Service For Swachhata

In the run up to the third anniversary of the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) on Gandhi Jayanti, the prime minister called for an accelerated, nation-wide campaign termed Swachhata Hi Seva, from September 15 to October 2. He made an appeal to all Indians to put in a burst of energy during this 18-day period by way of shramdan for swachhata, and thereby give a fillip to the SBM's efforts to achieve an open defecation free (ODF) and Clean India by October 2, 2019, the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi.

After the PM launched the ambitious five-year SBM programme in October 2014, the accelerated strategy adopted to achieve this goal was a distinct departure from the drip-drip approach which the country had followed till then. In the three years since the SBM was launched, significant progress has been made, with rural sanitation coverage increasing from 39 per cent to 70 per cent. As many as 250 million people, almost equal to the population of Indonesia, have stopped defecating in the open since the SBM began. Usage of the toilets built is over 90 per cent, according to a survey by the Quality Council of India. Good progress is also being made in urban areas.

But every successful time-bound programme needs to be fuelled by spurts of momentum to take it to the next level. The SBM is presently at an inflection point. Now is the time for a momentum shift to make everyone rededicate themselves to the cause of cleanliness. The prime minister's call for Swachhata Hi Seva in the fortnight running upto Gandhi Jayanti has been met with an unprecedented response and has the potential to push sanitation and cleanliness over the tipping point to a self-sustaining trajectory.

The President of India administered the Swachhata Hi Seva pledge to all Indians on September 15 at an event in rural Kanpur. Since then, we have seen mass mobilisation for swachhata like we have never seen before. In the past two weeks, over 2.5 crore people have participated in the movement across the country through some form of shramdan. People have come together and cleaned public places like bus stands, railway stations, parks, monuments and places of historical and cultural importance. People also helped to construct twin-pit toilets for those who were unable to do so themselves.

Through the fortnight, and especially on September 17, seva diwas, several cabinet ministers, chief ministers, state ministers, MPs, MLAs and sarpanches offered shramdan. The vice president too joined an ODF declaration event in Karnataka on September 26. The PM himself offered shramdan for the construction of a twin-pit toilet in a village in his parliamentary constituency Varanasi on September 23, setting an example for every Indian.

Movie stars, sports personalities, corporates, artists and faith leaders have offered shramdan in different parts of urban and rural India. The Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation, along with the Indian Railways, also did its bit by participating in a cleanliness drive at the Nizamuddin Railway Station. Perhaps the most inspirational contribution to the Swachhata Hi Seva movement came from the officers and jawans of the Indian Army at the Siachen glacier, who carried out a cleanliness drive at the world's highest battleground.

Schoolchildren and youth groups like the NCC, NSS and Nehru Yuvak Kendra have led the movement. Young people have come out in large numbers and taken swachhata pledges, held cleanliness drives, swachhata rallies and have written essays, drawn paintings and short films on Swachh Bharat. A whopping 2.6 crore essays and three crore paintings on the theme of swachhata for the national Swachh Bharat competition were received through the Department of School Education. Three lakh short films were also received, mainly from NCC cadets.

The Swachhata Hi Seva campaign has re-invigorated the spirit of swachhata in everyone's heart, harking back to the moment the PM announced the mission from the ramparts of the Red Fort on August 15, 2014. It has already succeeded in making SBM a true jan andolan. The fortnight concludes today, the third anniversary of the SBM, with the giving away of the National Swachh Bharat Awards by the PM. Stellar contributions to Swachhata Hi Seva will also be recognised.

There are still two years to go before the Swachh Bharat Mission concludes. Let us all build on the immense momentum and energy generated by crores of Indians during the Swachhata Hi Seva fortnight and continue to make our individual contributions, however small, towards a clean India.

END

Missing the point of Swachh Bharat Abhiyan

In 2014, more than half of India's population still practised open defecation. Prime Minister Narendra Modi set his government the goal of making the country open defecation-free in five years, by the 150th anniversary of M.K. Gandhi's birthday in 2019, by launching the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (SBA). Three years later, we are more than halfway into that period, and there is good reason to be sceptical about its method.

The primary strategy of the SBA has been the construction of toilets. The programme has increased the money to be spent per toilet from the previous Rs10,000 to Rs12,000, and it mandates that water storage tanks be built alongside government latrines. Strategically, however, there is hardly any difference from the previous government's Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan, and the Total Sanitation Campaign and the Central Rural Sanitation Programme before that.

The problem with this strategy is that access to toilets is not the reason why India has alarming rates of open defecation, nor is lack of education or access to water. India's per-capita gross domestic product, level of educational attainment and access to water predict much lower levels of open defecation than it actually has. The question is why, in 2011, had 70% of rural Indians not built toilets when their contemporaries in other developing countries could afford to do so?

What exacerbates the puzzle is evidence showing that not only do Indians not build toilets, they avoid using those that have been constructed already. India doesn't collect individual data on latrine usage; there is only household data that notes the presence or absence of latrines. Therefore, there is no way to know exactly how many people defecate in the open. But a survey by the Research Institute for Compassionate Economics in 2014 found that over 40% of the households in its survey of 3,235 that had a working latrine, had at least one member who nevertheless defecates in the open. Thus, even if the government does build the remaining toilets, it is not certain that people will use them.

Why rural Indians refrain from using latrines has much to do with the kind of latrines that can be built in villages and traditional norms that define purity and pollution. Villages don't have sewage systems because of which pit-latrines are constructed. These latrines collect the faeces in the pit; the moisture percolates in the ground and the faeces dry. This is a tremendous improvement in terms of public health over dry-latrines, which require manual scavengers to pick up the faeces, or for faeces to be washed away and potentially pollute water sources.

The idea of having a pit-latrine, however, is disgusting to millions of Indians. According to religious beliefs, physical cleanliness is not always the same as ritual purity. For example, cow dung and vegetable peels strewn on the floor are physically dirty, but ritually pure. Newborn babies, even if clean, are considered ritually impure. Human faeces and menstrual cloths are both physically dirty and ritually impure. Rural Indians commonly complain that it is dirty to have a pit latrine in the house; what they are emphasizing is not physical cleanliness, but ritual purity.

For the English-speaking elite, it is easy to forget that for a caste-conscious society, social mobility depends on emulating the practices of the so-called higher castes. This is done by imposing on oneself stricter standards of ritual purity and cleanliness. Manually cleaning pit-latrines, usually equated with the most degrading forms of Dalit labour, does not augur well with that aspiration.

