WHO’s Report on Swachh Bharat Mission

Why in news?

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A recent report by the World Health Organization (WHO) has praised Indias's Swachh Bharat Mission.

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What are the highlights?

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- The WHO statement was based on the initial results of a WHO modelling study on the health impact of the Swachh Bharat Mission Gramin (SBM-G).
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- WHO lauds India’s commitment to accelerated coverage of safe sanitation services.
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- It said India could avert 3 lakh deaths provided there is 100% implementation of Swachh Bharat Mission.
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- This is in reference to deaths due to diarrhoeal disease and protein-energy malnutrition (PEM).
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- The WHO analysed India’s accelerated coverage of safe sanitation services by accumulative Disability Adjusted Life Years (DALYs).
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- DALYs is the sum of the years of life lost due to premature mortality and years lost due to disability or ill-health.
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- According to the calculations, if all sanitation services are used, the initiative could result in over 14 million more years of healthy life in the period measured.
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- However, most of the WHO statement talks about the benefits of the sanitation programme in the future tense.
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What is the actual status of Swachh Bharat mission?

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- According to official sources the household latrine coverage figure for 2018-19 stands at around 90% across the country.
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- In Odisha it is nearly 60%, in Bihar 63%, in Goa 76%, in Tripura 77%, and in Jharkhand 85%.
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- On the other hand, states like Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Arunachal Pradesh have 100% coverage.
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- Household sanitation coverage has increased from an estimated 2% per year before Swachh Bharat to more than 13% annually between 2016 and 2018.
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What are the positive health impacts?

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- Swachh Bharat Mission led to additional health gains through changes -
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i. in personal hygiene (e.g., handwashing behaviour)
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ii. in consumption of safe drinking water (e.g., reduced risk of faecal contamination of drinking water)
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- There is evidence that improvements in drinking water supply, sanitation services and personal hygiene have positive health impacts.
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- They include
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i. improved nutritional status and its benefits
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ii. reduced incidence of infectious diseases such as different neglected tropical diseases and acute respiratory infections
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iii. reductions in diarrhoeal disease
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Source: Indian Express

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