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Week of 21 – 27 September 2026 · Current affairs for your SSB board

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THE WEEK

Five stories the board may ask about

1 DEFENCE · AIR FORCE

Seven air forces fly in to Jodhpur

The IAF began the flying phase of **Tarang Shakti 2026**, its multinational air exercise, at Air Force Station Jodhpur on 27 Sep (26 Sep–12 Oct). Australia, the US, the UAE, France, Germany, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh brought aircraft, including the stealthy **F-35**, Rafale and air-to-air tankers. A marathon on the side honours **Fg Offr Nirmal Jit Singh Sekhon**, the IAF's only Param Vir Chakra.

WHY IT MATTERS

Hosting is harder than visiting: ramps, fuel, airspace and radar for foreign jets. Flying beside an F-35 shows how hard stealth is to find.

YOUR BALANCED VIEW

Training with big powers and small neighbours together suits India: learn from the best, help the rest, and join no one's camp.

IO MAY ASK

What does India gain by hosting foreign air forces, and is there a risk in letting them see how we fly?

Source: PIB, MoD, 27 Sep

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2 DEFENCE TECH · AIR FORCE

An Indian glide bomb for enemy runways

On 23 Sep the MoD signed a **₹810.79 cr** contract with Bharat Dynamics for 160 **SAT-SAAW** (Satellite Smart Anti Airfield Weapons) for the IAF. Designed by DRDO, it is a satellite-guided **glide bomb**, released from the Jaguar, Hawk and Su-30 MKI at long stand-off range. It is bought under **Buy (Indian-IDDM)**, the top category, with 60% indigenous content.

WHY IT MATTERS

A runway cannot hide or move; close it and enemy jets stay grounded. Stand-off range lets our pilots fire and turn away outside enemy air defences.

YOUR BALANCED VIEW

Indian design is the real win. But 160 bombs is a modest stock; wars eat precision weapons fast, so numbers matter too.

IO MAY ASK

Is it better to buy the world's best weapon now, or wait for an Indian one that is good enough?

Source: PIB, MoD, 23 Sep

3 INTERNATIONAL · TRADE

India–NZ trade deal starts, dairy kept out

On 21 Sep the Commerce Ministry announced that the **India–New Zealand FTA** comes into force on **20 Oct 2026**. New Zealand drops duty on 100% of Indian goods from day one; India opens 70.03% of its tariff lines. India kept **dairy**, sugar and edible oils out, and lets in apples, kiwifruit and Manuka honey only through quotas, minimum prices and seasonal windows.

WHY IT MATTERS

New Zealand is the world's largest dairy exporter; India's dairy rests on about 8 crore small rural households. Dairy was one reason India walked out of RCEP in 2019.

YOUR BALANCED VIEW

Open up where we are strong, guard farmers where we are weak. With trade at only about $1.1 billion, this is more template than windfall.

IO MAY ASK

Should India protect its farmers even if that keeps prices higher for consumers?

Source: PIB, Commerce, 21 Sep

4 NATIONAL · ECONOMY

Make in India at 12: what changed, what didn't

Make in India, launched on 25 Sep 2014, completed twelve years this week. Its headline aim was to lift manufacturing's share of GDP from about 17% to **25%**. That share has not moved; it is still in the

high teens. But what India makes has changed: phones are assembled and exported at scale, defence output is up and chip plants are being built, helped by **PLI** incentives.

WHY IT MATTERS

Factories create the mass jobs services alone cannot. To gain share, manufacturing must grow faster than the rest of the economy, and services have grown fast too.

YOUR BALANCED VIEW

Twelve years changed what we make more than how much we make. Land, logistics, power and skills matter as much as subsidies.

IO MAY ASK

Why has India not become a factory to the world like China, and what would you fix first?

Source: Cavalier daily, 25 Sep

5 ENVIRONMENT · WILDLIFE

Project Rhino launched on World Rhino Day

On **World Rhino Day** (22 Sep) the Prime Minister announced that **Project Rhino** has begun, to help range states with protection, habitat, genetics and population studies. India has about 3,323 of the world's roughly 4,075 greater one-horned rhinos. **Assam** alone holds nearly 80%, over 2,600 of them in **Kaziranga**, and recorded zero poaching in 2025.

WHY IT MATTERS

All eggs in one basket: one flood, disease or poaching wave could hit most of the species at once. New homes like Dudhwa (UP) spread the risk.

YOUR BALANCED VIEW

Kaziranga is a real success. The next step is spreading rhinos to more parks, with local people as partners, not bystanders.

