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# Swachhata Hi Seva 2026 Promotes Citizen Participation, Scientific Waste Management and Sustainable Sanitation for Viksit Bharat

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## Recent Developments:

- **Swachhata Hi Seva (SHS) 2026** is being observed nationwide from **17 September to 2 October 2026** under the theme “**Swachhata Mein Sahbhag; Swachh Bharat, Viksit Bharat**”, emphasising citizen participation and collective responsibility for cleanliness.
- The campaign follows a **Whole of Government** and **Whole of Society** approach, with greater emphasis on youth engagement, stakeholder responsibilities, community ownership and sustained behavioural change.
- SHS 2026 also seeks to create awareness about the **Solid Waste Management Rules, 2026**, which came into force on **1 April 2026** and replaced the 2016 Rules.
- On **1 October**, citizens are being mobilised for collective **Shramdaan** under “**Ek Din, Ek Ghanta, Ek Saath**”, while **2 October** is being observed as Swachh Bharat Diwas with special Gram Sabhas in rural areas and special council meetings in urban areas.

## Swachhata Hi Seva: Evolution and Significance:

### *Origin and Objective:*

- **Swachhata Hi Seva** has been observed annually since **2017** as a dedicated cleanliness campaign preceding **Swachh Bharat Diwas on 2 October**.
- It emerged from the broader **Jan Bhagidari** approach of the **Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM)** and seeks to convert cleanliness from an administrative activity into a **people-driven movement**.
- Its focus has progressively expanded from visible cleanliness to **sustainable sanitation, waste management, sanitation-worker welfare, youth participation and behavioural change**.

### *Whole-of-Society Approach:*

- SHS integrates **government institutions, local bodies, educational institutions, civil society, private stakeholders and citizens** around shared sanitation responsibilities.
- The approach emphasises that sustained cleanliness requires **everyday behavioural change**, source-level waste management and community ownership rather than periodic cleaning drives alone.

## Five Core Activity Pillars of SHS 2026:

### *1. Transformation of Cleanliness Target Units and Public Places:*

- **Cleanliness Target Units (CTUs)** are neglected garbage points and difficult-to-clean locations identified for concentrated sanitation intervention.
- The campaign seeks their **waste removal, beautification, transformation and sustained maintenance**, thereby converting neglected spaces into clean public areas.

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- Citizens can report sanitation and garbage-related grievances through the **Swachhata App**, while identified locations can be mapped for targeted intervention.
- Public and community toilets are assessed through **FACES parameters** — **F**unctional, **A**ccessible, **C**lean, **E**co-friendly and **S**afe.

## 2. *Swachh Paathshala – Yuva for Swachhata:*

- The initiative places **students and youth** at the centre of long-term behavioural change and community cleanliness.
- Students from **Classes 6–12** participate in **Swachhata Gyan Yatras** to understand sanitation practices, waste management and responsible waste behaviour.
- Youth participation strengthens the transition from campaign-based cleanliness to **intergenerational behavioural change**.

## 3. *SafaiMitra Suraksha Evam Samman Shivirs:*

- These camps focus on the **health, safety, welfare and dignity of sanitation workers and their families**.
- Activities include **preventive health check-ups, safety equipment, welfare-scheme linkages, PPE support and financial inclusion services**.
- The initiative recognises sanitation workers as essential stakeholders in urban and rural sanitation rather than treating sanitation solely as an infrastructure issue.

## 4. *Jan Bhagidari for Swachhata:*

- **Jan Bhagidari** promotes individual and institutional responsibility for everyday cleanliness through source segregation, responsible disposal and reduction of littering.
- SHS 2026 promotes awareness about the **Solid Waste Management Rules, 2026, four-way source segregation**, home composting and responsible waste handling.
- Activities include **Swachhata rallies, human chains, cleanliness pledges, reusable-item collection drives and campaigns against single-use plastics**.
- The “**Swachh Parv, Harit Parv**” approach encourages eco-friendly and plastic-free celebrations during festivals.

## 5. *Swachhata Se Samriddhi:*

- This pillar links sanitation with **resource recovery, waste-to-wealth and circular economy principles**.
- The **Reduce, Reuse and Recycle (3R)** approach promotes minimisation of waste generation and productive reuse of discarded materials.
- **Kabaad Se Jugaad** promotes useful products from discarded materials, while **Kabaad Se Kala** encourages artistic use of waste.
- The broader objective is to shift the perception of waste from a **disposal burden to a recoverable resource**.

## Solid Waste Management Rules, 2026: Key UPSC Linkage:

### *Major Provisions and Significance:*

- The **Solid Waste Management Rules, 2026** replaced the Solid Waste Management Rules, 2016 and came into force on **1 April 2026**.
- Their coverage extends across **urban and rural local bodies**, government and private establishments, industrial areas, transport infrastructure, ports, airports, defence establishments and other specified premises.
- The Rules strengthen the regulatory foundation for **scientific waste management, source-level responsibility and resource recovery**.

- SHS 2026 complements this regulatory framework by creating **public awareness and behavioural ownership** around waste-management responsibilities.

