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 **Offline Centre Location:**
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1. U.S. Will Come to the Rescue of Iranians: Trump

Why in the News?

Former U.S. President Donald Trump has warned that the United States is “locked and loaded” and ready to intervene if Iran uses lethal force against protesters demonstrating over worsening economic conditions. This statement has triggered a sharp reaction from Iranian officials, who have warned that any U.S. interference would destabilise West Asia and make American military bases and assets “legitimate targets.”



If Iran [shoots] and violently kills peaceful protesters, which is their custom, the United States of America will come to their rescue

DONALD TRUMP, U.S. President



Trump must realize that U.S. intervention in this internal matter will lead to destabilizing the entire region and destroying American interests

ALI LARIJANI, Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council



Background

- **Economic Crisis in Iran:** Iran is facing severe economic distress, marked by currency collapse and soaring inflation - particularly food inflation, which reportedly reached over 64%. The rial has lost nearly 60% of its value since the June 2025 Israel–Iran conflict.
- **June 2025 Conflict:** Israel bombed Iran's nuclear facilities, triggering a 12-day war. The U.S. supported Israel's operations, and Iran retaliated by attacking a U.S. base in Qatar before a ceasefire was reached.
- **U.S.–Iran Relations:** Relations deteriorated since the U.S. withdrawal from the 2015 nuclear agreement under Trump's first presidency, followed by the re-imposition of sanctions.

- **Protests in Iran:** Protests began when shopkeepers in Tehran shut down businesses due to the falling rial. Demonstrations soon spread, leading to violent clashes and casualties.
- **External Messaging:** Israel's intelligence agency Mossad publicly encouraged Iranians - in Farsi - to join protests, further angering Tehran.

Features

Direct U.S. Threat of Intervention

- Trump warned of action if Iran used lethal force against protesters.
- He framed this as a humanitarian "rescue" operation.

Iran's Strong Military Warning

- Iranian leaders declared U.S. forces and bases across West Asia as legitimate targets if attacked.
- Statements emphasised that Iran treats this as a national-security red line.

Regional Implications

- Iran warned that U.S. involvement could destabilise the entire region.
- Tehran linked unrest to foreign interference, including Israel.

Escalating Rhetoric

- Trump also warned of future strikes if Iran rebuilds its missile or nuclear capacity.
- Iranian leaders responded with explicit military threats.

Civil Unrest Turning Deadly

- Casualties were reported during clashes between protesters and security forces.
- Iranian authorities claim the unrest includes "disruptive elements."

Challenges

Regional Instability

- Any U.S.–Iran confrontation risks widening conflict across West Asia.
- Proxy groups aligned with Iran could be drawn into escalation.

Diplomatic Breakdown

- Trust between Iran and the West is already fragile.
- Military threats undermine multilateral conflict-resolution efforts.

Information Warfare

- External actors - including intelligence agencies- openly encouraging protests complicates internal stability.
- Risk of misinformation and escalation grows.

Domestic Legitimacy Crisis

- Tehran faces rising public dissent driven by economic stress.
- Heavy-handed crackdowns could deepen anger and unrest.

Way Forward

Reviving Diplomatic Channels

- Re-engagement on nuclear and economic diplomacy could de-escalate tensions.
- Neutral mediators (e.g., EU, regional states) can play a constructive role.

Economic Relief Mechanisms

- Targeted humanitarian and financial relief may stabilise civilian conditions.
- Avoid blanket sanctions that disproportionately harm civilians.

Restraint from External Military Intervention

- Direct military action risks triggering broader conflict.
- International law prioritises sovereignty and de-escalation.

Internal Political Dialogue in Iran

- Tehran may need to address public economic grievances constructively.
- Governance reforms and anti-inflation measures could diffuse unrest.

Regional Security Framework

- Broader West Asian dialogue mechanisms could prevent spill-over tensions.
- Confidence-building measures between rivals are essential.

Conclusion

The latest confrontation between the United States and Iran once again highlights the fragility of West Asian geopolitics. Trump's threat of military intervention in response to Iran's handling of protests has escalated tensions, prompting strong military warnings from Tehran. While Iran grapples with severe economic distress and public unrest, the possibility of external military involvement threatens to widen instability across the region.

2. India Has the Right to Defend Itself Against Terrorism: S. Jaishankar

Why in the News?

