

# Daily Editorial Analysis 3 January 2026

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## Transforming a Waste-Ridden Urban India

### Context

- Global climate discourse has increasingly recognised **waste at the centre of climate action**.
- This was clearly reflected at COP30 in Belém, Brazil, where waste reduction and circularity were highlighted as key strategies for emissions mitigation, inclusive growth, and public health improvement.
- Initiatives such as the **No Organic Waste programme** and renewed emphasis on circularity reinforced the idea that waste management is integral to climate solutions.
- For India, with its rapidly expanding urban landscape, this approach is particularly relevant.

### Urbanisation and the Escalating Waste Crisis

- Urban growth in India is inevitable, but its quality is a matter of choice.
- Cities increasingly face a stark divide between clean, liveable environments and polluted, waste-choked urban spaces.
- Many Indian cities fail to meet global standards for environmental health, with air and waste pollution becoming persistent concerns.
- Despite regulatory action and judicial intervention, improvements have been limited, intensifying public dissatisfaction.
- The projected scale of waste generation is alarming. By 2030, Indian cities are expected to generate 165 million tonnes of waste annually, rising to **436 million tonnes by 2050** as the urban population approaches 814 million.
- These trends threaten public health, economic productivity, and climate stability. Achieving garbage-free cities by 2026 is therefore an **existential necessity for Indian cities**, not a cosmetic aspiration.

### Circular Economy as a Strategic Solution

- The success of the Swachh Bharat Mission in eliminating open defecation demonstrated India's capacity for large-scale behavioural and infrastructural change.
- Under **SBM Urban 2.0**, about 1,100 cities have been declared free of dumpsites, marking progress but also highlighting the distance yet to be covered.
- Sustainable, garbage-free urban environments are possible only when all cities adopt the **circular economy model**, which treats waste as a resource.

- Circularity replaces the linear **take-make-dispose** approach with one that prioritises waste reduction and resource recovery.
- This aligns with India's climate commitments and the principles of Mission LiFE, which emphasise responsible consumption.
- Circularity thus becomes both an environmental strategy and an economic opportunity.

## Managing Organic, Plastic, and Construction Waste

- India has a structural advantage in that over half of its municipal waste is organic.
- This can be effectively managed through composting and bio-methanation, including compressed biogas plants that generate green fuel and electricity.
- Such solutions directly reduce emissions while creating energy value.
- Dry waste, however, presents greater complexity. Plastics pose serious threats to ecosystems and human health and remain difficult to manage.
- Effective recycling depends on **efficient segregation at source**, supported by material recovery facilities that must expand alongside growing waste volumes.
- Refuse-derived fuel for industries like cement shows promise, but entrepreneurship and market linkages remain underdeveloped.
- Construction and demolition waste, estimated at **12 million tonnes annually**, significantly degrades urban environments.
- Illegal dumping along roadsides and open spaces is widespread.
- While much of this waste can be recycled into cost-effective construction materials, inadequate segregation and insufficient recycling capacity limit outcomes. Stronger enforcement of existing and upcoming regulations is essential.

## Wastewater, Governance, and Systemic Barriers

- Circularity also extends to wastewater and **faecal sludge management**. With freshwater availability increasingly constrained, recycling and reuse for agriculture, horticulture, and industrial purposes are critical.
- Urban programmes have recognised this link, but effective implementation depends on **proactive state-level action**.
- Multiple systemic barriers hinder progress. Waste segregation, collection logistics, processing efficiency, and market viability for recycled products remain inconsistent.
- Extended Producer Responsibility does not yet cover all waste streams, while construction waste tracking and accountability are weak.
- Municipalities also face financial constraints, underscoring the need for better coordination, monitoring, and incentive mechanisms.

## The Role of Citizens and Markets

- Circularity cannot succeed without **citizen participation**. Yet in a rapidly consumerist society, reducing and reusing materials is increasingly challenging.
- Constant product innovation and lifestyle changes weaken reuse practices.

- In this context, **recycling as practical pillar** of circularity is the most achievable near-term strategy, supported by technology, private enterprise, and coherent policy frameworks.
- Collaborative initiatives such as the Cities Coalition for Circularity reflect growing recognition of the need for shared knowledge and regional cooperation to scale solutions effectively.

## Conclusion

- India's urban waste challenge lies at the **intersection of climate action**, public health, and economic development.
- **Circularity offers a viable pathway to transform cities** from centres of waste accumulation into systems of resource efficiency.
- While challenges remain significant, coordinated governance, technological innovation, market development, and **informed citizen engagement** can drive this transition.
- In doing so, circularity can become a cornerstone of India's sustainable urban future.

## Transforming a Waste-Ridden Urban India FAQs

**Q1.** Why was waste highlighted at COP30?

**Ans.** Waste was highlighted because reducing and managing it effectively helps cut emissions, improve public health, and support sustainable economic growth.

**Q2.** Why is achieving garbage-free cities crucial for India?

**Ans.** Achieving garbage-free cities is crucial because unmanaged waste threatens public health, economic productivity, and climate stability.

