EDITORIALS - 6TH NOV 2026

1. DANGER IN THE SEWER (GS PAPER II GOVERNANCE, GS PAPER I SOCIETY)

This editorial '**Danger in the sewer**' was published in **The Hindu** on 6th Nov 2026, highlights preventable **sanitation-worker deaths** arising from weak enforcement and flawed policy priorities.

Persistent Deaths and Administrative Complacency

- **Sanitation-worker deaths** persist despite laws, court orders and mechanised alternatives; four workers recently died cleaning a hotel's **food-waste chamber** in Ujjain.
- **Parliament** and **National Commission for Safai Karamcharis** data record 859 deaths during 2014–2025, 498 during 2019–mid-2026, 332 across 18 States/UTs during 2021–2026, and 1,350 during 1993–2025; severe under-reporting is alleged.
- Government claims since **2021** that manual excreta cleaning from insanitary latrines stands eliminated obscure continuing hazards and weaken **inspection urgency** across municipal and private establishments.
- **Historically marginalised castes** remain overrepresented in sanitation work; the legal distinction since 2013 between hazardous sewer cleaning and **manual scavenging** leaves workers' exposure to noxious gases unresolved.

Legal Safeguards and Implementation Failures

- **Dr. Balram Singh (2023)** strengthened Safai Karamchari Andolan (2014) safeguards, requiring outsourced contracts without worker entry into sewers and raising death compensation to **₹30 lakh** per worker.
- A **2025 order** sought an end to manual sewer cleaning in four metropolitan cities, Bengaluru and Hyderabad; subsequent notices to **15 Chief Secretaries** addressed non-compliance with the 2023 ruling, including compensation.
- Contractors and municipal bodies violate the **2013 Act and Rules**, using **undocumented daily-wage workers** to evade liability; preventing deaths requires formal employment and stronger social security across caste lines.
- The **National Action for Mechanised Sanitation Ecosystem scheme**, centred on urban local bodies, retains an **implementation gap**, reflecting emphasis on assistance such as kit distribution over eliminating hazardous situations.

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Constitutional Foundations of Sanitation Workers' Dignity

- **Equal treatment:** Articles 14–15 challenge caste-based occupational segregation; in Sukanya Shantha (2024), the Supreme Court invalidated prison rules assigning cleaning work according to caste.

- **Abolition of untouchability:** Article 17 rejects caste-based degradation; Section 7A of the Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955 specifically penalises compelling scavenging on grounds of untouchability.
- **Occupational health:** Article 21 protects workers' health; Consumer Education and Research Centre (1995), concerning asbestos workers, recognised medical care as integral to a dignified life.
- **Freedom from exploitation:** Article 23 covers economic coercion; PUDR (1982) treated labour paid below minimum wages as forced labour, challenging assumptions that poverty-driven acceptance establishes genuine consent.
- **Humane working conditions:** Articles 39(e) and 42 inform workplace dignity; Bandhua Mukti Morcha (1984) connected Article 21 with protection of workers' health and humane employment conditions.
- **Access to justice:** Article 39A supports legal assistance; Section 12 of the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987 makes SC/ST persons eligible for free legal services.
- **Substantive rehabilitation:** Constitutional protection extends beyond compensation; Dr. Balram Singh (2023) directed rehabilitative support for families of workers killed in sewers, including educational assistance for dependants.

2. INDIA'S TIME WILL COME. FOR NOW, IT IS A MIDDLE POWER IN A BI-MULTIPOLAR WORLD (GS PAPER II INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS)

This editorial '**India's time will come. For now, it is a middle power in a bi-multipolar world**' was published in **The Indian Express** on 6th Nov 2026, highlights the **economic constraints** on India's global ambitions and its **strategic choices** as a middle power.

Economic Foundations of Global Stature

- China's rise and India's slowing growth have reopened questions about India's **global status**; economic size does not alone determine influence, but sustained **economic capability** remains crucial.
- India's growth rose from **3.5% during 1950–1980** to **6% during 1980–2010**, exceeding 8% during 2003–2010; stronger performance and globally sought IT skills improved international perceptions.
- Growing recognition appeared in the **BRIC report (2001)**, Stephen Cohen's *India: Emerging Power*, and Lee Kuan Yew's **"two engines"** description of India and China in 2007.
- Resilience against sanctions following the **1998 nuclear tests** demonstrated economic strength; earlier stature rested on **plural, secular democracy** and anti-colonial solidarity, but enduring power requires material capability.

Ambitions–Capability Gap

- The editorial questions **Vishwaguru** claims, the unfulfilled $5-trillion income target for 2020, and assertions of third-largest-economy status, placing India **sixth** instead.

- Official, scholarly and Western endorsement amplified expectations of India's rise; the **Quad** and closer **US military engagement** strengthened hopes that India would counter China.
- During **2010–2025**, China advanced economically and technologically, while India's electoral preoccupations, **majoritarianism** and anti-intellectualism weakened its rising-power narrative.
- Growth remaining near **6%** delays big-power status; **Viksit Bharat by 2047**, the editorial contends, requires growth well above 8% annually over the next decade.

Strategic Choices in a Bi-multipolar Order

- **Bi-multipolarity** combines US–China dominance with several influential **middle powers**; India should build alliances with Russia, the EU, the UK, Japan, Brazil, South Africa and like-minded countries.
- India's **developing-country identity** can strengthen its international voice; representing weaker countries, rather than courting powerful states, can secure support for **UNSC election**.
- Both the **US** and **China** challenge India; neither can serve as an instrument against the other, making stable relations with both a priority.