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, speaking at IIT-Madras, stated that India cannot be a good neighbour to a country that openly supports terrorism, referring to Pakistan. He asserted that India has the inherent right to defend its citizens against terrorism, and that no external actor can dictate how India should exercise this right. He also linked Pakistan-sponsored terrorism to the spirit of cooperation embodied in the Indus Waters Treaty, arguing that goodwill cannot be one-sided.

Background

India–Pakistan Relations

- Tense since independence, marked by wars (1947–48, 1965, 1971, 1999) and persistent cross-border terrorism.
- Major terror incidents include:
 - 2001 Parliament attack
 - 2008 Mumbai attacks

- 2016 Uri attack
- 2019 Pulwama attack

India's Counter-terrorism Posture

- Surgical Strikes (2016)
- Balakot Airstrike (2019)
- Stronger diplomatic isolation efforts against Pakistan

Indus Waters Treaty (1960)

- Brokered by the World Bank
- Considered one of the most successful transboundary water treaties
- India allowed Pakistan usage rights over three western rivers as a goodwill gesture
- India has recently questioned Pakistan's misuse of dispute-resolution mechanisms.

India's Neighbourhood First Policy

- While relations with Pakistan remain strained,
- India has extended significant economic and humanitarian support to other neighbours
- e.g., \$4 billion assistance to Sri Lanka, vaccine support during COVID-19, and fuel/food aid during the Ukraine-linked crisis.



Features

Clear Position on Terrorism

- India reserves the sovereign right to respond to terrorism in any manner it deems appropriate.

Pakistan Called Out Explicitly

- Described as a “bad neighbour” due to persistent terror sponsorship.

Conditionality of Good Neighbourliness

- Goodwill cannot coexist with terrorism.
- The Indus Waters Treaty goodwill logic weakens when hostility persists.

Assertion of Strategic Autonomy

- India rejects external prescriptions on national-security responses.

Positive Emphasis on Other Neighbours

- India is highlighted as a regional stabiliser and first responder during crises.

Challenges

Persistent Cross-border Terror Networks

- State-backed terror infrastructure remains operational in Pakistan.

Diplomatic and Security Balancing

- India must counter terrorism while preventing escalation into full-scale conflict.

International Perceptions

- India needs to maintain strategic credibility while asserting military options.

Hydro-political Tensions

- Reopening the debate around the Indus Waters Treaty may create new legal-diplomatic friction.

Regional Security Volatility

- Instability in Pakistan, Afghanistan and West Asia complicates the environment.

Way Forward

Strengthen Counter-terror Architecture

- Intelligence sharing
- Border management
- Cyber-monitoring of radical networks

Diplomatic Isolation of Terror Safe Havens

- Work through FATF, UN bodies and key partners.

Calibrated Deterrence

- Maintain readiness for proportional response
- Avoid uncontrolled escalation

Regional Cooperation

- Continue Neighbourhood First assistance

- Reinforce India's image as a responsible power

Conclusion

S. Jaishankar's remarks reiterate India's firm and sovereign stance against terrorism emanating from Pakistan. His position underscores that good-neighbourly relations must rest on mutual respect and non-violence, and that India retains the full right to defend its citizens from cross-border terror threats.

3. Telangana Adopts Resolution for Restoration of MGNREGA

Why in the News?

The Telangana Legislative Assembly has passed a unanimous resolution urging the Union Government to restore the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in its original form, following the Centre's move to replace it with the Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) - VB-G RAM-G. Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy argued that the new Act undermines wage-work rights, affects women negatively, and violates federal principles.



Background

- MGNREGA (2005) guarantees 100 days of wage employment on demand to rural households.

- It is considered rights-based legislation ensuring livelihood security.
- The scheme has been crucial in drought-prone and backward districts, including those in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh.
- Recent Change: The Union Government replaced MGNREGA with VB-G RAM-G, altering its structure and funding norms.
- Political Context: Opposition BRS boycotted the Assembly session, while Congress, AIMIM, CPI and BJP members spoke during the discussion.

Features

Right-to-Work Dilution Alleged

- CM stated VB-G RAM-G weakens the guarantee of wage work on demand.
- MGNREGA was designed as a legal entitlement, not a welfare scheme.

