cell therapy can be standard care only for indications approved **by MoHFW**; other therapeutic uses remain investigational.
- For **ASD**, therapeutic use of any type of stem cell is permitted only through **approved clinical trials**.
- The advisory follows the Supreme Court's 2026 judgment in Yash Charitable Trust v. Union of India.
- States and Union Territories covered by the **Clinical Establishments (Registration and Regulation) Act, 2010** must enforce these requirements.
- Unauthorised treatment, promotion or advertisement may invite professional disciplinary action, penalties or cancellation of clinical-establishment registration.

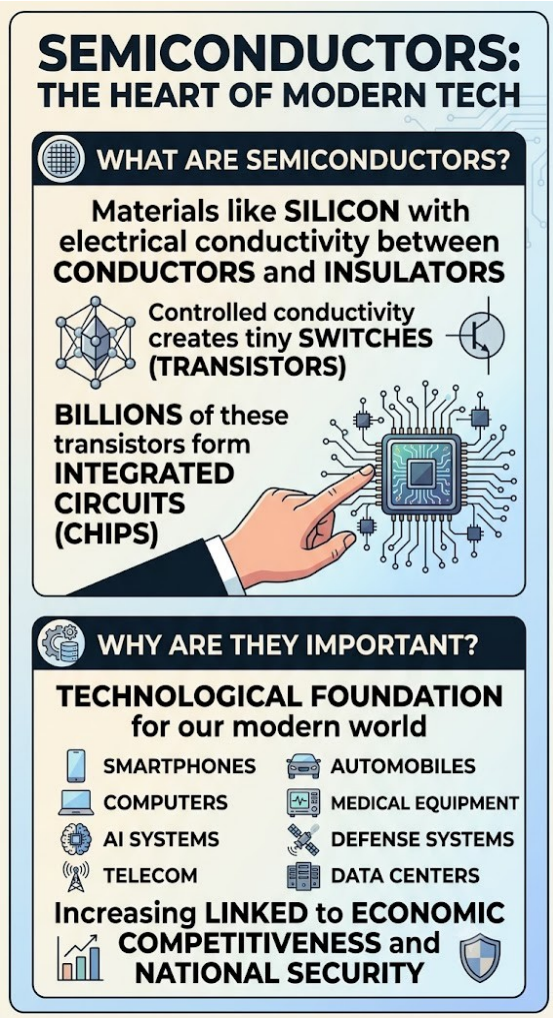
4.2 Semicon 2.0: Building India's Complete Semiconductor Ecosystem

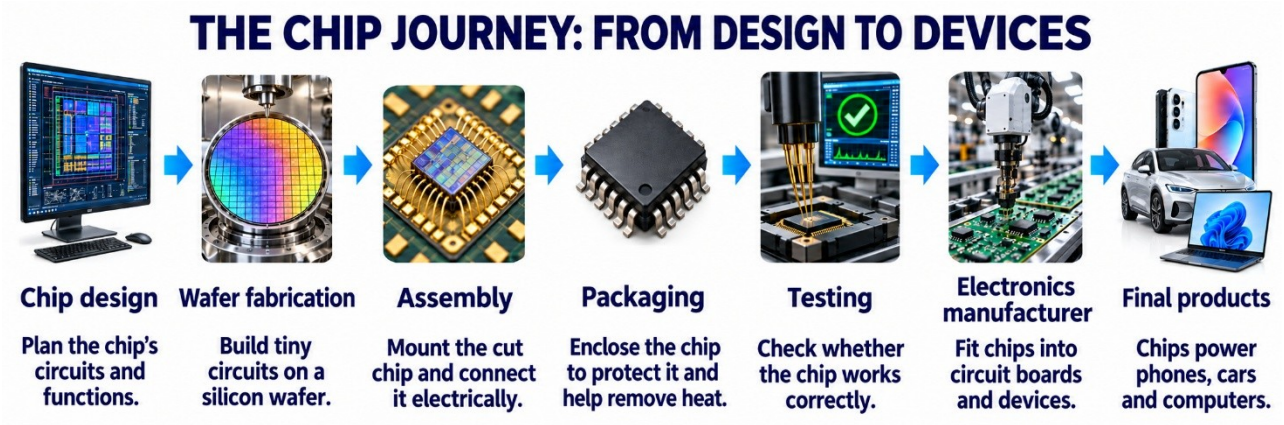
Context:

The fifth edition of **SEMICON India 2026**, being held at **Yashobhoomi, New Delhi, from 17–19 September 2026** under the theme *"Silicon to Systems: Building the Ecosystem"*, is showcasing India's transition from electronics assembly towards a complete semiconductor ecosystem. The event highlights the shift from **Semicon 1.0 to Semicon 2.0**, with greater emphasis on domestic design, fabrication, materials, equipment, advanced packaging, research and skilled manpower.

