

India now processes 70% of its waste, says PM Modi launching Swachh Bharat 2.0, AMRUT 2.0

Pointing out that the country processes around 1 lakh tonnes of urban waste every day, the Prime Minister said the next target is to ensure that no untreated sewage flows into rivers

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“Mountains of garbage” in Indian cities will be completely wiped out and not a drop of untreated sewage should go to the rivers, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said while launching the second phase of the flagship programmes, Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban and Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) on Friday to mark Gandhi Jayanti on October 2.

Referring to landfills as “big mountains of garbage” in cities, Modi spoke about the Ghazipur landfill in Delhi. “There is one such mountain of garbage in Delhi which has been sitting here for years and waiting to be removed,” he told Urban Affairs Minister Hardeep Singh Puri, who nodded in agreement. “This movement in India will create numerous ‘green jobs’ as well,” he added.

Modi said now around 1 lakh tonnes of urban waste is processed every day. “In 2014, less than 20 per cent of waste in India was processed. Now, India processes almost 70 per cent of its waste every day. We have to take it to 100 per cent,” he said.

In terms of urban water security, the Prime Minister said the next target is to expand the management of sewage and septic waste, and ensure that no untreated sewage flows into rivers. “When sewage water treatment increases, urban water bodies will get clean and then our rivers will also be clean,” he said.

The Swachh Bharat Mission 2.0 aims to make India’s cities garbage-free. The second phase of AMRUT 2.0, on the other hand, will work towards providing 100 per cent coverage of water supply in households for “urban water security” and improving sewage treatment. Invoking BR Ambedkar, Modi said “Babasaheb” used to consider urban development a major medium to eradicate inequality. “Those who migrate to cities from villages in search of a better life, may get jobs in the cities but their standard of living is worse than what it was in the villages. It’s a two-fold blow on them, to be away from their villages and not getting a good life in cities,” he said, adding that the Swachh Bharat Mission 2.0 and AMRUT 2.0 will help in making the life of the migrants in cities – the urban poor and the middle class – better and aid in fulfilling Ambedkar’s dreams.

In the seven years preceding 2014 when the NDA government came to power, the government had spent around Rs 1.25 lakh crore on urban development, whereas the NDA government in its seven years since 2014 has budgeted around Rs 4 lakh crore for it, he said. “New metro routes, housing for the urban poor are all being made from this.”

Identifying street vendors as important stakeholders in urban development, Modi said they have received loans worth Rs 2,500 crore from banks under the government’s PM-Street Vendors Atmanirbhar NIDHI scheme and through over 7 crore digital transactions, street vendors are building their credit history with banks, something that was not done before.

Under the scheme launched during the first lockdown last year, street vendors are eligible for a loan of Rs 10,000. If it is repaid on time, he is eligible for a second loan of Rs 20,000. Once the second loan is repaid, he is eligible for a third loan of Rs 50,000. Sources said several street vendors are moving towards the third loan after paying off the second one ahead of schedule.

“It is not a small feat to give loans worth Rs 2,500 crore to street vendors. And they are repaying on time, and also initiating digital transactions, so that it becomes easier for banks to give future loans to them looking at their transaction history. This has given financial freedom to street vendors,” Modi said, adding that he wants to reward states that disburse loans to the most number of beneficiaries under this scheme. “We have seen during the pandemic how hard life could get if the vegetable vendor or the milkman did not come to our colonies,” he said, speaking about the importance of street vendors.

Terming cleanliness workers and garbage collectors “superheroes”, Modi said that under the NDA government, urban development and cleanliness has received top priority.

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The Nirmal Gujarat Abhiyaan scheme which he had launched as chief minister of Gujarat became the foundation for the success of the Swachh Bharat Mission, he said, adding that the movement gave the state a new identity.

“Households segregate their garbage, and young people are conscious about cleanliness. Children even keep wrappers of toffees in their pockets instead of throwing them on the streets. People report about garbage on the Swachhta app,” he said, adding, “Just like brushing teeth in the morning, personal and social hygiene should be integral to people’s lives.”

Modi exhorted state governments and urban local bodies to connect with the mission with renewed energy, admitting that during the pandemic there has been some laxity on this.

Besides making cities garbage-free, the Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban 2.0 envisions to ensure grey and black water management, and make cities open-defecation-free. The mission will focus on source segregation of solid waste utilising the principles of 3Rs (reduce, reuse, recycle), scientific processing of all types of municipal solid waste and remediation of legacy dumpsites for effective solid waste management. The outlay for this programme is Rs 1.41 lakh crore.

AMRUT 2.0 aims to provide 100 per cent coverage of water supply to all households in around 4,700 urban local bodies by providing about 2.68 crore tap connections and 100 per cent coverage of sewerage and septage in 500 AMRUT cities by providing around 2.64 crore sewer/septage connections which will benefit more than 10.5 crore. AMRUT 2.0 will adopt the principles of circular economy and promote conservation and rejuvenation of surface and groundwater bodies. “The mission will promote data-led governance in water management and Technology Sub-Mission to leverage latest global technologies and skills. The outlay of AMRUT 2.0 is around Rs 2.87 lakh crore,” a government statement said.