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CENTRAL GOVERNMENT SUPPORT FOR COMPRESSED BIOGAS PRODUCERS

- The Central Government has announced several incentives under the GOBARdhan scheme for producers of Compressed Biogas (CBG).
- Producers will be able to obtain a 100% purchase guarantee for the biogas they produce.
- The minimum price fixed by the government for such procurement will remain valid for at least 10 years.
- In 2025, the GOBARdhan programme, formally known as the Galvanizing Organic Bio-Agro Resources Dhan programme, was implemented as part of the Swachh Bharat Mission.
- The scheme aims to collect materials such as : Cattle dung, Agricultural crop residues, Kitchen waste, Market waste and convert them into Compressed Biogas (CBG) and organic manure.
- To increase CBG production, the Central Government is implementing the GOBARdhan programme with an estimated outlay of Rs.23,731 crore.
- The programme is planned to operate from the current financial year up to 2035–36.
- Under the scheme, when a new plant is established, the government will provide direct capital assistance of up to Rs. 2 crore for every one tonne of daily production capacity, depending on the plant's capacity.
- The subsidy is not limited only to the plant. It will also cover equipment such as : Tractors used to transport cattle dung from villages, Waste-handling and waste-dumping equipment.
- Under the new rules, eligible producers may be selected for a guaranteed procurement of up to 100% of their CBG production.
- Accordingly, the entire quantity of CBG produced can be purchased under the government-backed arrangement.
- City Gas Distribution companies will be required to directly purchase the CBG produced.
- If a City Gas Distribution company fails to enter into the required agreement within the prescribed period, measures including reallocation of gas allocation may be taken against it.
- CBG will also have to be mandatorily blended with CNG – Compressed Natural Gas, which is used in vehicles.
- The mandatory blending level is : 3% in the current financial year, 4% in the next financial year, 5% in 2028–29.
- To provide long-term revenue security to producers, a fixed procurement price has been prescribed for CBG.
- For 1 million British Thermal Units (MMBtu), equivalent to about 294 kilowatt-hours, the procurement price has been fixed at Rs.2,110.

» Payment System

- Based on 25% methane content, a price of approximately Rs.98 per kilogram will be provided.
- This price will remain valid for the next 10 years, that is, until 31 March 2036.
- Each CBG project can receive capital assistance of up to Rs.30 crore.
- For new plants, financial assistance of up to Rs.1.25 crore for every tonne of daily production capacity will also be provided.
- This financial support will be released in instalments.
- The Central Government-owned company GAIL has been appointed as the operator responsible for coordinating and procuring CBG.

INDIA TARGETS INDIGENOUS BULLET TRAINS RUNNING AT 350 KM/H BY 2030

- The Ministry of Railways has prepared a revised estimate for the Mumbai–Ahmedabad High-Speed Rail Project.
- India has set a target of manufacturing B35-class indigenous bullet trains capable of operating at a speed of 350 km per hour by 2030.
- Japan is also planning to begin production of its next-generation E10-series bullet trains in 2030.
- India's B35 train is expected to be comparable to Japan's E10-series bullet train.
- The Mumbai–Ahmedabad High-Speed Rail Corridor, with a length of approximately 508 km, has received approval for a revised project cost of more than Rs.2 lakh crore.
- This is nearly double the original estimate prepared in 2015.
- The additional expenditure of around Rs.1 lakh crore is expected to be supported through the Central Government's budgetary resources.
- In December 2024, Japan indicated that production of the currently operational E5-series Shinkansen trains would gradually be discontinued.
- Following this development, India began work on developing the B35-class bullet train.
- Japan's E10 trains are expected to enter production in 2030 and become operational around 2034.
- Officials have stated that once these trains are ready, the possibility of operating them on Indian high-speed rail tracks will also be examined.

INDIA'S GROWING STRENGTH ON THE GLOBAL STAGE

- The joint statement of the 18th BRICS Summit, titled the "New Delhi Declaration 2026", sends some messages to the world openly and conveys some others indirectly.
- The declaration, jointly signed by the leaders of the 11 BRICS member countries, appears to convey an implicit message that the group is not intimidated by the United States or its NATO allies.

» BRICS

- British economist Jim O'Neill had predicted that by around 2050, a major share of global economic growth would come from the emerging economies of Brazil, Russia, India and China.