Impact on Marginalised Communities

- 90% of beneficiaries belong to SC/ST and Backwards Classes.
- 62% are women.
- The government argues that the new Act reduces inclusiveness.

Women Workers Affected

- MGNREGA was a major income support system for rural women.
- The new framework is alleged to discourage women's participation.

Federalism Concerns

- Under MGNREGA → Centre bore 100% wage cost.
- Under the new Act → States must fund 40%.
- Telangana argues this burdens State finances and violates cooperative federalism.

Break in Employment Period

- The new scheme reportedly mandates a 60-day work break during peak agricultural season.
- This could increase labour exploitation and reduce wage security.

Symbolism & Legacy

- Telangana demanded the restoration of Mahatma Gandhi's name to the programme.

Challenges Raised by Telangana

- Loss of Legal Right to Employment
- Financial Burden on States
- Reduced Livelihood Security for the Poor
- Gender Impact: Women Lose Key Income Source
- Risk of Corporate Labour Exploitation

Ministers alleged the scheme may divert cheap labour to corporates.

Way Forward

Retain Rights-Based Framework

- Employment guarantee must remain a legal entitlement, not discretionary.

Preserve Federal Financing Norms

- Wage cost burden should stay primarily with the Centre.

Strengthen Social Protection

- Especially for SC/ST, agricultural labourers and women.

Improve Implementation Rather Than Replace

- Digital delays, wage payments, and corruption issues should be addressed within MGNREGA.

Consult States Before Scheme Overhaul

- Consensus-based reform strengthens cooperative federalism.

Conclusion

The Telangana Assembly resolution reflects concern that replacing MGNREGA with VB-G RAM-G may weaken a landmark rights-based social security programme that has supported millions of rural poor - particularly women and marginalised communities. The demand is not only for restoring the earlier wage guarantee model but also for preserving the spirit of federalism and social justice that underpinned MGNREGA since its inception in 2005.

4. Centre Has No Plans to Change Land Acquisition Policy: Cabinet Secretary

Why in the News?

Cabinet Secretary T.V. Somanathan announced that the Union government has no plans to change the existing land acquisition policy, despite acknowledging that land acquisition remains one of the biggest challenges in infrastructure development. He was briefing the media after the 50th meeting of PRAGATI (Pro-Active Governance and Timely Implementation), chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Background

- Land acquisition is a critical step in executing infrastructure projects such as highways, railways, airports, power plants, and industrial corridors.
- Historically, it has been one of the most contentious governance issues due to compensation disputes, livelihood displacement, and resettlement challenges.
- The current framework largely operates under the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement (RFCTLARR) Act, 2013.

- PRAGATI, launched in 2015, is a digital governance platform for real-time monitoring and resolution of project bottlenecks, chaired monthly by the PM.



There is no plan to change the land acquisition policy... All States, irrespective of the political dispensations, want to complete their projects and all chief secretaries have been very responsive in resolving issues

T.V. SOMANATHAN
Cabinet Secretary



Features

No Change in Policy Planned

- Despite ongoing hurdles, the Centre will retain the current land acquisition law.
- The focus remains on better coordination and resolution mechanisms, not legal overhaul.

Scale of Projects Reviewed

- 3,300+ projects worth ₹85 lakh crore reviewed under PRAGATI.
- 7,735 implementation issues flagged; 7,156 resolved.

Major Bottlenecks Identified

- 35% - Land acquisition
- 20% - Forest, wildlife, and environmental clearances
- 18% - Right of way/use issues
- Others: law & order, construction delays, utilities, financing.

Improved Monitoring

- Projects pending for decades - some dating back to the 1990s- were completed after PRAGATI intervention.

Federal Cooperation

- States across political lines are working to resolve issues.
- Complex cases are escalated through a defined review framework up to the PM level.

Challenges

Land Acquisition Delays

- Compensation disputes and consent issues slow project rollout.

Environmental & Forest Clearances

- Mandatory safeguards cause procedural delays.

Right of Way and Local Opposition

- Resistance from local communities and landowners persists.

Coordination Across Agencies

- Multiple departments and governments are involved.

Balancing Development & Social Justice

- Need to protect livelihoods while promoting infrastructure growth.

Way Forward

Strengthen Institutional Coordination

- Further streamline issue escalation and inter-agency problem-solving.

Transparent & Fair Compensation

- Maintain trust with landowners through clarity and inclusion.