India cannot become free of open defecation by only building more toilets. Unfortunately, more than 97% of the SBA-Gramin's budget has been spent on the construction of individual household toilets.

What the evidence shows is that traditional norms associated with caste and untouchability are keeping people from using latrines. This means that the solution requires a concerted effort to change people's views about open defecation. While the SBA-Gramin allocates only 8% of the budget to information, education and communication activities, the actual expenditure is even lower, dropping from 4% in 2014-15 to 1% in 2015-16 and 2016-17. Latrine ownership should be promoted as a matter of prestige and affiliation with the modern world. At the same time, there should be more effort to inform people about the mortality burden of open defecation. Modi has made efforts to instil a new sense of civic pride in throwing garbage in trash cans. This is a laudable strategy, but it should be accompanied with an effort to change the attitudes towards caste hierarchies.

Do you think Swachh Bharat Abhiyan is the right response to India's sanitation problem? Tell us at views@livemint.com

Powerful challenge

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has, on several occasions, emphasised universal access to electricity as a priority for his government. In his Independence Day speech in 2015, the PM promised that 18,500 villages would receive electricity in the next 1,000 days. Two years later, nearly 14,500 of these villages have been "electrified". The speed with which the grid has reached these villages is impressive. However, the government's record is sullied by the fact that reportedly more than a fourth of the households in the "electrified villages" do not have a power connection. The significance of the Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana, or the "Saubhagya" scheme, launched by the PM last week should be seen in this context. The scheme changes the metric for measuring progress in electrification from the village to the household-level.

Beneficiaries for free electricity connections under the Saubhagya scheme would be identified using the Socio Economic and Caste Census (SECC) 2011 data. The scheme's document also notes that "Unelectrified households not covered under the SECC 2011 would also be provided electricity connections under the scheme on a payment of Rs 500, which shall be recovered by discoms in 10 installments through electricity bills." Free - or subsidised - connections will take care of the last-mile connectivity, often seen as among the biggest stumbling blocks to electricity access in the country. By roping in panchayats and other village-level institutions, the government aims to ensure that Saubhagya does not remain a top-down endeavour. However, the government hasn't found a way out of the other major challenge that afflicts power supply in the country: An electricity connection does not always ensure quality power supply. The government's claims of being power surplus notwithstanding, it is common knowledge that in many parts of the country, people face outages for several hours.

Ensuring reliable supply requires improving the health of discoms. The UDAY scheme, launched in 2015, has made some headway in improving the finances of the state discoms. The losses registered by these companies have been more than 20 per cent less this year. It will be interesting to see how states square the Saubhagya scheme with the requirements of UDAY. Saubhagya grants them the leeway to lower tariffs to people covered under the scheme. But at the same time, UDAY makes it incumbent on the states to pay for all the future losses of discoms. It will be interesting to see how the states strike a balance between the imperatives of improving access and the demands of keeping the discoms in good health.

END

English rendering of text of PM's Speech at 3rd Anniversary of Swachh Bharat Mission

All the Swachchagrahi brothers and sisters present here,

Today is 2nd October; it's the birth anniversary of venerated Bapu, and also the birth anniversary of Lal Bahadur Shastri. How far we have come in the last three years? I still remember that I was in the United States to attend a meeting at United Nations and I came back very late in the night of the 1st October and in the morning of the 2nd October I came out to clean with a broom. However, at that time all the news papers, media and all our friends from allied parties, I mean all political parties, all of them criticised me so much saying: the 2nd October was a holiday and we had spoiled the holiday of kids. Whether the kids will go to school or not? Why kids were engaged in this work? Lot of such things happened.

And it's my nature that I tolerate lot of things silently because my responsibility is such that I should tolerate and gradually I'm also improving my capacity for forbearance. However, today after three years; we kept working on this thing without wavering, without any reluctance and we persisted on this thing because I had full faith in the teachings of Bapu, because the path shown by Bapu can never be wrong.

I still have the same belief, however, it doesn't mean that there are no challenges. There are challenges but can we allow the country to remain like this just because there are challenges. Just because there are challenges, shall we only take up those things that will ensure regular praise for us? Shall we run away from this kind of work, shall we? And I feel that, today, those citizens who have been saying this thing in one voice. It's not like that there was no dirtiness in front of our eyes. It's not like that we too were not responsible for spreading the dirtiness in some way and it's not like that we don't like cleanliness either. There cannot be a human being who doesn't like cleanliness.

If you go to a railway station and there are four benches but two of them are not clean then you don't sit there, you sit on a good place. Why? Because our basic nature prefers cleanliness. However, the only gap that remains in our country is the lack of feeling that I myself should do this thing. There are no differences in the country over the issue that there should be cleanliness. The problem was always like that who should do it? And let me tell you one more thing and I have no hesitation in saying this thing, and it's possible that tomorrow I may face even more criticism but why should we hide anything from our countrymen? Even if a thousand Mahatma Gandhis come, even if a lakh Narendra Modis come, all the chief ministers come forward, all the governments join hands even then the dream of cleanliness can never be realised, it can never be realised. However, if 1.25 billion Indians come forward then this dream can be realised in no time.

Unfortunately, we have made plenty of things the responsibility of the government, we take them as the government's duty. As long as these are considered the responsibility of common man till then there will no problem. You see, Kumbh fair is being organised. Every day the people equal to the population of a small country of Europe gather on the banks of river Ganga. However, they manage all these things themselves, they do their own things and it is going on from centuries.

If we move forward by accepting the strength of the society, move forward by accepting the people's participation, move forward by reducing the government's role and increasing the society's role; then this movement will continue to succeed despite questions being raised. I'm confident of this thing. And today I'm happy that there are some people those still make fun of it, those who criticise it and they are the ones who never came forward to participate in the cleanliness campaign. It's their choice, they may have some reservations. And I'm confident that by the time of completion of five years the country's media will not publish this thing that who were working, who have been participating in the cleaning programme. The photos of those people are going to be published who were running away from this campaign, who were against it. Their photos are about to be published because when the country accepts something then you may or may not like it but you are forced to associate yourself with the issue.