Background:

- **India's electronics push:** The **National Policy on Electronics, 2019** provided the broad framework, followed by the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme **for Large-Scale Electronics Manufacturing, the Scheme for Promotion of Manufacturing of Electronic Components and Semiconductors (SPECS) and Electronics Manufacturing Clusters (EMC) 2.0**, which promoted electronics production, component manufacturing and industrial infrastructure.
- **Semicon India 1.0:** Launched in 2021, it supported semiconductor fabrication plants **(fabs),** display fabrication plants **(display fabs),** compound semiconductor manufacturing facilities, Assembly, Testing, Marking and Packaging (**ATMP**) units, and Outsourced Semiconductor Assembly and Test (**OSAT**) facilities, while the **Design Linked Incentive (DLI)** promoted Indian chip-design companies.
- **Talent development:** The **Chips to Startup (C2S)** programme focused on developing semiconductor design and manufacturing skills, while **PLI 2.0 for IT Hardware** encouraged domestic production of laptops, servers and other electronics that create demand for chips.
- **Increasing domestic value addition:** The **Electronics Components Manufacturing Scheme** and **Mobile Phone Manufacturing Scheme, 2026** seek to reduce dependence on imported components and increase the share of value created within India.
- **Semicon 2.0:** Approved in July 2026 with an outlay of **₹1,27,500 crore**, it shifts the focus from establishing individual semiconductor plants to developing the complete ecosystem required to sustain them.





Why Does India Need Semicon 2.0?

1. Reducing External Dependence

- India's electronics market is expanding rapidly, but many critical chips, manufacturing inputs, chemicals and specialised technologies still come from abroad, making domestic industries vulnerable to global supply disruptions and geopolitical tensions.

2. Increasing Domestic Value Addition

- Manufacturing a phone, computer or vehicle in India creates limited domestic value if the processor, memory, sensors, display components and other advanced parts are imported, so the next stage of policy aims to capture more high-value activities within India.

3. Strengthening Strategic Security

- Semiconductors are essential for defence systems, satellites, telecom networks, power infrastructure, artificial intelligence, automobiles and industrial machinery, so dependable access to chips has become an issue of both economic and national security.

What Does Semicon 2.0 Focus On?

1. Design and Indian Intellectual Property

- The programme seeks to support Indian firms and start-ups in creating their own chip designs and intellectual property so that India moves from mainly providing engineering services to also owning valuable semiconductor technologies.

2. Machines, Materials and Inputs

- Support will extend to semiconductor equipment, silicon wafers, specialty gases, chemicals and advanced materials, because a domestic fab cannot become truly resilient if most of the critical inputs required to operate it are imported.

3. More Fabrication Capacity

- India plans to expand silicon fabs as well as specialised semiconductor facilities, including compound and discrete semiconductors, so that more stages of actual chip manufacturing take place within the country.

4. Advanced Packaging

- India will strengthen **ATMP/OSAT** and advanced packaging capabilities, which are becoming increasingly important as multiple specialised chip components are combined into high-performance systems.

5. Research and Development

- Semicon 2.0 aims to support research in advanced semiconductor technologies, new materials, manufacturing processes and future chip architectures so that India gradually develops indigenous technological capability.

6. Talent Development

- The strategy also focuses on training engineers and technicians in areas such as Very Large Scale Integration (VLSI) design, semiconductor physics, process engineering, materials, fabrication, packaging and testing, ensuring that physical factories are supported by a skilled domestic workforce.

Progress So Far

- Under Semicon 1.0, **12 semiconductor manufacturing units with proposed investment exceeding ₹1.64 lakh crore** have been approved, with five units commencing commercial production by September 2026; meanwhile, domestic chip-design projects, access to advanced design tools and training initiatives have also expanded.