Community Engagement

- Early consultations reduce resistance and litigation.

Technology-Based Monitoring

- Expand digital project dashboards and grievance systems.

Capacity Building in States

- Train officials in land laws, rehabilitation and conflict mediation.

Conclusion

The Central government has clarified that it will not amend the current land acquisition policy, signalling stability in the legal framework. Instead, the emphasis is on systemic coordination and timely resolution of issues through PRAGATI, which has already helped unlock thousands of stalled projects. The challenge remains to balance rapid infrastructure growth with transparency, equity, and social acceptance.

5. Recasting Sanitation Through Urban–Rural Partnerships

Why in the News?

As India moves beyond universal toilet construction under the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM), the next major challenge is managing faecal sludge and wastewater generated from these toilets, especially in rural and peri-urban areas. A pilot urban–rural partnership model in Satara district, Maharashtra, demonstrates how nearby urban treatment infrastructure can be used to support rural sanitation - offering a scalable model for sustainable waste management under Swachh Bharat Mission–Grameen (SBM-G) Phase II.

Background

SBM launched in 2014

- Mission: ensure every household has access to a toilet
- Outcome: 12 crore+ rural toilets built; all villages declared Open Defecation Free (ODF)
- Led to improved dignity, safety for women, and public health gains

Shift to ODF Plus

- **SBM-G Phase II focuses on:**
 - Solid & liquid waste management
 - Behaviour change
 - Sustainability of sanitation outcomes
- As of Oct 2025 → 97%+ villages declared ODF Plus

Persistent Gap

- Most rural households use septic tanks or pits
- Regular desludging is required
- Unsafe disposal risks undoing ODF gains

Faecal Sludge Management (FSM) has become a critical missing link in the service chain.

Features

Maharashtra's FSM Initiatives

- 200+ faecal sludge treatment plants (FSTPs) in urban areas
- 41 sewage treatment plants co-treat sludge
- Challenge: linking the surrounding villages to these facilities

Satara Urban–Rural Partnership Model

- Satara city FSTP (65 KLD) had spare capacity.
- Four neighbouring villages - Jakatwadi, Songaon, Kodoli, Degaon- now use the same facility.

How it works

- Gram panchayats engage private desludging operators
- Scheduled desludging every 5 years
- Costs recovered through a small sanitation tax

- Formal MoU allows free disposal at the city FSTP



Outcomes:

- Safe desludging
- Lower cost for households
- Optimal use of existing urban infrastructure

Standalone Rural Cluster Model- Mayani

- Large village with heavy desludging demand
- Scheduled desludging introduced
- A cluster-level FSTP planned to serve ~80 villages
- Managed by:
 - Private operators or
 - Self-help groups (SHGs)

Institutional Partnership Focus

- **Collaboration between:**
 - Gram panchayats
 - Municipal councils
 - Private sector
 - Citizens

Challenges

Limited FSM Coverage in Rural Areas

- Informal desludging of the common
- Unsafe dumping persists

Cost & Access Constraints

- High costs deter regular desludging.

Behavioural Barriers

- Many tanks never desludge until overflow occurs.

Institutional Fragmentation

- Separate urban & rural jurisdictions
- Weak coordination

Environmental Risk

- Untreated sludge contaminates land & water.

Why Urban–Rural Partnerships Matter

- Efficient use of existing treatment infrastructure
- Lower costs for rural populations
- Improves public health outcomes
- Strengthens local governance collaboration
- Supports ODF Plus sustainability

Way Forward

Scale Urban–Rural FSM Partnerships Nationally

- Use underutilised urban treatment capacity

Promote Cluster-Based Rural FSTPs

- Especially in remote regions

Institutionalise Scheduled Desludging

- Fixed service intervals
- Tax-based cost recovery

Strengthen Regulations & Standards

- Build Local Capacity
- Train operators & SHGs

Community Engagement

- Awareness of safe sanitation chains

Conclusion

India's sanitation journey has moved from toilet construction to sustainable waste management. The Satara model shows that urban–rural partnerships can bridge FSM gaps, protect health, preserve environmental gains, and uphold the dignity achieved under Swachh Bharat. Scaling such models nationally will ensure that sanitation success is not temporary, but resilient and future-ready.

6. Transforming a Waste-Ridden Urban India

Why in the News?