Today, this cleanliness campaign, it no longer belongs to venerated Bapu, it no longer belongs to Government of India or state governments or municipalities. Today, the cleanliness campaign has become this country's common man's own dream. And whatever success has been achieved so far, it's not my slightest claim that that success belongs to the government. This success doesn't belong to Government of India or to the state governments, this success belongs to those countrymen who crave for cleanliness.

We have got self rule, and the tool for this self rule was passive resistance. The tool for great India is cleanliness. If Satyagrahi was at the centre of self rule then Swachchagrahi (who insists on cleanliness) is at the centre of a great India. And we too know this thing that whenever we visit some country of the world and when we see the cleanliness of that place then after coming back we discuss this that how clean it was, I was so impressed by the cleanliness. And when people tell me these things then I ask them: You must have felt good after seeing the cleanliness of that country. Did you see anyone throwing the garbage? They reply that we didn't see any such thing. Then I tell them precisely that is our problem.

And that is why we did not discuss the issue openly, I don't know why were we afraid to discuss this thing. Politicians and governments did not discuss the issue as they were apprehensive in case it becomes their responsibility. Oh brother; if it becomes your responsibility then let it be so. What's the problem? We are accountable people, our accountability is there.

And today what is the situation due to cleanliness? This ranking for the cleanliness that is taking place: which city is cleanest of all, which ones are the second and the third? And when their rankings are declared then it is being discussed in every city. A pressure is being created on the politicians, on the governments from the bottom that look that city got good marks in terms of

cleanliness. What are you doing? Then civil society also comes in the picture saying: look, this was behind us, it has beaten us; let us do something. A kind of positive, competitive atmosphere is being created. And a positive result of that thing is also being reflected in this entire system.

It's true that the toilets were constructed but they were not used. But when these kind of news come in then it's not something bad. They wake us up, we should not get angry due to them. Yes, it would have been better if they mention this thing that: look, this is the responsibility of the society, of the family, of the individual that they stress upon using the toilets.

I'm always there, earlier I used to work with a social organisation, I joined politics very late. I was working in Gujarat, there was an accident involving Machu Dam in Morvi, thousands of people were killed, the entire city was submerged in the water so I was deployed for service, for cleaning the city. All the work related to cleaning the city were going on, they went on for nearly a month. Later, we people, some members of the civil society and also through the NGO it was decided that we will construct houses for those whose homes have been destroyed. So we adopted a village. We collected the money from the people and we wanted to rebuild the village; it was a small village, there might have been some 350-400 houses. When we were designing the layout then I insisted a lot on this thing that in any case there must be a toilet. Then the villagers used to say that: we don't need toilet, we have a big open field here, please don't construct the toilet, instead just increase the size of the room little bit. But I told them that I would not compromise on this thing. We will construct a room as per the funds available with us but the toilets will be constructed in any case. So, in any case they were going to get it free of cost therefore they did not argue much and it was constructed.

And when I again visited that area nearly after 10-12 years then I felt the need to meet old associates as I had worked in that area for several months, so I went to see them. And after visiting that place, I regretted a lot as goats were kept in all those toilets constructed by us. So this is the tendency of the society. It's not the fault of that person who constructed it, neither it is a fault of the government if it insists on this thing. The society has its own nature. We are required to bring about the changes while understanding these limitations.

Can anyone tell me that whether all the schools in India have been constructed as per the requirement or not? Whether teachers have been employed as per the requirement or not? Whether all the facilities, books etc. have been provided to the schools as per the requirement are not? They are there in large quantities. However, given the status of facilities the status of education is low. So the government after making all these efforts, after spending the money and constructing the buildings, after appointing the teachers; and if it gets the cooperation of the society then it won't take much time to achieve 100% literacy. The same infrastructure, the same number of teachers can achieve 100% literacy but it is not possible without the cooperation of society.

If the government thinks that the task will be accomplished if we construct the buildings, if we pay salary to teachers. Yes, we can take satisfaction that earlier it was this much and we have done

that much. But if there is people's participation, if a kid takes admission in a school then it stops attending the class. And now even parents don't ask him to go to school. The issue of toilet is also similar to this. So cleanliness as a responsibility, the more we create this kind of atmosphere then everyone will also think 50 times before doing something wrong.

And you see, our kids, small children, the households that have sons, grandsons and granddaughters. In a way they are the biggest ambassador of my cleanliness mission. These kids, if grandfather throws something somewhere then these kids ask them to remove it, they tell them not to throw those things there. This kind of atmosphere should be created in every household. If kids accept something then why can't we do the same?

How many kids have been dying just because of not cleaning their hands, because of not being able to clean their hands with soap before having their meal? But as soon as you mention this topic, people will say: how can we buy soap; how can we get water; Modi will only deliver lecture; how the people will wash their hands? Oh brother, if you can't wash your hands then leave it, but those who can wash their hands, at least, let them do that.

Look, there may be thousand reasons to criticise Modi. Everyday, I give you some or some other reason, you should utilise that. But we should not make fun of such things or do politics over the need to bring about the change in the society. We should follow a collective responsibility and you will see that things will change.

You see, these kids have done a great job. I had been posting the pictures of these kids on social media on daily basis, I used to post them with a lot of pride. I, personally, don't not know these kids. But when I saw the picture of that kid who has shown enthusiasm for cleanliness, I used to post them and they used to reach to millions and millions of people. It's okay brother! Why is he doing that? This essay competition, whether the cleanliness can be ensured through essay competitions? An immediate response would be that it can't ensure cleanliness. Cleanliness can be ensured through drawing competition? No.

Ideological movement is also necessary for cleanliness. Development does not take place by mere development of the system unless an ideological movement is also being launched. So this effort to produce films, the efforts to bring creativity, essay writing; all these things are an attempt to provide an ideological basis to cleanliness. And when something finds a place in our minds in the form of an idea, finds a place as an essence then it becomes very easy to follow that thing. So this is the reason behind associating these activities with this campaign. And I would like; you see, there was a time when I felt a lot of pain; and it's not the fault of those who were doing those things therefore I don't blame them. However, it's a commercial world, everyone has a tendency to push those things where there is a possibility of making some money and everyone will be interest in making some money.

If you watch the television programmes that were produced four-five years ago in which if some kids were shown performing the job of cleaning in a school then it used to become a news story; teachers were criticised for making the kids to do the cleaning job in the schools. And it used to provide the opportunities to parents; they used to rush to the school asking: 'Will you educate our kids or will you make them to do the job of cleaning?' Today, this has brought about such a big change that if kids are doing the cleaning of a school then it becomes the headline of TV news. It's not a small thing.