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India's Potential as a Global Public Goods Provider

- **Health security:** Vaccine Maitri supplied vaccines to Bhutan and Maldives in January 2021, illustrating how India's pharmaceutical capacity can support collective health security.
- **Humanitarian response:** Operation Dost deployed rescue teams to Türkiye and supplied relief to Türkiye and Syria after the 2023 earthquakes, demonstrating assistance beyond immediate strategic partnerships.
- **Digital inclusion:** India's grant-supported digital identity project in Sri Lanka illustrates how sharing digital public infrastructure can strengthen service delivery and socioeconomic inclusion abroad.
- **Clean-energy cooperation:** The International Solar Alliance, launched with France in 2015, promotes solar cooperation, offering India a platform to address shared energy-access and climate challenges.
- **Climate resilience:** The CDRI's Infrastructure for Resilient Island States initiative, launched at COP26 in 2021, supports resilient infrastructure in vulnerable small island developing states.
- **Development assistance:** Operation Karuna delivered 40 tonnes of medical supplies and relief materials to cyclone-hit Myanmar in 2023, demonstrating India's capacity to provide regional emergency assistance.
- **Collective security:** India's longstanding participation in UN peacekeeping demonstrates willingness to support international stability through personnel contributions, complementing diplomatic claims with operational responsibility.

3. 'NATIONAL BELONGING, CONTESTED & ENLARGED' AND 'TRUMPISM COMES UP AGAINST INSTITUTIONS' (GS PAPER II INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS)

These articles '**National belonging, contested & enlarged'** and **'Trumpism comes up against institutions**' were published in **The Indian Express** on 6th Nov 2026, highlight America's capacity for **immigrant inclusion, institutional checks** on presidential power, and **implications** for India.

Immigration, Inclusion and Political Representation

- America's **national belonging** evolves through recurring exclusion and integration; anti-immigrant hostility coexists with opportunities for outsiders to attain **political authority**.
- **Immigration legislation of 1924** reinforced racial barriers against Asians; **immigration reforms of 1965** enabled large-scale Asian migration, underpinning Indian-Americans' subsequent economic and political rise.
- **Minority representation** in Congress rose from about 12% in 2000 to 26% in 2024; **Indian-Americans** won five House seats, with another pending, and reportedly at least 30 state-legislature seats, including 15 women.
- Abdul El-Sayed's election as the first Muslim senator, Ilhan Omar's re-election and Zohran Mamdani's mayoralty demonstrate **political integration** despite persistent **racial and religious prejudice**.
- **MAGA hostility** warrants concern, but sweeping judgments overlook America's integrative capacity; India's own **"sons of the soil" movements**, caste divisions and religious prejudice caution against treating exclusion as uniquely American.

Electoral Accountability and Limits of Trumpism

- Democrats flipped **seven Republican Senate seats** and captured both congressional chambers; **periodic elections** checked a president whose supporters interpreted impeachments and indictments as persecution.
- The setback challenges **strongman politics** promising prosperity and security: tariffs increased consumer costs, while war with Iran raised fuel prices, worsening the **cost of living**.
- **Immigration enforcement** retains support among many Hispanic voters, but aggressive ICE raids and community humiliation undermine it; the 2024 Latino shift towards Republicans did not establish a permanent **electoral realignment**.
- **Trumpism** persists through deindustrialisation, demographic anxiety and distrust of liberal elites; dismissing these **structural grievances** risks repeating the political misjudgment preceding Trump's 2016 victory.
- **Congressional oversight** can investigate, subpoena and obstruct presidential action, but Democrats lack the two-thirds majority required to override a **presidential veto**; gridlock remains likely.
- Presidential authority over **trade policy**, war and executive action remains substantial; domestic frustration could encourage **external assertiveness** despite congressional losses.

Implications for India

- **Indian-American political participation** does not imply support for Indian government policies; their allegiance is to the US, and **diaspora diversity** requires New Delhi to earn support rather than presume it.
- Tariffs reportedly reaching **50%**, subsequently reduced to 18% in exchange for halting Russian-oil purchases, a $100,000 fee on certain H-1B visas and pressure over Chabahar expose risks from **presidential discretion**.
- Preserving **strategic autonomy** requires stronger relationships with members of **Congress**, extending India's engagement beyond the Oval Office.

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Comparative Safeguards Against Executive Overreach

- **Legislative confidence:** Unlike a fixed-tenure US presidency, India's government depends on parliamentary support; Vajpayee's ministry fell after losing the 1999 confidence vote by one vote.
- **Investigative scrutiny:** Parliamentary committees provide oversight in India; the US Senate's Watergate investigation in 1973 demonstrated how legislative inquiries can expose misconduct within the presidency.
- **Judicial restraint:** Courts can reject excessive executive claims; United States v. Nixon (1974) required the President to surrender recordings despite his invocation of executive privilege.
- **Federal protection:** India's S.R. Bommai judgment (1994) subjected Article 356 proclamations to judicial review, limiting the Union executive's ability to arbitrarily dismiss state governments.
- **Financial control:** Legislative spending authority constrains executive discretion; the US Impoundment Control Act, 1974 restricts presidential withholding of funds already authorised by Congress.
- **Appointment scrutiny:** Unlike India's collegium-based higher judicial appointments, US Supreme Court nominations require Senate consent; Robert Bork's rejection in 1987 demonstrated this check on presidential choice.
- **Press freedom:** Constitutional protection of reporting enables public scrutiny; the Pentagon Papers case (1971) rejected the Nixon administration's attempt to restrain publication of classified Vietnam War documents.