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## Current Affairs - 03 January 2026

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### TRANSFORMING A WASTE-RIDDEN URBAN INDIA

- 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.

### **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.



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- 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.
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### STREET DOGS, SUPREME COURT AND THE JUDICIAL OVERREACH DEBATE

- 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.

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- This restarts the cycle of population growth, aggression, and rabies risk.
- Therefore, evidence-based policy, rabies control, and One Health approach are better approaches.

### 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/CSVR 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.
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### LAND ACQUISITION IN INDIA AND INFRASTRUCTURE DELAYS

- Land acquisition is the process through which the government acquires private land for public purposes such as infrastructure development, industrial corridors, housing, defence projects, and social infrastructure.
- In India, this process has long been sensitive due to tensions between development objectives and the rights of landowners, farmers, and local communities.
- Given India's ambitious infrastructure and industrial growth plans, land acquisition plays a foundational role in enabling economic expansion.
- However, it also remains one of the most contested areas of public policy.

#### **Legal Framework Governing Land Acquisition**

- The present legal framework is governed by the **Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013 (LARR Act)**.
- This law replaced the colonial-era Land Acquisition Act of 1894 and aimed to make the acquisition process more humane, transparent, and participatory.
- Key features of the Act include mandatory:
  - Social Impact Assessment (SIA),
  - Consent requirements for private and public-private partnership projects,
  - Enhanced compensation linked to market value,
  - Comprehensive rehabilitation and
  - Resettlement provisions for affected families

#### **Compensation and Rehabilitation Provisions**

- Under the LARR Act, compensation is calculated based on market value, with higher multipliers for rural areas and additional solatium.
- The law also mandates rehabilitation measures such as housing, employment or annuity options, and provision of basic infrastructure for displaced families.



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- These provisions were designed to address historical grievances where communities were displaced without adequate compensation or livelihood support.

### Procedural and Administrative Challenges

- Despite its progressive intent, land acquisition remains a slow and complex process.
- SIAs often take considerable time, consent requirements are difficult to fulfil in areas with fragmented landholdings, and valuation disputes frequently lead to litigation.
- Additionally, coordination challenges between Central ministries, State governments, and district administrations further delay acquisition timelines.
- Since land is a State subject, differences in administrative capacity and political priorities across States add to implementation difficulties.

### Impact on Infrastructure Projects

- Large infrastructure projects such as highways, railways, power plants, industrial parks, and urban transport systems are especially vulnerable to land-related delays.
- In many cases, projects face cost overruns and time overruns due to unresolved land disputes, even after financial and technical approvals have been secured.
- As a result, land acquisition has emerged as a structural bottleneck in India's infrastructure-led growth strategy.

### Way Forward

- The recent reviews reinforce that while strong legal safeguards for landowners are necessary, **efficient administration, early stakeholder engagement, and cooperative federalism** are equally critical.
  - Rather than legislative changes, the emphasis is on better implementation, dispute resolution, and institutional coordination.
  - For India to meet its infrastructure and development goals, land acquisition reforms must focus on execution efficiency while maintaining the balance between development needs and social justice.
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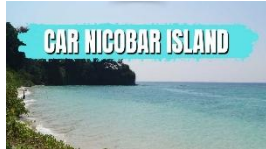
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### KEY FACTS ABOUT CAR NICOBAR ISLAND



- It is part of the **Nicobar district** in the **Andaman and Nicobar Islands Union Territory**.
- It is the **northernmost island of the Nicobar group**.
- It lies **south of Little Andaman** and **north of Nancowry Island**.
- The **ten-degree channel** lies on the **northern side** of the island and **separates the Andaman Islands and Nicobar Islands**.
- Despite being a **small island** – under 127 sq.km. – it holds **nearly half of Nicobar's population** (over 17,800 in 2011) and serves as the district headquarters.
- It is **remarkably flat** except for some cliffs in the north and small hilly areas in the interior.
- It is **bordered by a silvery beach** and **areas of flat ground consisting of coralline diluvium**.
- It is inhabited primarily by the **Nicobarese tribal community** (Scheduled Tribe).
- The climate of Car Nicobar Island is a **tropical monsoon climate**, as it is **just 9 degrees from the equator**, with an annual rainfall of 400 mm.
- The Car Nicobar islands **do not have any evergreen forests**, which dominate the central and southern islands of the Nicobars.
- **Most of the island** is covered with **coconut plantations**, and natural flora is present only in the interior areas.
- The island has been designated an **Important Bird Area (IBA)** by BirdLife International.
- The island was **severely affected by the tsunami** that was caused by the **2004 Indian Ocean earthquake**, which led to many deaths and damaged infrastructure.
  - Car Nicobar lies **750 km (470 mi)** from the **epicenter of the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake**, and the ensuing tsunamis struck it with great force.



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### WHAT ARE DISTRICT MINERAL FOUNDATIONS (DMFS)?



- DMFs are **statutory bodies** in India established by the state governments by notification.
- They derive their **legal status from** the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957, as amended as the **Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2015**.
- **In any district affected by mining-related operations**, the **State Government** shall, by **notification**, establish a trust, as a **non-profit body**, to be called the **DMF**.
- **Purpose:** To work in the interest and benefit of persons and areas affected by mining-related operations in a manner as may be prescribed by the respective State Government.
- **Jurisdiction:**
  - The **operation of DMFs** falls under the **jurisdiction of the relevant State Government**.
  - **Composition and functions** of the DMF are prescribed by the State Governments.
- **Funding:** It is funded through the **contributions from the holders of major or minor mineral concessions in the district**, as may be prescribed by the Central or State Government.
- The **Central Government has notified the rates of contribution** payable by miners to the DMFs.
- The Fund available with the Trust shall be **used for:**
  - The overall **development of the area affected by mining-related operations** in the District in accordance with the Annual Action Plan prepared by the Trustees of the Foundation for the purpose.
  - **Creation of local infrastructure** for socio-economic purposes.



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### VOICE OVER WIFI



- It is a technology that **allows voice calls over Wi-Fi networks**, bypassing traditional cellular networks.
  - It enables customers to **make and receive voice calls and messages** over a Wi-Fi network.
  - It is an **IP Multimedia Subsystem (IMS)**-based service using the customer's existing mobile number and phone dialer, **without the need for third-party applications**.
  - It is also **known as Wi-Fi Calling**.
  - It's **built directly into your phone's operating system** and works seamlessly with your existing phone number and contacts.
  - **Working of Voice over Wi-Fi:** It works by utilizing **Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP)** technology to transmit voice data as digital packets over an internet connection.
  - **Advantages of Voice over Wi-Fi:**
    - It ensures **clear and reliable connectivity** in areas with weak mobile signal such as homes, offices, basements, and remote locations.
    - It helps **reduce network congestion** and is offered free of cost, with no additional charges for Wi-Fi calls.
    - It **ensures clear and reliable connectivity** in areas with weak mobile signal such as homes, offices, basements, and remote locations.
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