And I think what would have happened if the media had not made this entire movement its own agenda? It's three years since then and the print and electronic media of this country has completely associated itself with the cleanliness programme; and at times they are two steps ahead of us.

And I have seen that these kids, the films about these kids have been given regular slots by some TV channels. This is the issue: how to involve all the people? The more they get involved, and you see that now we got that opportunity for the progress of our country, we must take our country to that destination by 2022. We don't have to remain silent like this. And if want to do this thing then it's a big thing.

Any person, if our house is not clean and some guest visits us; even if they come for some marriage proposal but if things are scattered here and there then he will think that everything else is fine, the boy is also well educated but the house is in such a poor shape; so why should we marry our daughter in this family? And he will go back. If someone comes from outside and visits India, sees Agra, Taj Mahal, what a wonderful places, but if he looks around the monuments then he will be puzzled. So how can we tolerate such a situation?

Who is at fault? My point is not this. And it is possible if all of us work together; this thing has been demonstrated by my countrymen in the last three years; it's been demonstrated by the civil society and by the media. And if there is so much support and even then if we are not able to build momentum in these things then one day all of us will have to hold ourselves accountable.

I want that all of us should stress upon these things, we should take them forward. With the help of

data, we just explained our progress to you people, but even now, despite building the momentum this is something which must be done on regular basis only then it will succeed.

There are temples in the villages but not everyone goes to the temple. It's human nature, some don't go to temples. Despite a temple being there in the villages, some people don't go. Same is true about mosques and gurudwaras. People may attend one or two functions there. So this is the tendency of the society, the life goes on and such people move on in their own world. We have to involve them, we have to make efforts. And when we make efforts then things will happen.

As per the data, it appears that the speed is fine, direction is fine too. A campaign to construct toilets in the schools was launched. And when our daughters go to school then they are mindful of these things. They ask questions, they check the facilities and after that they take admission. Earlier it was not like this, it was like that: we will manage. Why should we manage? Why should our daughters tolerate these things?

And you can never realise the power of cleanliness unless you look it from the point of view of a woman. You think about that mother in whose house everyone has a right to throw waste material and other things here and there. That mother does it all alone, when all other go out for work or go to school, she keeps cleaning the house for two hours, she keeps doing this back-breaking work for hours, two hours. You should ask that mother: how do you feel when we put our things in order before going out? That mother would certainly say that it was back-breaking work, it's good that you put your things in order so I'm able to finish the work in 10 minutes. You please tell me, be it a mother of middle class, higher-middle class or lower middle class or be it a poor mother whose half a day was spent in cleaning; if all the members of the family keep their things at right place, they may or may not help that mother in cleaning the house but if they just keep their things in order then what a big relief it will be for that mother? Whether we could not have done this thing earlier?

And that is why I have only one yardstick about cleanliness in my mind. You can imagine this thing. I want to ask the men. You urinate on any intersection. Please forgive me for using this kind of language. You must have seen the situation of those mothers and sisters who sometimes go out to market to buy something. They too will have to face nature's calls. But they don't relieve them in the open, they suppress these things till the time they get back home. What are these values? And if these values are there in her daughter, in her sister in her family then how it is that men don't have them? Because, as a man we believe that we have all these liberties. And unless these changes take place we cannot understand the cleanliness in real terms.

You see that those mothers and sisters living in the villages, even the mothers and sisters living in slums in cities, they wake up early and go out, go into woods to relieve themselves. Since there are risks then they go out in a group of 5-7 people and if they feel the nature's call after the day break then they wait till the evening; you just imagine what kind of suppression of the body it is. What will happen to the health of that mother who needs to defecate at 9-10 in the morning but she is not able to go out due to daylight, who continues to wait till 7 in the evening thinking she would go out to relieve her in the dark. You tell me, what would be the situation of that mother? If you have this kind of sensitivity then you don't have to watch TV channels, don't have to listen to a TV anchor, you will not need a Prime Minister or a state government to understand cleanliness; this in itself will become a part of your responsibility.

And that is why I'd like to call upon the countrymen. Unicef has released a report recently, it has conducted a survey of nearly 10,000 those households who have constructed toilets, they compared the present situation with the earlier one. And it is their estimate that on an average it entails the expenditure of 50 thousand rupees per annum over treatment of diseases per family due to lack of toilet or lack of awareness about cleanliness. If the head of the family falls ill then all other things just stop. And if the ailment is severe then two members of the family are required to look after him. He needs to borrow money at a high interest from a money lender for the treatment. So in way, a burden of nearly Rs. 50 thousand falls on a poor family.

But if we adopt cleanliness as our religion, if we accept cleanliness as our own responsibility then we can save the burden of Rs. 50,000 on a family and also lessen the burden of those difficulties that fall on the family due to that disease. We may or may not put money into his pocket but these fifty thousand rupees are of great help to him in his life. So these surveys, this information that is given to us, all of us should follow that as a social responsibility.

A lot of people meet me after becoming the Prime Minister. Political workers, retired officers and also some of those who work in the social sector meet me. They are very polite and very affectionate. At the time of leaving, they politely hand over their bio data and ask me to get back to them if I need their assistance for anything. They say: 'I'm always there for anything.' They are so polite that I also ask them politely to spare some time for cleanliness. And they don't come back again.

You please tell me, they had come to me seeking some work, they came with nice bio-data but after considering all these things if I just asked them to do this thing then they don't come back again. See, no work is small or big, no work is lowly. If we lend our support then it will become big so we should give it that respect.

I'd like to heartily congratulate all those who have worked hard in these 15 days to once again provide momentum to this thing. However, all these things, and I still say that it's just a beginning, a lot still needs to be done. Those kids who have participated in this thing with enthusiasm, those school teachers who encouraged them – some would have produced films, some would have written essays, some of them dedicated themselves in the cleaning, some schools even went out,

spent up to half an hour in the morning to create atmosphere in different parts of villages.

I'm surprised; some people; statues of great souls; we, all the politicians, all the political parties fight so much for installation of the statues of great souls. However, after the installation no one is willing to take the responsibility of cleaning that statue. Everyone feels that he or she follows those leaders and their statues should be installed. However, the people from the same community, their own followers are not interested in cleaning the statues; and then it is open for any bird to sit on top of it and do whatever it feels like.