At COP30 (2025) in Brazil, the global climate community placed waste management and circularity at the centre of climate action. A major initiative — No Organic Waste (NOW) - was launched to reduce methane emissions. This has renewed focus on urban waste management in India, where expanding cities face rising waste volumes and pollution challenges. The article argues that India must shift from a linear to a circular waste economy to ensure clean, climate-resilient cities.

Background

Circular Economy

- Treats waste as a resource
- Focuses on reduction, reuse, recycling, and recovery

Mission LIFE (COP26)

- Advocates sustainable consumption and behaviour change

Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM)

- Eliminated open defecation
- Now working toward Garbage-Free Cities (GFC) by 2026

Urban Waste Projections

- 165 million tonnes/year by 2030
- 436 million tonnes/year by 2050
- Major source of methane & GHG emissions
- Public-health threat and urban environmental crisis

SBM Urban 2.0

- Over 1,100 cities declared dumpsite-free
- But complete garbage freedom requires full circularity

Features

India's Urban Waste Challenge

- Pollution levels are among the highest globally
- Growing waste = increasing emissions, disease burden, climate risk
- Circularity is now an existential necessity

Organic Waste Opportunity

- >50% municipal waste = organic
- Can be converted into:

- compost
- bio-methane
- green fuel (CBG plants)
- electricity via combustion



Waste Threat

- A third of the waste is dry.

Plastic poses:

- ecological risk
- human-health danger
- recycling difficulty

Requires segregation at source & recycling systems

Construction & Demolition (C&D) Waste

- 12 million tonnes/year
- Causes dust, dumpsite overflow, and pollution
- Much of it can be reused
- Compliance with C&D Waste Rules 2016 & 2025 is key

Wastewater & Faecal Sludge

- Linked to urban water security
- Missions involved:
 - AMRUT
 - SBM Urban

Recycling needed for:

- agriculture
- industry

- urban reuse

Challenges

Weak Segregation at Source

- Mixed waste prevents recycling

Infrastructure Gaps

- Treatment facilities insufficient
- Testing & monitoring weak

Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Limits

- Not fully applied to all dry waste categories
- Poor coordination across agencies

Finance Shortages

- Limits investment in circular systems
- Behavioural Barriers
- Consumer culture resists reduction & reuse.

Market Ecosystem Still Developing

- Recycled products struggle commercially.

Way Forward

Adopt Full Circular Waste Systems

- Treat waste as a recoverable resource
- Integrate recycling markets

Strengthen Source-Segregation

- Household compliance
- Digital tracking
- Incentives & penalties

Expand Recycling & Processing Capacity

- Material Recovery Facilities (MRFs)
- Compost & biogas plants
- C&D waste recycling hubs

Implement EPR Effectively

- Hold producers accountable

Build Urban Waste-Water Reuse Systems

- Reduce freshwater demand

Strengthen Laws & Monitoring

- Enforce 2016 & 2025 C&D rules
- Track illegal dumping

Promote Public-Private Partnerships

- Encourage innovation & entrepreneurship.

Mobilise Citizens

- Awareness around Reduce-Reuse-Recycle
- Mission LiFE behaviour change

Support Municipalities

- Financial resources
- technical & institutional capacity-building
- Regional & Global Knowledge Sharing
- Through initiatives like the Cities Coalition for Circularity (C-3)

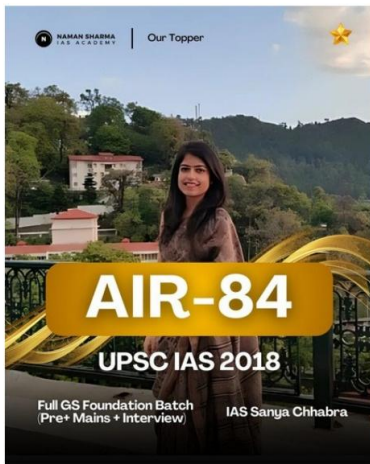
Conclusion

Urban India stands at a crossroads. With explosive urbanisation and soaring waste volumes, linear “use-and-dump” systems are no longer viable. Circular waste management - where waste becomes a resource - is essential not just for clean cities, but for climate resilience, environmental protection, public health, and economic sustainability.



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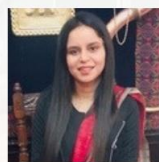
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