



## World Toilet Day

World Toilet Day is celebrated every year on 19 November.

- In 2013, the **United Nations General Assembly officially designated November 19 as World Toilet Day**. It is **coordinated by UN-Water** in collaboration with governments and partners.
- It is a day that seeks to engage and educate people and their communities worldwide to encourage support for sanitation-related issues.
- It also aims to **break the stigma around sanitation** as the silence around the issue of toilets and sanitation has deadly consequences.
- The theme of World Toilet Day-2018 is “ **When Nature Calls**” which emphasizes that when nature calls, toilet is needed but billions of people don't have toilets.
- Human faeces, on a massive scale, are not being captured or treated, contaminating the water and soil that sustain human life.

## The Sanitation Crisis

- Toilets save lives, because human waste spreads killer diseases. World Toilet Day is about inspiring action to tackle the global sanitation crisis.
- Today, globally **4.5 billion people live without a safe toilet** and 892 million people still practise open defecation.
- **SDG 6** aims to ensure that everyone has a **safe toilet** and that **no-one practices open defecation by 2030**. Failure to achieve this goal risks the entire 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- The impact of exposure to human faeces on this scale has a **devastating impact on public health**, living and working conditions, nutrition, education and economic productivity across the world.
- Sanitation is important for preventing many diseases including diarrhoea, intestinal worms, schistosomiasis and trachoma.
- Universal access to sanitation in households and schools is essential in:
  - Reducing diseases
  - Improving nutritional status of children
  - Enhancing safety, and well-being of children
  - Increasing educational prospects, especially for women and girls

## Significance for India

- Sanitation is a serious issue in India, with **more than 60% of Indians still defecate in the open**, and more than 80 million people in urban areas still do not have access to safe toilets.
- Over one lakh **children die in India due to diarrhoea-related diseases**, close to 20% of the global statistic of child deaths due to diarrhoea, and the World Health Organization (WHO) has stated that 90% of these deaths **can be directly attributed to improper sanitation facilities**.
- From an economic perspective, the **inadequate urban sanitation** has led to a **financial loss to the economy** equivalent to 6.4% of India's Gross domestic product (GDP).
- Further, hundreds of **manual scavengers** who scrape the waste with their bare hands without any protective gear or masks, die each year cleaning out sewers in cities across India.

- **Community toilet blocks (CTB)** can enable access, but the **distance of the CTB from the home** can deter its usage and cast a shadow on its **safety**, especially for **women**.
- On average, women and girls hold their bladders for more than 13 hours a day, leading to many reproductive and urinary tract infections.
- Many women in India also prefer liquid meals for dinner, eat less and restrict water intake due to the lack of safety of CTBs during the night.

## Way Forward

- **Nature-based sanitation solutions (NBS)** should be encouraged which harness the power of ecosystems to help treat human waste before it returns to the environment.
- Most NBS essentially involve the protection and management of vegetation, soils and/or wetlands, including rivers and lakes. For instance:
  - **Composting** latrines that capture and treat human waste on site, producing a free supply of fertiliser to help grow crops etc.
  - **Human-made wetlands** and reed-beds **filter wastewater** before it is released back into water courses.
- **Behavioral change** should be focussed upon by the government along with the construction of toilets under Swachh Bharat Mission ( launched on 2 October 2014) which is aimed to eliminate open defecation by 2019.
- **Technological solutions** should be leveraged for sustainable solution of sanitation and hygiene. For instance:
  - Recently a machine launched by Sulabh International (a social service organization) can be adopted for eliminating manual scavenging. The machine injects high-pressure water into the tunnels and tanks and then collects the waste with a mechanical bucket operated from ground level. A remote control inspection camera generates high-resolution images of the sewer system.
  - **Reinvented toilets** promoted by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation can be adopted. Reinvented toilets are special as they turn liquid waste into clear water for flushing, and solids into pellets or ash that is fertilizer.
  - While the reinvented toilet gets optimized, India should, in parallel, look at **Omni processors for faecal sludge treatment plants (FSTP)**. These zero emission processors will end dumping of faecal sludge taken from septic tanks into rivers, lakes, farms and open spaces. They can also prevent the death of workers in septic tanks.