These, these are the evils of our social life. And that is why it is responsibility of all of us. It is not my point of view that someone is good or bad. We all have to think this thing. And if all of us will reflect then results will be certainly there. And that is why I convey my best wishes to all the countrymen, to all the Satyagrahis and Swachchagrahis. We should once again dedicate ourselves to the nation on the occasion of the birth anniversaries of venerated Bapu and Lal Bahadur Shastri; we should give priority to cleanliness; and cleanliness is something that can be done by anybody who may not be capable of, who cannot do anything else for the service of the country. This is such a simple thing. As Gandhi Ji had said during the freedom movement: 'If you can't do anything else then you just spin the wheel, this is your contribution towards freedom.'

I feel that every Indian can do such a small thing to make a Great India (Shreshtha Bharat) that I will spare 5, 10, 15 minutes, half an hour, I will do something. And you will see that there will be a natural change in the country and one thing is very clear that in the world we will have to look at India through the eyes of the world. We must do that and in any case we will accomplish that.

Thank you very much.

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AKT/SH/SK

All cities and towns in five more States declared Open Defecation Free

All cities and towns in five more States declared Open Defecation Free

Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Chattisgarh, Jharkhand, Haryana reach ODF milestone

HUA Minister Shri Hardeep Singh Puri calls for 'life style change' to make the country clean

Five more States viz., Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Chattisgarh, Jharkhand and Haryana have reached the milestone of making all cities and towns 'Open Defecation Free' as the Swacch Bharat Mission completed three years today. This was announced by the Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs Shri Hardeep Singh Puri while speaking at a programme here today on the occasion of the third anniversary of the mission.

Giving an account of the progress towards Swacchata in urban areas of the country, Shri Puri informed that as against the target of building about 66 lakh individual household toilets in urban areas, 38 lakh toilets have already been built and construction of another 14 lakh toilets is in progress. Over two lakh community and public toilet seats have been built as against the mission target of five lakh toilet seats.

Stating that focus in now being laid on Solid Waste Management, Shri Puri said that efforts are on to generate over 500 MW of electricity and over 50 lakh tons of compost from municipal solid waste to enable processing of the entire solid waste being generated in urban areas.

Shri Puri said that sanitation is a birth right and individual responsibility as well. He informed that the fortnight long 'Swacchata Hi Sewa' campaign concluding today has witnessed participation of over 80 lakh people spread over 3.50 lakh activities in urban areas.

The Minister stressed on the need for 'life style change' to realise the objective of Swacch Bharat as envisioned by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi.

AAR/KM

END

Government keen to ensure a decent living Habitat for the poor, says HUA Minister

Real Estate sector will overcome problems, says Shri Hardeep Singh Puri

28 lakh affordable houses sanctioned in urban areas

Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs celebrates World Habitat Day

The Government is committed to ensure a decent living habitat to all in urban areas and in particular, for the poor and has taken various initiatives in this regard, asserted the Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs Shri Hardeep Singh Puri today. The flagship new urban missions launched during the last three years constitute an integrated urban habitat model, he further said.

Shri Puri spoke at a programme organized by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs on the occasion of 'World Habitat Day' on the theme 'Housing Policies : Affordable Homes' in New Delhi.

The Minister said the new urban missions launched by the Government like the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban) is at the core of ensuring affordable homes to the poor and the needy while other missions like the Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban) and Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) aim at enabling the much needed basic infrastructure for a decent habitat.

Under PMAY(Urban), the Ministry has so far approved construction of 28,57,321 affordable homes for Economically Weaker Sections, Low and Middle Income Groups with an investment of Rs.1,54,180 cr. Central assistance of Rs.44,278 cr has been approved for these houses.

Shri Puri said that the Government has taken several initiatives to give a boost to housing sector and in particular to affordable housing to meet the housing needs of the people. He further noted that the real estate sector has run into some problems for various reasons and he had reasons to believe that this sector will soon bounce back. Shri Puri said after a long time, the Government has brought this sector under a regulatory framework in the interest of the sector.

Shri Puri, while referring to the Sustainable Development Goals to be achieved by 2030 noted that India's performance would be the key to achieve these goals at global scale. Noting that 15 of the 17 SDGs are in the domain of urban local bodies, he said the Government is endeavoring to improve the capacities of city governments.

AAR/KM

END

Recently, the central government launched the Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana (or Saubhagya).[i],[ii] The scheme seeks to ensure universal household electrification (in both rural and urban areas) by providing last mile connectivity. The scheme is expected to cover three crore households. Note that currently about four crore households are un-electrified. A rural electrification scheme has also been under implementation since 2005. In light of this, we discuss the current situation of, and key issues related to rural electrification in the country.

Regulatory and policy framework

Under the Electricity Act, 2003, the central and state governments have the joint responsibility of providing electricity to rural areas. The 2003 Act also mandates that the central government should, in consultation with the state governments, provide for a national policy on (i) stand-alone power systems for rural areas (systems that are not connected to the electricity grid), and (ii) electrification and local distribution in rural areas. Consequently, the Rural Electrification Policy was notified in August 2006.[iii]

The Rajiv Gandhi Grameen Vidyutikaran Yojana (RGGVY), launched in 2005, was the first scheme on rural electrification. In December 2014, Ministry of Power launched the Deendayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana (DDUGJY), which subsumed the RGGVY.[iv] Components of DDUGJY include: (i) separation of agricultural and non-agricultural electricity feeders to improve supply for consumers in rural areas, (ii) improving sub-transmission and distribution infrastructure in rural areas, and (iii) rural electrification by carrying forward targets specified under the RGGVY.

The total financial outlay for DDUGJY over the implementation period (until 2021-22) is Rs 82,300 crore which includes budgetary support of Rs 68,900 crore. The central government provides 60% of the project cost as grant, the state power distribution companies (discoms) raise 10% of the funds, and 30% is borrowed from financial institutions and banks.

Status of rural electrification

As of August 2017, about 1% of the villages in India remain un-electrified (3,146 villages). However, with regard to households, around 23% (4.1 crore households) are yet to be electrified. Table 1 at the end of this post shows the status of rural electrification across all states.

