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SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT RULES, 2026: ADDRESSING INDIA'S URBAN WASTE CHALLENGE

The Solid Waste Management Rules, 2026, notified by the **Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change**, will come into force on April 1, 2026, replacing the 2016 framework. The new rules comprehensively overhaul waste management by urban and rural local bodies, emphasising waste reduction, reuse, segregation, and at-source processing.

By discouraging dependence on large landfills and dumping yards, the rules aim to promote decentralised, sustainable, and circular approaches to managing growing solid waste challenge.

How Are the 2026 Rules Different from the 2016 Rules?

- While retaining the core principles of segregation, recycling, and scientific disposal introduced in 2016, the 2026 Rules introduce stricter obligations, expanded segregation, and stronger enforcement mechanisms.
- **Waste Hierarchy Introduced**
 - The Solid Waste Management Rules, 2026 lay down a clear **waste hierarchy** that prioritises prevention and minimisation of waste over disposal.
 - The hierarchy follows the sequence of **prevention, reduction, reuse, recycling, recovery**, with **disposal permitted only as a last resort**, signalling a move away from landfill-dependent waste management.
- **Four-Way Waste Segregation**
 - **Wet waste:** biodegradable household waste
 - **Dry waste:** recyclable materials such as paper, plastic, metal, and glass
 - **Sanitary waste:** items like sanitary napkins, tampons, and condoms
 - **Special-care waste:** hazardous or sensitive items including medicines, paint cans, bulbs, and tube lights
- Urban local bodies are mandated to support segregation through appropriate infrastructure. This includes green bins for wet waste, blue bins for dry waste, and red bins for sanitary waste.

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- **Enhanced Responsibilities of Bulk Waste Generators**

- Mandatory segregation at source
- Hand over recyclable waste to authorised entities
- All gated communities, RWAs, hotels and restaurants, and institutions with over 5,000 sq m area must comply within one year
- The 2016 Rules had weaker enforcement for bulk generators.

Polluter Pays Principle and Environmental Compensation

- Environmental compensation for:
 - Failure to register on the centralised portal
 - False reporting or forged documents
 - Improper waste handling and segregation
- Higher landfill fees for mixed or unsegregated waste
- Landfilling made financially disincentivising
- **Role of CPCB:** To frame detailed guidelines on compensation and penalties.
- This marks a shift from advisory compliance to deterrence-based regulation.

Centralised Tracking and Digital Monitoring System

- Introduction of a centralised online portal to track: Waste generation; Collection; Transportation; Processing; Disposal.
 - Mandatory registration for:
 - Bulk waste generators
 - Urban and rural local bodies
 - Waste transporters and processors
 - Waste pickers
 - Railways, airports, SEZs and large authorities
 - This addresses data gaps and weak monitoring seen under the 2016 Rules.
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INDIA'S NEXT INDUSTRIAL SHIFT — ELECTRONS OVER MOLECULES

- The contrast between molecules and electrons offers a clear framework for understanding the energy transition. Molecules such as coal, oil, and gas are burned directly in engines, furnaces, and boilers. Electrons, supplied through the **grid**, power electric motors and digitally controlled processes.
- Electrification delivers significant **efficiency** gains: electric motors convert over 90% of energy into useful work, compared with less than 35% for combustion engines.
- These gains enable higher **automation**, better process control, and faster **decarbonisation** as electricity generation shifts toward cleaner sources.

India's Starting Point and Structural Constraints

- India has expanded electricity capacity rapidly and is a global leader in annual solar additions.
- Despite this progress, industrial electricity accounts for only about one quarter of energy use, while green electricity remains a small fraction of final demand.
- Three structural constraints explain this gap. First, legacy reliance on on-site combustion continues to lock firms into molecule-based systems. Second, uneven power quality discourages all-electric process design.
- Third, **policy** has prioritised generation capacity more than industrial adoption of electricity.
- Without addressing these constraints, Indian industry risks falling behind as global markets tighten carbon standards.

