

SWACHH BHARAT HELPED MEET UN GOALS: PM

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Government policies & interventions for development in various Sectors and issues arising out of their design & implementation incl. Housing

Top honour:Narendra Modi receiving the award of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation from Bill Gates.PTI-

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, honoured with the “Global Goalkeeper” award by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation for the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, has said the cleanliness campaign played a critical role in helping achieve UN goals and targets.

“Getting the award in the year of Mahatma Gandhi’s 150th birth anniversary is personally significant for me. When 130 crore people take a pledge, any challenge can be overcome,” he said accepting the award here on Tuesday night.

Not just numbers

Mr. Modi said the success of Swachh Bharat was above and beyond any statistics.

“The campaign has not only improved the lives of crores of Indians, but it has also played a significant role in achieving the goals set by the UN,” Mr. Modi said.

He dedicated the award to those Indians who transformed the campaign into a “people’s movement” and accorded topmost priority to cleanliness in their lives.

“No such campaign was seen or heard about in any other country in the recent past. It might have been launched by our government, but people took control of it,” Mr. Modi said.

As a result, over 11 crore toilets were built in the country in the past five years, which was a record, he said.

The Prime Minister said if the mission had benefited anyone the most, it was the poor and women. “Only that person who does not have a toilet understands its value, especially women,” he said, adding that not having a toilet was among their most tough problems.

He said many young girls had to give up education due to lack of toilets in their schools. “Our daughters wanted to study but due to lack of toilets they were forced to leave their schools and sit at home.”

Mr. Modi said it was the responsibility of his government to help the girls and women come out of this situation and it had performed the duty with utmost sincerity.

He expressed satisfaction that the mission was helping save millions of lives. He met Bill Gates and Melinda Gates after the programme.

“PM @narendramodi had a fruitful interaction with @BillGates and @melindagates,” the Prime Minister’s Office said in a tweet.

During the event, he noted that even a report by the Foundation said due to an increase in rural sanitation in India, the rate of heart problems in children had gone down and the body mass index of women had improved.

He recalled Mahatma Gandhi's message that for him cleanliness was more important than freedom.

Stating that the simple meaning of democracy was that people should be at the centre of policies and schemes, the Prime Minister said for decades, India had witnessed "constitutional federalism", but it was his government that attempted to change it to "co-operative federalism" and with time, it was now moving towards "competitive-cooperative federalism".

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