Issues with rural electrification

Definition of an electrified village

An electrified village is defined as one that has the following: (i) provision of basic infrastructure such as distribution transformers and lines in the inhabited locality, (ii) provision of electricity in public places like schools, panchayat office, health centers, dispensaries, and community centers, and (iii) at least 10% of the total number of households in the village are electrified.[iv]

Therefore, a village is considered to be electrified if 10% of the total number of households in the village have been electrified. This is apart from the basic infrastructure and electrification of certain public centers in the village. The Standing Committee on Energy (2013) had observed that according to this definition, a village would be called electrified even if up to 90% of households in it do not have an electricity connection.[v] It also noted that the infrastructure being provided under the scheme is highly inadequate, unreliable and unsustainable. The Committee recommended that the actual electrification requirement of villages must be assessed, and it should be ensured

that the state discoms provide electricity to the remaining households in the village.

Supply of electricity

The Standing Committee had also noted that while the rural electrification scheme looks at creating infrastructure, the actual supply of electricity to households rests with the state discoms.[v] These discoms are already facing huge financial losses and hence are unable to supply electricity to the villages. Discoms continue to supply subsidised power to agricultural and residential consumers, resulting in revenue losses. Further, the average technical and commercial losses (theft and pilferage of electricity) (AT&C losses) are at around 25%. While the Ujjwal Discom Assurance Yojana (UDAY) has eased off some of the financial losses of the discoms, it remains to be seen whether discoms are able to reduce the cost-tariff gap and AT&C losses in the future.

It has been recommended that generation capacity should be augmented so that states can meet the additional demand under the rural electrification schemes. Further, the assistance to financially weaker states should be increased so that they can better implement the scheme.[v]

Electricity to below poverty line (BPL) households

Under the rural electrification scheme, the cost for providing free electricity connection per BPL household is Rs 3,000. It has been observed that this cost per household may be inadequate.[v] Due to the low cost, the quantity and the quality of work has been getting compromised leading to poor implementation of the scheme. It has been recommended that the Ministry should revisit the cost provided under the scheme.[v]

The new electrification scheme: Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana (or Saubhagya)

The new scheme, Saubhagya, seeks to ensure universal household electrification, that is, in both rural and urban areas. Under Saubhagya, beneficiaries will be identified using the Socio Economic and Caste Census (SECC) 2011 data. The identified poor households will get free electricity connections. Other households not covered under the SECC, will be provided electricity connections at a cost of Rs 500. This amount will be collected by the electricity distribution companies in 10 instalments.

The total outlay of the scheme will be Rs 16,320 crore, of which the central government will provide Rs 12,320 crore. The outlay for the rural households will be Rs 14,025 crore, of which the centre will provide Rs 10,588 crore. For urban households the outlay will be Rs 2,295 crore of which the centre will provide Rs. 1,733 crore.

The state discoms will execute the electrification works through contractors or other suitable agencies. Information technology (mobile apps, web portals) will be used to organise camps in villages to identify beneficiaries. In order to accelerate the process, applications for electricity connections will be completed on the spot.

So far the focus of electrification schemes has been on rural areas, where typically last mile connectivity has been difficult to provide. Saubhagya extends the ambit of electrification projects to urban areas as well. While DDUGJY has focused on the village as the principal unit to measure electrification, the new scheme shifts the targets to household electrification. While the target for ensuring electricity connection in each household will be a significant step towards ensuring 24×7 power, the question of continuous and quality supply to these households will still rest on the ability of the discoms to provide electricity. Further, while the scheme provides for free connections, the ability of these households to pay for the electricity they consume may be a

concern.

Table 1: Status of rural electrification across states (as of August 2017)

State	Total inhabited villages (Census 2011)	Number of un-electrified villages	% of un-electrified villages	Total rural households (in lakh)	Rural households to be electrified (in lakh)	% of un-electrified households
Andhra Pradesh	26,286	-	0%	112.16	0	0%
Arunachal Pradesh	5,258	1,191	23%	2.32	0.81	35%
Assam	25,372	337	1%	51.88	24.2	47%
Bihar	39,073	214	1%	123.21	65.87	53%
Chhattisgarh	19,567	256	1%	45.2	6.48	14%
Goa	-	-	-	-	-	-
Gujarat	17,843	-	0%	66.52	0.24	0%
Haryana	6,642	-	0%	34.22	6.89	20%
Himachal Pradesh	17,882	-	0%	14.7	0.19	1%
Jammu & Kashmir	6,337	102	2%	12.9	2.7	21%
Jharkhand	29,492	368	1%	54.71	30.63	56%
Karnataka	27,397	10	0%	94.77	7.6	8%
Kerala	1,017	-	0%	71.03	0	0%
Madhya Pradesh	51,929	46	0%	113.93	45.19	40%
Maharashtra	40,956	-	0%	137.85	3.7	3%
Manipur	2,379	62	3%	3.88	1.07	28%
Meghalaya	6,459	125	2%	4.63	1.39	30%
Mizoram	704	11	2%	1.1	0.011	1%
Nagaland	1,400	-	0%	1.6	0.88	55%
Odisha	47,677	373	1%	85.5	34.36	40%
Punjab	12,168	-	0%	36.89	0	0%
Rajasthan	43,264	-	0%	89.57	20.84	23%
Sikkim	425	-	0%	0.37	0.06	16%
Tamil Nadu	15,049	-	0%	102.84	0	0%
Telangana*		-	0%	59.7	4.17	7%
Tripura	863	-	0%	7.96	2.17	27%
Uttarakhand	15,745	49	0%	17.32	1.85	11%
Uttar Pradesh	97,813	2	0%	301.91	148.02	49%
West Bengal	37,463	-	0%	138.2	1.28	1%
Total	**596,460**	**3,146**	**1%**	**1786.87**	**410.601**	**23%**

* all villages in Telangana were declared electrified before the bifurcation of the state.
Sources: Ministry of Power; PRS.

[i] "PM launches Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana "Saubhagya"", Press Information Bureau, Ministry of Power, September 25, 2017.

[ii] "FAQs on Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana "Saubhagya"", Press Information Bureau, Ministry of Power, September 27, 2017.

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Behaviour tips for Swachh Bharat

The neurologist, Antonio Damasio, once wrote, "A brain that can't feel, can't make up its mind". Examples abound where ostensibly rationally thinking human beings with perfect information and foresight choose collectively to defy the fundamental tenet of classical economics. They tend to succumb when the dessert cart trundles by, to the great consternation of economic theorists and clairvoyants. We all break our diets.