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- Recognising this potential, these countries came together to form BRIC in 2006. South Africa later joined the grouping, and subsequently six more countries were added, leading to the expanded grouping often referred to as BRICS+.
- BRICS has emerged as a major grouping without Western countries and has increasingly become a strong voice for the nations of the Global South.
- » India's Role
 - For nearly the past 20 years, India has played an important role in shaping the objectives and functioning of BRICS.
 - Following the rotational presidency system, after chairing BRICS in 2012, 2016 and 2021, India again assumed the presidency in 2026.
 - During the past year, India organised around 400 meetings among officials and leaders at different levels from the member countries.
 - Ultimately, India succeeded in bringing together countries with differing positions, including Iran and the United Arab Emirates, and helped produce a common declaration on several major political and economic issues.
- » Message to the United States and China
 - The declaration condemns countries that take unilateral coercive measures contrary to global trade rules, the United Nations Charter, and international law, and calls for such measures to be withdrawn.
 - Although the countries are not explicitly named, the references are understood in the passage as pointing particularly to the United States and U.S. President Donald Trump.
 - During the summit, the Indian Prime Minister also stated that technology, critical minerals, raw materials required for production, and export trade should not be used as weapons.
 - The passage presents this statement, made in the presence of China, as an indication of India's increasing diplomatic confidence.
- » Against Terrorism
 - India has repeatedly raised the issue of cross-border terrorism originating from Pakistan at international forums such as the United Nations Security Council.
 - India has also called upon the international community to prevent such terrorism and avoid providing support to countries associated with it.
 - According to the passage, despite India not always receiving sufficient support on this issue in the past, the latest BRICS declaration, signed by China as well, strongly condemns cross-border terrorism.
 - The declaration also specifically refers to the Pahalgam terrorist attack in Kashmir and states that such acts of terrorism should not be tolerated in any form.
- » Representation in Global Institutions
 - The declaration argues that international institutions such as the United Nations and the United Nations Security Council continue to have disproportionately greater representation from developed Western countries.
 - It calls for reforms so that these institutions do not function primarily according to the interests and priorities of those countries.
 - In particular, BRICS has called for greater representation for developing countries.

» China's Support for India

- The declaration indicates that China, as a BRICS member, has expressed support for calls to provide India and Brazil with a greater role in the United Nations Security Council.

» New Development Bank

- In 2015, BRICS established the New Development Bank (NDB).
- One of its purposes was to create an alternative source of development financing for countries that may face difficulties in obtaining funds from institutions such as the World Bank.
- The bank provides funding for economic and infrastructure development in BRICS countries and can also provide financial assistance during periods of foreign-exchange shortages.

» An Alternative to the U.S. Dollar?

- There has been continued discussion about whether BRICS countries could create a common currency as an alternative to the U.S. dollar.
- However, the joint declaration does not announce the creation of such a currency.
- Instead, it recognises that there is no single solution suitable for every country and suggests a gradual approach.
- Member countries could increase trade among themselves using their local currencies.
- The BRICS Payment Task Force, comprising central-bank representatives and experts from member countries, is examining how cross-border payments can be made : Faster, Easier, More secure, With greater use of local currencies.

» Investment Platform

- The task force is also expected to examine ways to expand the functioning of the New Development Bank.
- This includes : Providing financing to member countries in their own currencies, Identifying sources for raising such funds, Developing a common investment platform.
- BRICS member countries have agreed to continue discussions on creating such an investment mechanism.

» Uninterrupted Supply of Energy Resources

- On the conflict in West Asia, BRICS has called for disputes to be resolved through dialogue and diplomatic channels.
- The grouping has also stressed the importance of restoring peace and ensuring that the supply, trade and consumption of energy resources are not disrupted.
- The passage states that India succeeded in bringing together countries with different strategic interests, including : Iran, United Arab Emirates, China, Russia and in securing agreement on a common declaration.
- It also argues that the level of participation by leaders, the speeches delivered at the summit, and the bilateral meetings and negotiations held on the sidelines reflected a diplomatic success for India as the host and chair.
- The summit is presented as evidence that, in a world affected by wars, trade barriers and geopolitical tensions, India's ideas, negotiations and diplomatic initiatives are receiving increasing international recognition and attention.