Conclusion:

India's semiconductor policy is now moving from **"assemble electronics in India" to "build the ecosystem behind electronics in India."** Semicon 2.0 therefore seeks to deepen domestic capability across design, manufacturing, materials, research, packaging and skills while integrating India more strongly into global semiconductor supply chains.

5. Environment, Geography & Disaster Management

5.1 PRAMAAN Certification for Sustainable Forest and Wood Products

Context:

The Union Environment Minister awarded India's first PRAMAAN certificates under the Indian Forest and Wood Certification Scheme (IFWCS) to the Andhra Pradesh Forest Development Corporation, covering 33,000 hectares of plantations, and an Odisha bamboo farmer, marking the scheme's transition to field-level implementation.



Explanation:

- **PRAMAAN** stands for Programme for Recognition and Accreditation of sustainable Management practices for Agroforestry And Natural forestry resources.
- It operates under the **Indian Forest and Wood Certification Scheme (IFWCS)**, launched by **MoEFCC in December 2023**.
- It certifies **forests, Trees Outside Forests (TOF), wood and Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs)** for sustainable management and market access.
- Certification includes Forest Management, Tree Outside Forest Management and Chain of Custody.
- Forest Management certification follows the Indian Forest Management Standard under the **National Working Plan Code, 2023**.
- Certification is based on **independent third-party audits**, not merely self-declaration.
- Certification bodies are accredited by **NABCB**, under the **Quality Council of India (QCI)**.
- **IIFM, Bhopal** is the scheme's operating agency.
- It facilitates **responsible, deforestation-free sourcing** and access to sustainability-conscious markets.

5.2 India Reaffirms Commitment to Cetacean Conservation at IWC-70

Context:

At the 70th meeting of the International Whaling Commission (IWC-70) in Hobart, Australia, India called for science-based conservation and international cooperation to protect whales and other cetaceans. The meeting coincides with the 80th anniversary of the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling (ICRW).

Explanation



- **Cetaceans** are aquatic mammals comprising **whales, dolphins and porpoises**.
- **IWC** was established under the **International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling (ICRW), 1946**, signed in **Washington, D.C.**
- It is the global body concerned with whaling management and whale conservation; India joined in 1981.
- Cetaceans in Indian waters receive the highest level of legal protection under the **Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972**.
- **Project Dolphin** adopts an ecosystem-based approach for conserving dolphins, whales, porpoises and their aquatic habitats.
- India has notified **Marine Protected Areas (MPAs)** that also conserve marine biodiversity.
- India has identified the **Arabian Sea humpback whale** among species requiring focused conservation action.
- Major threats include bycatch, ship strikes, pollution, underwater noise and habitat degradation.

5.3 India's Forest and Landscape Restoration Initiatives at COFO 28

Context:



At the 28th Session of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Committee on Forestry (COFO 28) in Rome, India highlighted its progress in forest and landscape restoration, carbon-sink creation and sustainable forest management. India also called for greater international support for finance, technology transfer and capacity development.

Explanation:

- **COFO** is an **FAO statutory body** dealing with global forestry issues; **COFO 28** is being held in **Rome**.
- India's forest and tree cover is 82.74 million ha, or 25.17% of its geographical area.
- FAO Global Forest Resources Assessment 2025: India ranks **9th in forest area** and **3rd in net annual forest-area gain**.
- Under the **Bonn Challenge**, India targets restoration of **26 million ha by 2030**; **21.76 million ha** is under restoration.
- **Aravalli Green Wall** targets restoration of degraded landscapes, while **MISHTI** focuses on **mangrove restoration**.
- India aims for an additional **3.5–4.0 billion tonnes** CO_2-equivalent carbon sink by 2035, compared with 2005.
- India supports the proposed UN Decade for Afforestation and Reforestation, 2027–2036.

5.4 NITI Aayog Launches Second Edition of India Electric Mobility Index

Context:



NITI Aayog has launched the second edition of the India Electric Mobility Index (IEMI) 2025 to assess and compare the progress of States and Union Territories in the transition to electric mobility. 29 of India's 36 States and Union Territories have notified Electric Vehicle (EV) policies.