Conclusion

- The emerging industrial race is defined by the speed and **quality of electrification**.
 - China's experience shows that directing clean electricity into industry delivers durable advantages in productivity and trade. India must respond with equal ambition.
 - Future efforts must focus not only on adding capacity but on ensuring that electricity flows into factories, workshops, and industrial parks.
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INDIA-U.S. TRADE DEAL 2026 - STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS

- India and the United States share a rapidly expanding trade relationship, shaped by strategic convergence, supply chain realignments, and geopolitical considerations.
- The U.S. is India's largest trading partner, accounting for a substantial share of India's exports in services, pharmaceuticals, engineering goods, and IT.
- However, trade ties have also witnessed friction, particularly over tariffs, market access, digital trade, and agriculture.
- In August 2025, the U.S. raised tariffs on Indian goods to **50%**, citing trade imbalances.
- This escalation set the stage for renewed negotiations aimed at stabilising bilateral trade while protecting domestic interests.

Key Features of the India-U.S. Trade Deal

- **Large-Scale Import Commitment**
 - India has committed to importing \$100 billion worth of U.S. goods annually for five years, more than double the \$45.62 billion imported in FY25. The imports will primarily include:
 - Energy products (oil, gas, coal), Aircraft and aircraft parts, Technology and high-value manufactured goods, Precious metals, Nuclear-related equipment and Selected agricultural products
- **Tariff Reduction by the United States**
 - As part of the understanding, the U.S. agreed to reduce tariffs on Indian goods to **18%**, down from the earlier 50%.
 - This rollback improves market access for Indian exporters and restores competitiveness in sectors such as engineering goods, textiles, and auto components.
- **Protection of Sensitive Sectors**
 - Despite opening its market to a wide range of U.S. products, India has maintained explicit protection for sensitive sectors, including:

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- Genetically modified agricultural products, the dairy sector, Poultry, maize, cereals, and corn
 - This calibrated approach reflects India's long-standing policy of shielding small farmers and food security from external shocks.

Agriculture and Market Access Framework

- India has allowed **quota-based or limited access** for select agricultural commodities such as cotton, pulses, chestnuts, and onions.
- Market access has also been extended to apples, wine, spirits, and beer, products already permitted under trade agreements with other partners like the EU and New Zealand.
- The government has consistently reiterated that **no compromise has been made on farmer welfare**.

Concerns and Criticisms

- **Fiscal and Trade Deficit Risks**
 - Committing to fixed import values may constrain India's trade flexibility and widen the merchandise trade deficit if exports do not grow proportionately.
- **Farmer and MSME Concerns**
 - Farmer groups have expressed apprehensions that surplus U.S. agricultural produce could eventually seek deeper access to Indian markets, affecting domestic prices and livelihoods.
- **Absence of a Formal FTA**
 - Despite its scale, the arrangement stops short of a full-fledged Free Trade Agreement (FTA), leaving uncertainties about dispute resolution mechanisms and long-term enforceability.

Way Forward

- India will need to closely monitor implementation, ensure safeguard mechanisms remain robust, and simultaneously push for export expansion in services, manufacturing, and technology. Strengthening domestic competitiveness and productivity will be critical to maximising gains from the deal.
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WHAT IS THE TENDER YEARS DOCTRINE?



TENDER YEARS DOCTRINE

The Delhi High Court recently held that the welfare and best interests of minor children must prevail over the application of the Tender Years Doctrine.

- It is a prominent **common law principle** in family law and custody jurisprudence.
- It presumes that **children of "tender age"** (generally **under 5 years**) should remain **with their mother unless she is proven unfit**.
- The doctrine rests on several **presumptions**:
 - **Biological Bond**: Infants have a natural attachment to mothers.
 - **Nurturing Instinct**: Mothers are presumed better caregivers for young children.
 - **Developmental Needs**: Early childhood requires maternal involvement.
 - **Emotional Security**: Mother's presence provides psychological stability.
- **Recent Delhi High Court Ruling**:
 - It held that the **best interests and welfare of minor children** are paramount and must **override the application of the Tender Years Doctrine**.
 - The court also held that **custody disputes must be resolved based on a comprehensive evaluation of the child's overall well-being rather than stereotypical assumptions** regarding parental roles.



PROJECT HIMANK

WHAT IS PROJECT HIMANK?

- It is a project of the **Border Roads Organization (BRO)** in the Ladakh.
- **Objective: Development of road communication in the Ladakh region.**
- The entire area of responsibility of the project falls in **high altitude** with **challenging working conditions and a limited working season**.
- The Project ensures the maintenance of **communication and access to strategic areas close to the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China**.