IO MAY ASK

Should we spend crores saving animals when many people still lack basic needs?

Source: Cavalier daily, 22 Sep

QUICK-FIRE

Know these cold

NOMADIC ELEPHANT (18th)	India–Mongolia armies · Pithoragarh · 21 Sep–3 Oct · 45 soldiers a side, platoon level
VARUNA (24th)	India–France navies · Toulon · INS Trishul arrived 22 Sep · series named Varuna in 2001
ADMM-Plus maritime	INS Sahyadri & INS Kulish · Subic Bay, Philippines · 21–25 Sep · rescue, survey, medevac drills
Tank power units	₹586 cr for T-72/T-90 auxiliary power units · private firm · Make-II route · 21 Sep
First Ascent	NIMAS Dirang team (Col Ranveer Singh Jamwal) · 20 unclimbed Ladakh peaks above 6,000 m in 23 days · flagged in on 25 Sep

Quantum cooling	DRDO's first deep-tech start-up deal · 20 millikelvin dilution refrigerator · Zero mK, Alwar · 24 Sep
Agnibaan RLV	₹200 cr support to Agnikul (Chennai) for a fully reusable rocket, upper stage included · 25 Sep
Asian Games kabaddi	Men and women both beat Iran for gold · men now nine-time champions · India past 100 medals
ASEAN	Now 11 members · Timor-Leste joined Oct 2025 · India at ASEAN economic meets, Manila
Dates	22 Sep World Rhino Day · 23 Sep Ayurveda Day (fixed date since 2025) · 27 Sep World Tourism Day

TALKING POINT

Seven air forces at Jodhpur, a trade deal with New Zealand, an Indian-designed bomb: India is **opening up with confidence**, while guarding what matters most, its farmers and its own weapons.

PRACTICE

Speak it

LECTURETTE OF THE WEEK

India's Energy Security

Why now: This week India hosted OPEC's Secretary General (22 Sep), laid the foundation of its first port-based green-methanol plant at Kandla (26 Sep), and explained a new insurance pool that keeps Indian ships sailing through war zones (27 Sep).

OPEN · 30S

"An army marches on its stomach; a nation runs on its fuel." Today I will speak on India's energy security.

POINT 1 · 40S

The dependence. India imports roughly 85% of the crude it uses; Russia and Iraq are the top suppliers. About 60% of our oil and gas imports pass the Strait of Hormuz, where the Navy has escorted Indian tankers since March under Operation Urja Suraksha.

POINT 2 · 40S

The shields. Spread the suppliers, keep strategic reserves (Visakhapatnam, Mangalore, Padur) and insure our own ships: the ₹13,906.50 cr Bharat Maritime Insurance Pool covers them when foreign insurers pull out.

POINT 3 · 40S

The way out. Ethanol blending, electric vehicles and green fuels. Kandla's e-methanol plant (₹2,300 cr, 150 tonnes a day) is small, but a start on the road to net zero by 2070.

CLOSE · 30S

Energy security is national security. The cheapest barrel is the one we never need to import.

Quote one number (85%) and one place (Hormuz). Practise aloud against a 3-minute timer.

How to give a lecturette → **110 lecturette topics →**

GROUP DISCUSSION OF THE WEEK

“Vocational skills matter more than a college degree for India's youth”

India finished **10th** at the 48th **WorldSkills Competition**, Shanghai (22–27 Sep), with 6 silvers and 20 Medallions for Excellence, up from 13th at Lyon 2024. Its largest-ever team had 70 young competitors in 63 skills, from bakery to logistics.

FOR

- Employers hire for what you can do; a degree without skills often means no job.
- A trained electrician, welder or chef starts earning sooner, and without a loan.
- Factories need skilled hands, and manufacturing's share has not budged in twelve years.
- Medallions rising from 12 to 20 show world standards are within reach.

AGAINST

- A degree builds reasoning, communication and adaptability that outlast any one trade.
- Automation can kill a narrow skill; education helps a person relearn.
- Research and innovation need higher education, not just hands-on training.
- Many careers, officer entries included, still require a degree.

HOW TO CONCLUDE

Not either–or. Build skills into every degree through apprenticeships, and give vocational paths dignity and a route to further study.

GD guide for the SSB →

OUR SSB FACULTY

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Col Manoj Batra (Retd)



Col Vijayant Thakur (Retd)

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Facts from PIB press releases of the week. Views are framed for discussion practice.