Explanation:

- **India Electric Mobility Index (IEMI)** is a **NITI Aayog** framework that tracks State and Union Territory progress in electric mobility and supports evidence-based policymaking.
- The IEMI 2025 edition assesses 16 indicators within three weighted themes: Transport Electrification Progress (50%), Charging Infrastructure Readiness (30%), and EV Research and Innovation Status (20%).
- The 2025 edition places States and Union Territories in four bands: Top Performers, Frontrunners, Emerging Performers and Aspirants.
- The top performers are Delhi (84), Maharashtra (78), Karnataka (73), Chandigarh (71) and Goa (65).
- Electric mobility can reduce **vehicular emissions** and India's dependence on imported crude oil while supporting energy security.
- Major Central initiatives include **Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Electric Vehicles (FAME)**, **PM Electric Drive Revolution in Innovative Vehicle Enhancement (PM E-DRIVE)** and **PM-eBus Sewa**.
- Production Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes support automobiles and auto components and **Advanced Chemistry Cell (ACC) battery storage**.
- A reliable and spatially distributed **public charging network** is essential for wider EV adoption.
- The **Unified Bharat e-Charge app** seeks to improve accessibility and convenience of EV charging infrastructure.

5.5 India's First Soil Carbon Payments to Farmers

Context:



Grow Indigo initiated India's first soil-carbon credit payout programme, worth over ₹2.9 crore for 2,550 farmers in Punjab and Haryana, under its privately operated Aadi initiative. Payments reward verified soil-carbon storage or avoided emissions from regenerative practices; they are not a government subsidy.

Explanation:

- **Soil organic carbon (SOC) is the carbon stored in soil organic matter from decomposing plant residues, roots and microorganisms. It supports soil fertility, structure and water retention.**
- **Regenerative agriculture** aims to restore soil health while maintaining productivity through practices such as reduced tillage, residue retention, crop diversification and Direct Seeded Rice (DSR).
- Plants absorb atmospheric carbon dioxide; some of this carbon enters the soil through roots and crop residues, allowing healthy soils to function as carbon sinks.
- A **carbon credit** generally represents one tonne of carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO_2e) reduced, avoided or removed.
- Aadi is a voluntary, privately operated carbon-credit programme launched by Grow Indigo in 2019 with technical guidance from the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR).
- Credits are issued after measurement and independent verification; Grow Indigo made initial farmer payments from its own funds before selling the credits.
- Such practices can provide co-benefits including water conservation, reduced stubble burning, lower PM2.5 emissions, improved soil health and climate resilience.

5.6 World Circular Economy Forum 2026: Advancing Resource Efficiency and Circularity

Context:



The World Circular Economy Forum (WCEF) 2026 was inaugurated at Gandhinagar, Gujarat, under the theme **"Circular Economy: Transition for People and Prosperity."** It is the first WCEF hosted in South Asia and focuses on practical solutions for a resource-efficient and sustainable economy.

Explanation:

- **Circular Economy** replaces the linear **take-make-use-dispose model** by keeping products and materials in use through reduce, reuse, repair, refurbish, remanufacture and recycle.
- It aims to reduce **virgin-resource extraction, waste generation and environmental pressure** while retaining the economic value of materials for longer.
- **Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)** makes producers responsible for environmentally sound management of products and waste, particularly at their end-of-life stage.
- India applies EPR through sector-specific **waste-management frameworks** supported by digital compliance systems.
- **Mission LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment)** complements circularity by encouraging environmentally responsible consumption and behavioural change.
- India also launched the **Resource Efficiency and Circular Economy Industry Coalition (RECEIC)** during its **G20 Presidency** to promote international cooperation on circularity.

5.7 Integrated Coastal India Approach for Blue Economy and Security

Context:



Recently, at the National Conference on Coastal Ecology, Security and Sustainability (CCESS) 2026, the government emphasised treating India's coastline as an integrated space linking ecology, security, technology, economic development and coastal communities.