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Key Facts about Border Roads Organization (BRO):

- It is a road construction executive force in India that provides support to the Indian Armed Forces.
- BRO was entirely brought under the Ministry of Defence in 2015.
- It develops and maintains road networks in India's border areas and friendly neighboring countries.
 - This includes infrastructure operations in 19 states and three union territories (including Andaman and Nicobar Islands) and neighboring countries such as Afghanistan, Bhutan, Myanmar, Tajikistan, and Sri Lanka.
 - BRO specialises in constructing and maintaining Roads, Bridges, Tunnels, Airfields and Marine Works across some of the world's most challenging terrains.
- The BRO also has an operational role during national emergencies and the outbreak of hostilities, when it provides direct support to the Army in the maintenance of roads in the forward zones and executes other functions specified by the government.
- **Motto: Shramena Sarvam Sadhyam** (everything is achievable through hard work).

WHAT IS EXERCISE KHANJAR-XIII?



The 13th edition of the joint military Exercise KHANJAR India and Kyrgyzstan begins recently at Misamari in Sonitpur district of Assam.

- It is the 13th edition of the annual India-Kyrgyzstan Joint Special Forces Exercise.
 - The exercise has been held alternatively in India and the Kyrgyz Republic every year.
- **Khanjar-XIII Location:** Misamari in the Sonitpur district of Assam.
- The exercise aims to enhance interoperability between the Special Forces of both nations.
- The 2026 exercise will focus on joint operations in urban warfare and counter-terrorism scenarios under the United Nations mandate.



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PM VIKAS SCHEME



- It is a **Central Sector Scheme**.
- It focuses on **socio-economic empowerment of minority communities**. It aims to **ensure inclusive growth** for not only the minority and artisan communities but also for the youth and women.
- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Minority Affairs
- **Objectives of PM VIKAS Scheme:**
 - **Skill Development:** To build **capacity of minority communities** through targeted interventions by providing skill training support in need-based courses and ensuring employment.
 - **Cultural Preservation:** To preserve and **promote the cultural heritage** including traditional arts and craft forms by propagation of literature/ documents/ manuscripts and showcasing their unique ICH.
 - **Educational Support:** To provide **formal education and certification** up to 8th, 10th, and 12th through open schooling to school dropouts from minority communities.
 - **Leadership and Entrepreneurship:** To **empower women from minority communities** and instil confidence amongst them by providing leadership and entrepreneurship support.
- **Key Features of PM VIKAS Scheme:**
 - The **National Minorities Development & Finance Corporation (NMDFC)** has been given the responsibility of providing finance to the communities.
 - School dropouts are given formal education as well as certification.
 - The **Export Promotion Council for Handicrafts** provides **market linkages** in order to provide livelihood opportunities for beneficiaries.
 - The **'Hub and Spoke' model** is used to establish Vishwakarma Villages to support the artisans and their crafts.

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DEATH PENALTY IN INDIA - APPELLATE COURTS CORRECTING TRIAL COURT ERRORS, BUT STRUCTURAL FAULTLINES PERSIST

- **Meaning:** It is a legal punishment for heinous crimes (such as murder, gang rape of minors under 18, terrorism-related offenses), restricted to the "**rarest of rare**" cases under the IPC and CrPC.
- **Confirmation and appellate review:** A death sentence passed by a Sessions Court **must** be confirmed by the High Court. Convicts have a right to appeal to the Supreme Court.
- **Exceptions:** Death penalties cannot be imposed on individuals who were under 18 at the time of the offense. Executions are generally avoided for pregnant women.
- **The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023:** It retains the death penalty for heinous crimes, and is restricted to the "rarest of rare" cases.

Challenges Highlighted and Way Forward:

- **Systemic failure of trial courts:** To follow constitutional safeguards. Mandatory enforcement of Supreme Court's 2022 sentencing guidelines.
- **High risk of wrongful convictions:** Capacity-building and sensitisation of trial court judges on mitigation and sentencing hearings.
- **Arbitrary use:** Of life imprisonment without remission. Development of a clear statutory framework governing life imprisonment without remission.
- **Gap:** Between evolving constitutional jurisprudence and ground-level judicial practice. Strengthening legal aid and defence representation in capital cases.
- **Legislative push:** Towards harsher punishment amid judicial caution. Aligning legislative policy with constitutional values of fair trial, proportionality, and human dignity.

Conclusion:

- The report underscores that wrongful convictions in death penalty cases are systemic, not incidental, revealing deep structural flaws in India's criminal justice system.
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