My own experience with policy and its delivery allows me to cite a few more such scenarios where pure economic policy-making crumbled at the event horizon - the policy was of little use to communities it was designed to help. As an implementer, I found programmes requiring normative behavioural change distressingly difficult to deliver, and admittedly, success was moderate.

Let's take the case of Swachh Bharat, a proverbial horse and water scenario. Building toilets and creating infrastructure has not proved to be enough to make people use them. Naming and shaming has met with limited success to change preferences here. In the absence of social disincentives with everyone indulging in the same behaviour, and the practice being a collective habit perfected over the years, something more than building toilets (mostly without water supply) needs to be done here.

Another of many such examples is the "win-win-win" incentive whorl created by our agricultural policy owing to the MSP guarantee to a limited number of crops, mainly rice and wheat. It's a winning scenario for farmers growing crops underwritten by the MSP. Fertiliser subsidies encourage more use and productivity in the short term - a win-win for both farmers and suppliers. Government procurement further fortifies overflowing FCI godowns, adding to our confidence of being sufficient in grain, adding the third win. In this system of self perpetuating incentivisation, where is the scope to wean away farmers from cereal crops towards cash crops and ensure a better agro-climatic fit?

So what is that new perspective? Let's understand through a few examples again. Singapore is so spick and span, they say, you could eat out off the road. Locals file at the Tokyo metro entry and exit in perfect straight lines like automatons without a prompt, every single day of their commute. In fact, Japan is so low on public misdemeanour, more force and resources are deployed for the community service bureau than the crime bureau in the National Police Force. People behaving well save these governments billions in enforcement costs. In another example of a government harnessing normative insight, the British government called in game theorists to help design auctions for 3-G mobile telecoms' operating licences in 2000, and ended up raising a cool $35.4 billion, exploiting the competitive gaming behaviour of the bidders. In short, understanding strategy requires a perspicacious look into social norms and habits, and into human behaviour guiding such norms and habits. Policy needs to be informed thus.

Guided by such principles, the British government now has a full-fledged "Behavioural Insights Team" (BIT) also called the "Nudge Unit" working with the Cabinet Office. The two mantras informing all policy are: If you want to encourage someone to do something, make it easy (here is a case for simplifying tax returns), and we can't do evidence-based policy without evidence (perhaps a case for more decentralised planning tailored to local needs). Their five-year old "What Works Network" to encourage the government to test new ideas is already available in some manner in an indigenous avatar of the PMO's website welcoming crowdsourcing of ideas for better insights and policy design. Another stellar example to emulate is the public connect network established by the Gujarat government through BISAG (the Bhaskaracharya Institute of Space-Applications and Geo-informatics), the brainchild of our prime minister. The institute has done great work in sustainable development and inclusive growth through communication, information

and direct public connect.

The US too has an SBST Team (Social and Behavioural Sciences Team) in the White House, which conducts randomised controlled trials to test the effectiveness of federal policy. It has helped veterans make choices for better pension plans. It has also helped people to pay off their educational loans and also helped the IRS to increase tax compliance using simple nudges instead of hard (dis) incentives.

Policy design in India thus stands to gain by being behaviourally-informed especially in the realm of policy outcomes like clean India. Working in a normative space with communities, instead of an antiseptic economic sphere, shall ensure the achievement of desired policy outcomes in the long run while minimising costs to the exchequer. This calls for the inclusion of their choices and preferences in policy and using nudges, that is continuous subtle suggestions and subliminal prompts, so that behaviours that are beneficial are reinforced and those which are damaging are extinguished.

Remember, in the long run, we are all humans.

Shri Radha Mohan Singh reviews Pioneer Project CHAMAN

Project CHAMAN, likely to be completed by March 2018: Shri Singh

Interim report of site suitability study for North East to be handed over to the states by January 2018 for immediate consideration for implementation: Agriculture Minister

Union Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Minister, Shri Radha Mohan Singh said that in order to provide strategic development to the horticulture sector, so as to increase farmers income, a pioneer project called CHAMAN, has been launched three years back by the Government. This project is being implemented by Mahalanob is National Crop Forecast Centre (MNCFC) using remote sensing technology and is likely to be completed in March 2018. This was told by the Shri Singh in New Delhi today during a presentation on CHAMAN.

Shri Radha Mohan Singh said that the Horticulture sector is one of the major drivers of growth in Agriculture sector. This sector provides nutrient rich crops to the people and better remunerative prices to the farmers thereby augmenting their income. It also provides higher employment opportunities in the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors. Thus it has gained significant prominence in the recent years. It is a matter of pride that India is the Second largest producer of Vegetables and Fruits in the world and is First in the production of Banana, Mango, Lime and Lemon, Papaya and Okra.

Shri Singh informed that CHAMAN is a pioneer project in which remote sensing technique is being used for strategic development of horticulture sector as also to increase the farmers' income. It gives methodology for preparing reliable estimates of horticulture crops. Union Agriculture Minister said that this methodology will help the farmers to generate better income.

Shri Radha Mohan Singh said that the income of farmers will increase by growing selected crops in the high suitable areas identified under CHAMAN in the current Jhum /waste lands. Besides this, the Post-Harvest damages of farmers would be significantly reduced by creation of desired Post Harvest Infrastructures like cold storages etc. thereby increasing their income. In addition the Geo-Spatial Studies like crop intensification, orchard rejuvenation and aqua-horticulture would further help the farmers' to grow their horticultural crops in a profitable manner which will help doubling their income.

Union Agriculture Minister informed that it is proposed to hand over the interim reports of North Eastern States Site Suitability Studies to the respective State Governments by January 2018 for immediate consideration. The waste land/ jhum land areas identified for one crop in one district each of North Eastern States, under site suitability studies would be utilised by the State Governments to take up the projects of development of these areas on priority. On completion of this Project, the Geo-Spatial Studies would be conducted in all major states of the country.

Shri Singh told that on completion of this project, the methodology developed for seven important horticulture crops would be made operational in all the States. The remote sensing technology would be extended to other horticulture crops in future.

Shri Radha Mohan Singh also told that apart from these, various flagship programmes of the Ministry such as PMFBY, Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana (PMKSY), Soil Health Card, Rashtriya KrishiVikasYojana (RKVY) etc. are using remote sensing, GIS and GPS tools for their effective implementation.

