

Moving from ODF to Garbage Free Cities under SBM-U 2.0: Puri

By TIOL News Service

NEW DELHI, MAR 29, 2023: HARDEEP S. Puri, Minister for Housing and Urban Affairs, has stated that since 2014, India has witnessed a transformation in sanitation and waste management under the leadership of the Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Swachhata has become a foundational tenet in not just every government scheme but also in the way of life of citizens. The Swachh Bharat Mission - Urban (SBM-U) was the first large-scale programme to instil the principle of Jan Bhagidari. People's ownership and leadership of this mission transformed a government programme into a people's programme. SBM-U became a Jan Andolan. The Minister lauded the 'Rally for Garbage Free Cities' as a women led Jan Andolan, wherein lakhs of citizens have taken on the responsibility of cleaning their streets, neighbourhoods, and parks.

Puri unveiled the 'Stories of Change' Compendium which captures some of the amazing on-ground successes and informed the gathering that more than 300 women Self-Help Group members have travelled across cities to learn various waste management models. The Minister congratulated 'Swachhata Doots' for being change makers, many of whom are first time travellers and this enriching experience has offered them a platform to see, interact and learn. Four lakh women are directly engaged in sanitation and waste management as an enterprise in urban India. Through the Swachh Bharat mission, we have not only provided dignity to women, but also concrete livelihood opportunities.

Puri addressed the participants of the 'Swachhotsav - 2023: Rally for Garbage Free Cities' in New Delhi, that was organised by MoHUA in collaboration with GIZ, Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection; UNEP and UN Habitat, as part of India's celebration of the International Day of Zero Waste 2023. The event which saw discussions on good practices in Circularity in Garbage Free Cities, Women and Youth for GFC, Business and Tech for GFC, was attended by over 350 delegates including Mayors, Commissioners, Mission Directors, Business and Tech experts, women & youth leading sanitation, technical institutions, development partners, etc.

Speaking about the achievements of the Mission, the Minister informed that urban India has become Open Defecation Free (ODF), with all 4,715 Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) completely ODF, 3,547 ULBs are ODF+ with functional and hygienic community and public toilets and 1,191 ULBs are ODF++ with complete faecal sludge management. Further, waste processing in India has gone up by over four times from 17% in 2014 to 75% today. This has been aided through 100% door-to-door waste collection in 97% wards and source segregation of waste being practiced by citizens across almost 90% wards in all ULBs in the country.

Puri expressed his confidence that the resolve and determination shown in achieving the targets of SBM-U would be amplified manifold in the second phase of the mission (SBM-U 2.0) where India aims to become Garbage Free. He highlighted the importance of today's 'Garbage Free Cities' rally in raising awareness about waste management in the country, as changes in consumption patterns and rapid urbanisation drive up waste generation.

Speaking about the progress in the GFC-Star rating protocol, launched in January 2018 to encourage a competitive, mission-mode spirit among ULBs, he proudly declared that the certification has increased from only 56 cities in the first year to 445 cities till date. We have now set ourselves the ambitious target of having at least 1,000 3-star Garbage Free Cities by October 2024.

Waste management is an important aspect of India's commitments to meet its Paris Agreement targets. Last year in June, the Prime Minister launched the Lifestyle for Environment (LiFE) movement and urged each of us to become 'Pro-Planet People' by weaving in the concepts of 'Waste to Wealth' and circular economy in our lives. The 2023-24 budget has reinforced its commitment on building circular economy through an enhanced focus on scientific management of dry and wet waste.

Manoj Joshi, Secretary, MoHUA commended the role of women's leadership in ensuring circularity of waste management and implementing a zero-waste approach turning waste into valuable resources. He stressed the need to upscale Self-help groups to a professional level so as to ensure higher income generation for these groups. Further, from 'Women-in garbage management' to 'women-led garbage free cities' are showing desired results in tune with the vision of our Hon'ble Prime Minister.

The Minister applauded the Mayors and Commissioners of cities, who had signed the 'Swachhata Ke Navratna' pledge for Garbage Free Cities and hoped that they would disseminate the message of 'Garbage Free Cities' to every citizen in their cities. Further, Puri thanked the UN in India, and other partner organisations for supporting the Zero Waste Day event, as well as representatives from states and cities for always championing the cause of Swachhata.