**Q3.** What role does the circular economy play in waste management?

**Ans.** The circular economy treats waste as a resource and focuses on reducing waste while recovering materials and energy.

**Q4.** Why is plastic waste particularly challenging to manage?

**Ans.** Plastic waste is difficult to manage because it harms ecosystems and human health and requires strict segregation and recycling systems.

**Q5.** Why is citizen participation important for circularity?

**Ans.** Citizen participation is important because effective waste segregation and responsible consumption begin at the household level.

**Source:** **The Hindu**

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## Recasting Sanitation with Urban-Rural Partnerships

### Context

- The Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM), launched in 2014, has been a **transformative public welfare initiative** that reshaped India's rural sanitation landscape.
- Its central aim was to ensure universal access to toilets, a goal achieved within a decade through the construction of over 12 crore household toilets.
- As a result, every village in India attained Open Defecation Free (ODF) status. These outcomes significantly improved living conditions, reduced disease burden, and enhanced **public health and dignity**, particularly for women and vulnerable communities.
- However, the rapid expansion of sanitation infrastructure also revealed challenges that extend beyond toilet construction.

## The Emerging Challenge of Faecal Waste Management

- With toilets becoming widespread, the management of **faecal waste management** emerged as a critical concern.
- In rural areas, septic tanks and pits are commonly used, all of which require periodic desludging.
- Without organised systems for safe collection, transport, and treatment, untreated waste can contaminate land and water, threatening environmental and health outcomes.
- These risks underscore the need to move from infrastructure creation to service-based sanitation solutions.

## ODF Plus and the Need for Sustainable Sanitation Systems

- To address these concerns, Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen) Phase II introduced the concept of **ODF Plus**, expanding the focus to include solid and liquid waste management, behavioural change, and safe sanitation service chains.
- By October 2025, nearly **97% of villages achieved ODF Plus status**, indicating substantial progress.
- Yet faecal sludge management remains uneven, particularly in rural and peri-urban regions where treatment capacity is limited.
- Building **sustainable sanitation systems** has therefore become essential to preserving earlier gains.

## Urban-Rural Partnerships: The Case of Satara

- Maharashtra has taken a leading role in developing faecal sludge management solutions.
- The State invested in over **200 faecal sludge treatment plants** and encouraged co-treatment in existing sewage treatment plants.
- In Satara district, an innovative model was implemented by linking four villages to the city's underutilised treatment plant.
- Through **urban-rural partnerships**, villages gained access to safe treatment facilities while cities improved infrastructure utilisation.
- Gram panchayats engaged private operators to provide **scheduled desludging services**, funded through modest sanitation taxes, ensuring affordability and accountability.

## Decentralised and Cluster-Based Solutions

- Urban linkages are not feasible for all villages, **making decentralised approaches** equally important.
- In Mayani village, regular desludging cycles were introduced and managed by private operators or self-help groups.
- Additionally, the village was selected for a cluster-level treatment plant designed to serve nearly 80 surrounding villages.
- Such **cluster-level treatment plants** demonstrate how rural communities can pool resources to create viable, locally managed sanitation infrastructure.

## Collaboration as the Key to Sustainability

- The experiences from Satara highlight that **long-term sanitation success depends on cooperation across** administrative and institutional boundaries.
- Effective faecal sludge management requires coordination between urban and rural governments, public institutions, private service providers, and local communities.
- Viewing sanitation as a continuous service rather than a one-time construction effort is essential for maintaining outcomes.

## Conclusion

- The Swachh Bharat Mission has fundamentally **improved sanitation access** across India.
- Its next phase emphasises the **importance of managing waste** safely and sustainably to protect health and the environment.
- Scalable models based on partnerships and **decentralised infrastructure** offer practical pathways forward.
- Ultimately, **the mission's success will be defined** not by toilets alone, but by resilient systems that uphold sanitation standards for future generations.

## Recasting Sanitation with Urban-Rural Partnerships FAQs

**Q1.** What was the primary goal of the Swachh Bharat Mission launched in 2014?

**Ans.** The primary goal was to ensure universal access to household toilets across India.

**Q2.** Why is faecal sludge management important after achieving ODF status?

**Ans.** Faecal sludge management is important to prevent environmental contamination and protect public health.

**Q3.** What does ODF Plus focus on beyond toilet construction?

**Ans.** ODF Plus focuses on waste management, behavioural change, and sustainable sanitation services.

**Q4.** How did the Satara model improve rural sanitation?

**Ans.** The Satara model linked villages to urban treatment plants through scheduled and affordable desludging services.

**Q5.** Why are cluster-level treatment plants useful in rural areas?

**Ans.** Cluster-level treatment plants allow multiple villages to share resources for sustainable waste treatment.

**Source:** **The Hindu**

# Street Dogs, Supreme Court and the Judicial Overreach Debate

## Context

- Over the past decade, the issue of street dogs in India has evolved from a local civic concern into a constitutional and legal controversy, drawing the attention of the Supreme Court of India (SC).
- The debate lies at the intersection of **public safety, animal welfare**, judicial overreach, and scientific policy-making, raising important questions about governance, separation of powers, and humane solutions.

