

General Studies-2; Topic– Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation

Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM)

1) Introduction

- It was World Toilet Day recently, and India made a bold statement by making sanitation a national issue.
- In 2014, the Centre launched the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) with an aim to eradicate open defecation by 2019.
- Since then, the number of people practising open defecation has decreased significantly with 1,678 cities declared open defecation free at the end of 2017.

2) Some Facts

- More than 94 per cent rural households in India have been provided toilets as of September 27, 2018.
- 24 states are already ODF, even in conventionally backward states like UP and Madhya Pradesh, more than 99 per cent households own functional toilets.
- 93 per cent people owning toilets actually use them regularly, according to the National Annual Rural Sanitation Survey (NARSS).

3) What Triggered the Massive Transformation

- **Political Push**
 - a. Political push is the most important factor.
 - b. PM Modi gave primary importance to cleanliness and sanitation and championed the cause by giving the country a time-bound goal to work towards achieving clean and ODF India by October 2, 2019.
- **Public Finance**
 - a. The government released funds in a time-bound manner.
 - b. India's rural sanitation budget in excess of \$20 billion is the largest in the world.
 - c. The government provides financial incentive to economically and weaker sections across the country to build and use toilets at Rs 12,000 per eligible household.
- **Partnerships**
 - a. The government has built several strategic partnerships to mainstream sanitation in all sectors.
 - b. All ministries all putting efforts to improve sanitation in their respective spheres of influence such as hospitals, schools, anganwadis, markets, highways and railways.
 - c. Several developmental agencies and corporates have also participated in and supported the mission.
- **People's participation**
 - a. The mission has brought together all section of society from film stars to sportspersons to the common man.
 - b. The 'Swachhata Hi Seva' campaign saw an estimated 150 to 200 million people joining the Jan Andolan.
 - c. Every village in the country has swachhagrahis and millions of volunteers work for swachhata with no official titles.

4) Opportunities

- The size of India's sanitation economy is \$32 billion per year.
- This market is set to double to an estimated \$62 billion per year by 2021.
- Further, there is a largely untapped market for converting waste into valuable byproducts.

5) Human Waste Treatment

- In order to further strengthen its mission of universal sanitation, India now needs to make human waste treatment a sustainable business proposition.
- This is also an important step to helping India achieve the sixth SDG—sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.
- A sustainable sanitation ecosystem includes not only access to toilets, but also effective evacuation, transport, and treatment of waste along with reuse or disposal of the treated product.
- SBM's focus has been on improving access to toilets, however, the same focus has not been given to management beyond the toilet.
- As a result, human waste largely goes untreated and ends up in the environment, posing significant threat to water sources and human health.
- Almost 1.75 million tonnes of human waste is generated in India every day.
- When treated correctly, human waste can be converted into useful byproducts, including fuel, fertiliser, and irrigation water.
- It also has the potential to create jobs and entrepreneurship opportunities.
- There is a need for public, private and other funders to invest in innovative waste management to bridge the gap between the challenges and opportunities.
- This will require a supportive regulatory and policy framework.

6) Concerns / Challenges

- There are serious problems, like disposal of faecal matter, quality and maintenance of toilets, and inappropriate technology.
- In Uttarakhand more than 70 per cent of the toilets were built without any expert's guidance and in several areas, they were unusable owing to either lack of water connection or that they were not built within household premises.
- The National Family Health Survey (NFHS-4) done in 2016-17 too found that open defecation remained fairly high in the rural areas of the BIMARU states.
- The adoption of the twin pit model is still very low in rural India.
- Another issue is the poor nature of construction and low quality of raw materials used under SBM (G)
- City drains are still cleaned by manual scavengers despite the rule banning them.
- **In the absence of Faecal Sludge Management services**
 - a. Toilets will fill up in a few years and be rendered defunct
 - b. Manual scavenging would be resorted to
 - c. This will not only perpetuate an exploitative social system, but will also give rise to a public health emergency.

7) Way Forward

- Policy makers, planners, the private sector, innovators, researchers and others need to create a sustainable ecosystem for sanitation.
- **The Government of India should consider taking additional actions such as**
 - a. Adopting the new international standard for non-sewered sanitation systems

- b. Helping to de-risk new technologies through supported pilot projects
- c. Rolling out policy incentives for creating useful byproducts from human waste
- d. Developing policies to regularise waste collection and transport
- e. Doing so will usher in a new era of sanitation solutions in India.
- To sustain ODF status, the durability and quality of construction of toilets must be due care of, shows the 51st report by the Standing Committee of Parliament.

8) **Conclusion**

- We certainly need to celebrate the successes of Swachh Bharat but not without addressing the constraints to ensure course correction.