Explanation:

- India's **11,000–12,000 km coastline** supports ports, fisheries, marine biodiversity, coastal livelihoods and strategic security.
- The **Blue Economy** refers to sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth, livelihoods and ecosystem health.
- The **Deep Ocean Mission**, implemented by the **Ministry of Earth Sciences**, seeks exploration of deep-sea resources and development of indigenous ocean technologies.
- Submersibles, underwater robots, ocean observation, remote sensing, communication and surveillance systems can support resource exploration and coastal security.
- Marine resources include fisheries, minerals, metals and other biological resources, but their exploitation requires ecological safeguards.
- Mangroves, coral reefs and coastal wetlands provide biodiversity, carbon storage and natural protection against coastal hazards.
- A holistic approach integrates coastal communities, traditional knowledge, ports, scientific research, environmental sustainability and maritime security.
- **Swachh Sagar Surakshit Sagar** promotes coastal cleanliness through citizen participation.

5.8 PACT and e-FAST India: Accelerating Zero-Emission Freight Transport

Context:

Recently, NITI Aayog launched the Platform for Aggregating Clean Transport (PACT) at the 5th e-FAST India Summit 2026 to accelerate the deployment of zero-emission trucks. The Summit also introduced the ZET Marketplace to facilitate business, financing and charging partnerships.



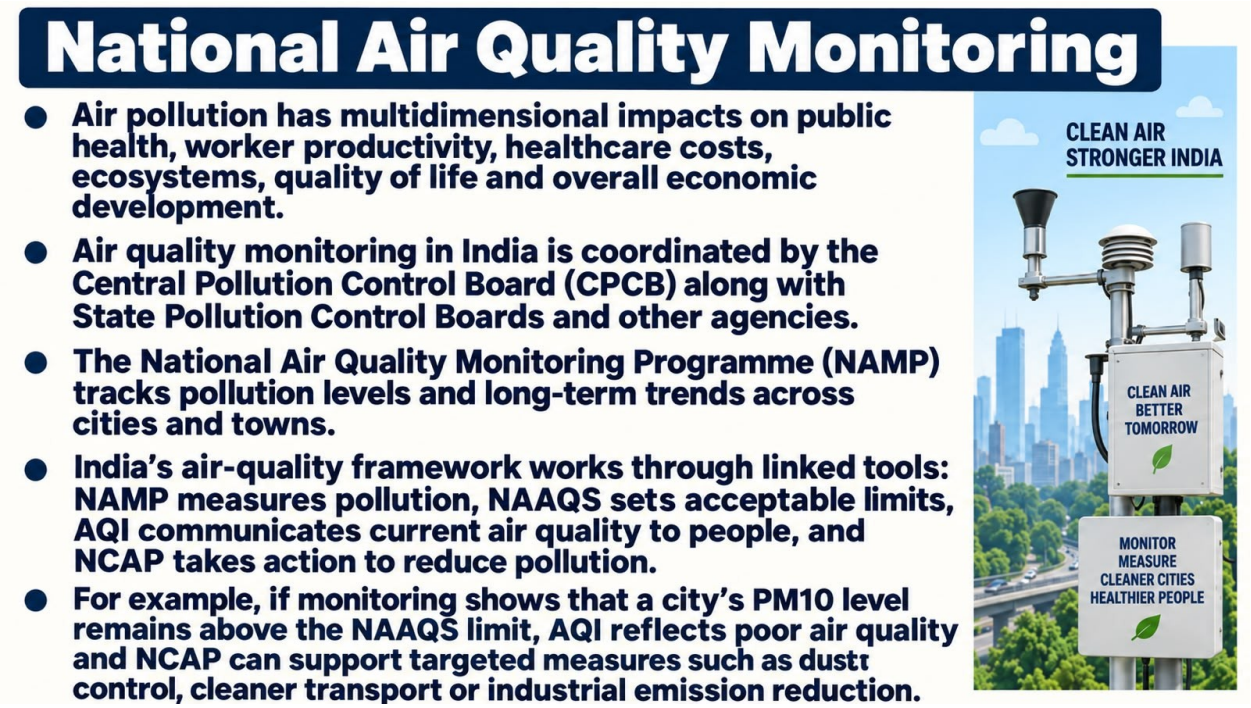
Explanation:

- **e-FAST India (Electric Freight Accelerator for Sustainable Transport–India)** is a NITI Aayog-led platform for accelerating **zero-emission freight**, particularly medium- and heavy-duty vehicles.
- **PACT** is a flagship initiative under e-FAST India that **aggregates freight demand** from shippers, Logistics Service Providers (LSPs) and other stakeholders.
- Aggregated demand can provide greater certainty to manufacturers and investors, improving the commercial viability of **electric medium- and heavy-duty vehicles (e-MHDVs)**.
- It connects shippers, LSPs, vehicle manufacturers, financiers and Charge Point Operators (CPOs).
- PACT will help identify **freight corridors**, improve demand visibility and facilitate **corridor-based charging infrastructure**.
- The **ZET Marketplace** connects stakeholders for business, financing, technology and charging partnerships for **Zero-Emission Trucks (ZETs)**.
- Freight electrification can reduce **oil dependence, transport emissions and logistics-related air pollution**, while strengthening **energy security**.

5.9 National Air Quality Monitoring

Context:

India observed **Swachh Vayu Diwas on September 7**, coinciding with the International Day of Clean Air for Blue Skies. The occasion highlighted progress in India's efforts to monitor and reduce urban air pollution.



National Ambient Air Quality Standards

- **National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS)** prescribe permissible concentrations of major air pollutants.
- They act as benchmarks for judging whether air quality in an area is acceptable.
- Under the National Ambient Air Quality Standards, 2009, the annual limits are 60 µg/m³ for PM10 and 40 µg/m³ for PM2.5.
- Areas repeatedly exceeding prescribed limits require stronger pollution-control measures.

Air Quality Index

- The **Air Quality Index (AQI)** converts pollution data into an easy-to-understand numerical indicator.
- It considers **eight pollutants** – PM10, PM2.5, NO_2, SO_2, CO, O_3, NH_3 and Lead.
- Air quality is classified from **Good (0–50)** to **Severe (401–500)**.

National Clean Air Programme

- Launched in **2019**, the **NCAP** currently covers **130 cities**.
- It uses **city-specific action plans**, as major sources of pollution differ across cities.
- Measures include **road-dust control, cleaner transport, industrial emission reduction, waste management and increasing green cover**.
- Its revised objective was to achieve **up to 40% reduction in PM10 levels or attain the national PM10 standard**, compared with the **2017–18 baseline**.

Performance of NCAP

- By 2025–26, **108 of 130 cities** recorded a decline in annual PM10 levels.
- **72 cities** achieved reductions of more than 20%.
- **26 cities** achieved reductions above 40%.
- However, only **14 cities actually met the national PM10 standard**.
- Around **₹16,423 crore** was provided to participating cities, of which about **70.5% was utilised**.

Critical Analysis

- NCAP shows that targeted measures can reduce pollution, but **lower pollution does not necessarily mean clean air**.
- The fact that only **14 cities met the prescribed standard** shows that significant gaps remain.
- Pollution also crosses municipal and State boundaries, limiting the effectiveness of city-level action alone.

Way Forward

- Improve local implementation and fund utilisation.
- Give greater attention to **PM2.5 and major local pollution sources**.
- Promote **airshed-based planning** across administrative boundaries.

- Regularly review city action plans using measurable outcomes.

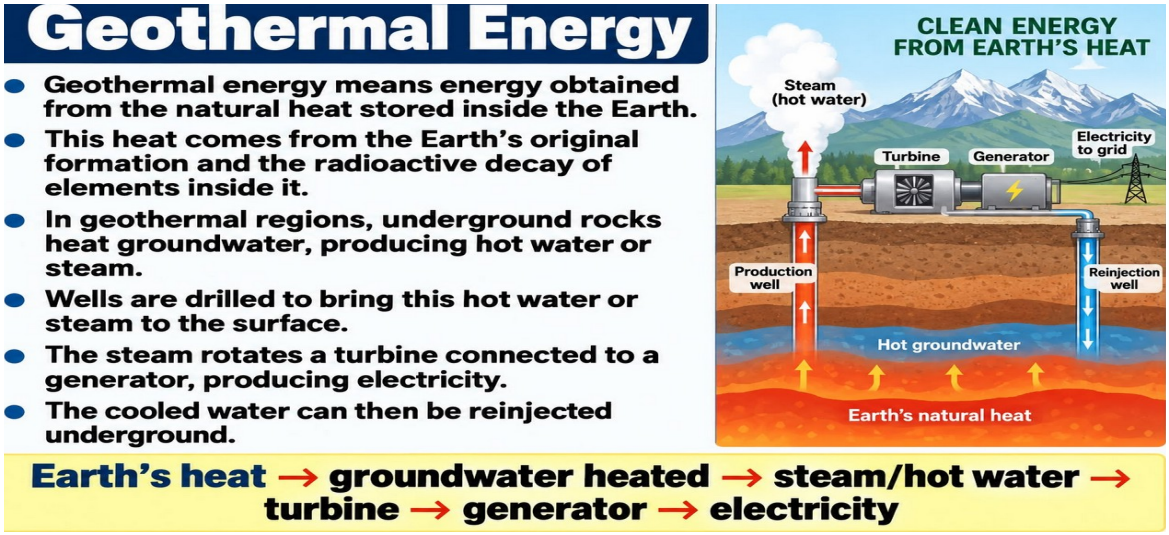
Conclusion:

India has made measurable progress in reducing urban air pollution. The next priority should be to move from **relative improvement to actual compliance with national air-quality standards**.

5.10 Geothermal Energy in India

Context:

India commissioned its **first two geothermal wells in Puga Valley, Ladakh, in July 2026**, marking an important step towards assessing geothermal resources for future power generation. The wells will support India's proposed first one-megawatt geothermal demonstration project.



Geothermal Energy in India

- India has an estimated theoretical geothermal potential of around **10.6 GW**.
- The two wells at Puga are for reservoir evaluation; they do not yet represent commercial electricity generation. A 1-megawatt demonstration project is planned.
- Important geothermal regions include **Ladakh and the Himalayas, Cambay basin, Son-Narmada-Tapi region and Andaman & Nicobar Islands**.
- **Puga Valley in Ladakh** is considered one of India's most promising geothermal sites.
- The **National Policy on Geothermal Energy, 2025** promotes exploration, research, demonstration projects, new technologies and private-sector participation.

Why is Geothermal Energy Important?

A. 24×7 Renewable Energy	B. Complements Solar and Wind
Unlike solar and wind, geothermal power is largely independent of sunlight, wind and weather conditions. It can therefore provide relatively stable baseload electricity.	Geothermal energy can complement variable renewable sources such as solar and wind and improve grid stability and reliability.
C. Low-carbon and Indigenous	**D. Multiple Uses**
It produces much lower greenhouse-gas emissions than fossil-fuel-based electricity and can reduce dependence on imported fuels, strengthening energy security and supporting India's Net Zero by 2070 target.	Apart from electricity generation, geothermal heat can be used for: • Space and district heating • Greenhouses and agriculture • Aquaculture • Industrial heating and drying • Tourism and hot-water applications

Challenges

- High **exploration and drilling costs**
- Difficulty in locating commercially viable reservoirs
- Geological and technological risks
- Limited domestic expertise and infrastructure

- Possible concerns such as **induced seismicity and geothermal-fluid management**

Conclusion:

The **Puga Valley project marks India's transition from identifying geothermal resources to actually testing their use for power generation**. Though geothermal energy may remain a smaller component of India's energy mix, its **reliable, low-carbon and round-the-clock nature** makes it a valuable complement to solar and wind.

6. History and Art & Culture

6.1 Swami Vivekananda's Historic Chicago Address of 1893

Context:

Swami Vivekananda's historic address, delivered on 11 September 1893 in Chicago, was recently commemorated for presenting India's civilisational and spiritual ethos and its message of religious harmony to the world.



Explanation:

- **Swami Vivekananda (1863–1902)** was born as **Narendranath Datta** in Calcutta and became the foremost disciple of **Ramakrishna Paramahamsa**.
- He represented **Hinduism at the World's Parliament of Religions**, held in **Chicago in 1893**.
- His famous opening address on **11 September** stressed religious tolerance, universal acceptance and harmony among faiths.
- He presented **Vedanta** as a universal philosophy and helped introduce **Yoga and Vedantic thought** to Western audiences.
- Vivekananda advocated **Practical Vedanta**—spirituality expressed through service to humanity, character-building and social upliftment.
- He founded the **Ramakrishna Mission in 1897**, combining spiritual development with education, healthcare and social service.
- His ideas strongly emphasised youth empowerment, national regeneration and service to the poor.
- His birthday, **12 January**, is observed in India as **National Youth Day**.

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