## Background - Judiciary and the “Dog Problem”

- The SC, unusually, has taken **suo motu cognisance** of issues relating to street dogs, even on the basis of unverified media reports.
- In one instance, without hearing affected parties, the Court directed that all street dogs be **confined** to dog pounds, a move that would require thousands of crores of rupees and is practically **unimplementable**.
- The subject is now under the control of a reconfigured Bench, signifying judicial reconsideration.

## Constitutional Concerns - Separation of Powers

- Separation of powers, part of the **Basic Structure Doctrine**, mandates that each organ of the State functions within its domain.
- Under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (**PCA**) Act, 1960, the Animal Welfare Board of India (**AWBI**) is the designated executive authority to frame guidelines on animal management.
- The judiciary issuing detailed policy directions risks encroaching into executive functions.
- The Court could instead direct the AWBI to revise and harmonise guidelines, balancing human safety, and compassion, a Fundamental Duty under **Article 51A(g)**.

## Existing Legal Framework - Not a Law Deficit, but an Implementation Deficit

- The Animal Birth Control (Dogs) **Rules**, updated in 2023, already provide a clear national protocol Capture–Sterilise–Vaccinate–Release (CSVR).
- This approach is endorsed by –
  - World Health Organisation (WHO)
  - World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH)

## Why Not Culling or Detention

- Removal or confinement creates ecological “**vacuum zones**”, allowing new, unsterilised dogs to migrate in.
- This restarts the cycle of population growth, aggression, and rabies risk.
- Therefore, evidence-based policy, rabies control, and One Health approach are better approaches.

## Global Best Practices - Lessons for India

- **France**

- Tackled stray dogs through mandatory registration, sterilisation incentives, strict anti-abandonment laws, and improved waste management.
- Municipal authorities, not courts, led the effort.
- **Result:** Sharp decline in stray populations within a decade.

- **Netherlands**

- It became the first country with zero stray dogs, without killing any.
- This is achieved through nationwide CSV, strong funding support, public education, penalties for abandonment, and adoption and identification systems.
- Success is driven by executive coordination and **civil society**, not judicial activism.
- **Inference:** Scientific, humane approaches work better than coercive detention.

## **Ground Realities in India - The Myth of Dog Pounds**

- Experiences from municipal dog pounds (e.g., Jodhpur) reveal severe neglect, lack of food and medical care, misuse of public funds, and high mortality rates.
- Dog pounds often function as “**death warrants**”, not shelters, highlighting governance failure, municipal incapacity and unaccountability.

## **Behavioural and Social Dimensions**

- Dog aggression is usually linked to hunger, sexual disturbance (lack of neutering), and human provocation (stone-pelting). Fed and sterilised dogs are largely non-aggressive.
- Street dogs –
  - Act as **informal security** in many localities.
  - Are cared for by poor and lower-middle-class communities.
  - Help inculcate compassion among children.
  - Are used in therapy and psychological interventions.

## **Challenges and Way Ahead**

- **Poor implementation of existing laws and rules:** Strict implementation of ABC/CSV Rules, 2023.
- **Judicial overreach into executive policymaking:** Judicial restraint coupled with executive accountability.
- **Inadequate municipal infrastructure and funding:** Strengthening municipal capacities and monitoring mechanisms.
- **Elite-driven perceptions and dog-related phobias:** Focus on humane, scientific, and decentralised solutions. Targeted action against genuinely aggressive dogs, not blanket measures.
- **Weak enforcement against pet abandonment:** Public education on responsible pet ownership.

## **Conclusion**

- India's street-dog issue is not a legal vacuum but a governance and implementation failure.
- Scientific evidence, global best practices, and constitutional principles all point towards humane, executive-led, and evidence-based solutions, not mass detention or judicial micromanagement.
- Upholding compassion as a Fundamental Duty, while ensuring public safety, requires **rational policymaking** grounded in science—not fear, sentimentality, or impractical orders.

## Judicial Overreach Debate FAQs

**Q1.** How does the SC's intervention in street-dog management raise concerns regarding the doctrine of separation of powers?

**Ans.** By issuing policy directions on animal management, the judiciary risks encroaching upon executive functions.

**Q2.** Why is the Capture-Sterilise-Vaccinate-Release (CSV) model considered the most sustainable solution?

**Ans.** CSV is evidence-based, endorsed by WHO and WOA, and effectively controls population growth and rabies.

**Q3.** How Article 51A(g) of the Indian Constitution is relevant to the street-dog debate?

**Ans.** Article 51A(g) mandates compassion towards living creatures, requiring humane and scientific approaches to animal management.

**Q4.** What lessons can India draw from France and the Netherlands in addressing the street-dog issue?

**Ans.** Strong municipal leadership, public education, sterilisation, strict enforcement against abandonment, etc.

**Q5.** Why are dog pounds considered an impractical and inhumane solution?

**Ans.** Due to poor municipal capacity, neglect, lack of medical care, and high mortality.

**Source:** **IE**

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