### Swachh Bharat Mission: Institutional Framework:

#### *Launch and Core Objective:*

- **Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM)** was launched on **2 October 2014** as a nationwide sanitation mission covering rural and urban India.
- Its approach has evolved from **toilet access and open-defecation elimination** towards sustainable sanitation, solid-liquid waste management, public-space cleanliness and behavioural change.
- The SBM logo uses **Mahatma Gandhi's spectacles** as a symbol of cleanliness and civic responsibility.

#### *Rural and Urban Components:*

- **Swachh Bharat Mission–Grameen (SBM-G)** focuses on rural sanitation, ODF sustainability, solid and liquid waste management and behaviour change.
- **Swachh Bharat Mission–Urban (SBM-U)** focuses on urban sanitation, scientific waste management, public spaces, sanitation infrastructure and **Garbage-Free Cities**.
- The rural component has therefore moved from **toilet construction to ODF sustainability and ODF Plus outcomes**, while the urban component increasingly emphasises integrated waste management and resource recovery.

### ODF Plus: From Open Defecation Free to Sustainable Sanitation:

#### *ODF Plus Concept:*

- India's rural areas were declared **Open Defecation Free (ODF) in 2019**, marking a transition towards sustaining sanitation outcomes.
- An **ODF Plus Model Village** sustains its ODF status, manages **solid and liquid waste**, maintains visual cleanliness and displays appropriate ODF Plus awareness messaging.
- Under the ODF Plus framework, villages are categorised as:
- **Aspiring:** Manages either solid waste or liquid waste.
- **Rising:** Manages both solid waste and liquid waste.
- **Model:** Manages both waste streams along with **visual cleanliness and ODF Plus awareness messaging**.
- The SBM-G dashboard currently records more than **5.69 lakh ODF Plus villages** and more than **5.25 lakh ODF Plus Model villages**, demonstrating the scale of India's transition towards sustainable rural sanitation.

### Significance for Governance and Sustainable Development:

#### *From Campaign to Behavioural Change:*

- SHS demonstrates the shift from **government-provided sanitation infrastructure** towards **citizen-owned sanitation outcomes**.
- Its emphasis on youth, community participation and sanitation workers strengthens the social foundations required for sustained cleanliness.

#### *Circular Economy and Resource Recovery:*

- Source segregation, composting, recycling and reuse reduce pressure on **landfills and municipal waste systems**.
- Waste-to-wealth initiatives can create opportunities for **resource recovery, local livelihoods and circular production systems**.

### ***Public Health and Human Dignity:***

- Effective sanitation reduces exposure to **pathogens, contaminated environments and unmanaged waste**, supporting preventive public health.
- SafaiMitra welfare measures address occupational risks and reinforce the principle of **dignity of labour**.

### ***Local Governance:***

- Implementation depends heavily on **Urban Local Bodies, Gram Panchayats, community institutions and citizens**.
- SHS therefore provides a practical example of **cooperative governance and decentralised service delivery**.

### **Challenges and Way Forward:**

#### ***Key Challenges:***

- **Behavioural sustainability:** One-time cleanliness drives may not produce lasting behavioural change without regular community monitoring.
- **Waste segregation:** Mixed waste at source reduces the efficiency of recycling, composting and material recovery.
- **Infrastructure gaps:** Local bodies continue to require adequate collection systems, processing facilities, sanitation infrastructure and technical capacity.
- **Sanitation-worker safety:** Mechanisation, protective equipment, occupational health services and social-security coverage require sustained attention.
- **Rural-urban waste management:** Increasing waste generation requires integrated systems extending from **source segregation to processing and final disposal**.

#### ***Way Forward:***

- Strengthen **source segregation and decentralised waste processing** at household, institutional and community levels.
- Link cleanliness campaigns with measurable indicators such as **waste recovery, processing efficiency, ODF sustainability and public-space cleanliness**.
- Institutionalise sanitation-worker welfare through regular health screening, PPE provision, mechanisation and social-security linkages.
- Promote **circular economy models** based on composting, recycling, reuse and material recovery.
- Use SHS as a platform for sustained **Jan Bhagidari**, rather than limiting participation to annual cleanliness campaigns.

### **Value Addition for UPSC:**

#### ***Prelims Keywords:***

- **Swachh Bharat Mission:** Launched on **2 October 2014**.
- **Swachhata Hi Seva:** Annual campaign observed since **2017**.
- **SHS 2026 Theme:** “**Swachhata Mein Sahbhag; Swachh Bharat, Viksit Bharat.**”
- **SHS 2026 Period:** **17 September–2 October 2026**.
- **Solid Waste Management Rules, 2026:** Effective from **1 April 2026**.
- **ODF:** Rural India declared ODF in **2019**.
- **ODF Plus Model:** ODF sustainability + solid and liquid waste management + visual cleanliness + awareness messaging.

#### ***Mains Linkages:***

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- **GS-II:** Local governance, citizen participation, cooperative governance, public-service delivery.
- **GS-III:** Environmental pollution, solid-waste management, circular economy, resource recovery and sustainable development.
- **GS-IV:** **Swachhata, dignity of labour, public responsibility, ethical citizenship and Jan Bhagidari.**
- **Essay:** *“Cleanliness becomes sustainable when citizens treat it as a responsibility rather than a government service.”*