SS

Over 69 lacs subscribers join Atal Pension Yojana with contribution of Rs. 2690 crores

Secretary DFS: Still Scope for increasing pension coverage

Atal Pension Yojana currently has over 69 lacs subscribers with contribution of Rs. 2690.00 crores. Chairman, PFRDA Shri Hemant G Contractor however emphasised the need of increasing the pension coverage in India at a recently concluded conference on Atal Pension Yojana. The conference organised by Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) in the national capital saw participation from all major banks, representatives from NPCI, SCHIL, SIDBI, Access Assist and some major MFIs.

A large section of the society still does not have access to pensions and this is a cause of concern for PFRDA and Government, Shri Contactor said. Congratulating the winners of the contest organised by PFRDA the Chairman said that APY has made progress in covering the intended subscribers but much remains to be done. He mentioned that on an average, a little less than 2% of the eligible population is covered under APY and hence a lot has to be done to provide people a regular access to old age income. He also touched upon the issues of persistence in the APY accounts and asserted that the objective of the scheme is to provide pension and this will only happen if the contribution in the account has been regularly paid. He urged the APY Service Providers to educate the subscribers on the importance of the same. He also urged upon the APY Service Providers i.e Banks and Post Offices under Department of Post to achieve the targets allocated by government by putting in their best efforts.

A video message of Shri Rajiv Kumar, Secretary DFS was played during the occasion. Shri Rajiv Kumar mentioned that Atal Pension Yojana is flagship program of the Government of India under financial inclusion and financial security. The pension coverage in this country is at around 12% and banks and other stakeholder need to work towards greater coverage under the scheme. He also said that DFS is monitoring the progress under the scheme and targets allocated under the scheme to banks should be accomplished. He touched upon the subject of providing a digital platform for APY by PFRDA i.e e-APY. Secretary Shri Rajiv Kumar congratulated the banks on their performance under the campaigns and urged them to continue the work.

While the government has a pension scheme for the BPL persons but the amount is meagre and is not sufficient for old age needs. 9% of the population of India, i.e 110

million people are over 60 years and by 2030 this figure is expected to cross 180 million. The 60 plus age groups is the fastest growing demographic in the country. With increase in longevity of the people, disintegration of the joint family system in India and inflation, there is greater need for old age than ever before. Currently pension benefits are available India basically to the organised sector. Atal Pension Yojana introduced in 2015 by Government of India provides a self- contributory savings pension scheme with guaranteed pension of Rs. 1,000/- to Rs. 5,000/- with a very low contribution by the subscriber. All banks and Department of Post have pushed the product to the interiors of the country. APY has option for increasing the pension amount from Rs. 1000/- to any other amount up to Rs. 5000/- as per the savings capacity of the subscriber, and further allows the spouse to continue the account in the event of the death of the subscriber before the age of sixty years. PFRDA has also been engaging with various State Governments for providing co-contribution under the scheme. With the introduction of e-APY through Aadhaar, the banks will be able to effectively utilise the digital platform for greater coverage.

SBS/KA

END

How many schemes does it take to light up a sky?

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, at the launch of the power for all scheme, Saubhagya (which promises electrification of all households), presented India's night-time light (NTL) satellite images for 2012 and 2016 released by the US space agency Nasa recently. NTL images capture light resulting from human activity that is reflected to the outer space at night. In the absence of reliable and granular datasets, recent research indicates that NTL is a powerful tool for economists and a good proxy for urbanization, electricity consumption, and economic activity. As proof of his previous ministry's progress, Piyush Goyal also shared the two images on social media—contrasting a relatively dark India in 2012, with a well-illuminated satellite image from 2016. Attributing this to the success of the power ministry in the last three years is a fair assumption to make. Which programme's success could be reflecting in the satellite data?

To understand ground realities and ascribe changes in satellite data to policy developments, it is best to validate NTL with national accounts or household survey data. One such attempt was made to track electrification in Vietnam using night-time lights by Brian Min and Kwawu Mensan Gaba. It was found that electrified villages appear brighter in satellite imagery because of public lighting, and subsequently, brightness increases with the number of streetlights. In contrast, the correlation between light output recorded by the satellite with household electricity use and access is low. Processed satellite NTL data registers a one-point increase in brightness for every 60–70 additional streetlights or 240–270 electrified homes. This implies one streetlight—as captured by NTL—is at least four times the weight of an electrified household from outer space.

In 2015, the Central government launched the Unnat Jeevan by Affordable LEDs and Appliances for All (Ujala) programme, the world's largest LED bulb distribution scheme to promote efficient lighting and reduce energy consumption. Under Ujala's street lighting component that aims to replace conventional street lights with LEDs, 50,000km of Indian roads have been illuminated till August. The nationwide push for Ujala is unprecedented—this effort in other countries being the prerogative of local governments. With 290,000 street lights retrofitted in Delhi alone, and three million across the country, New York's initiative to retrofit its 250,000 streetlights with LEDs—the largest effort to date in the US—is minuscule in comparison.

The most economical LEDs are whiter, brighter and richer in short-wavelength blue and green light. Though LED lighting is 2.5 times more luminous than conventional street lamps, it doesn't get recorded in the 2012 and 2016 images because the Visible Infrared Imaging Radiometer Suite (VIIRS) Day/Night Band (Dnb) night-time sensor, that records these satellite images, is "blue-blind", i.e., it is not sensitive to wavelengths shorter than 500 nanometres (blue and green spectrum). Even though Ujala has been undertaken on a war-footing, the "blue blindness" of the sensor will therefore suggest that cities are getting darker when that is unlikely to be the case. This should serve as a caution to policymakers about the constraints of NTL data to reflect policy changes on the ground.

In light of this evidence, it is imperative to analyse the progress made by the other flagship programme of the power ministry—the village electrification programme. Under the Rajiv Gandhi Grameen Vidyutikaran Yojana (RGGVY)—started in 2005 by the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government—most of the gains had been made before 2012. At its peak, 28,000 villages were electrified in 2006-07, and over the two UPA terms, around 100,000 villages had been connected to the grid. In 2015, the Modi government rehashed RGGVY as the Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana (DDUGJY) which was to electrify the last 18,000 dark villages.

According to data released by the Press Information Bureau, although 12,300 villages were electrified between 2012 and 2016, data from the Grameen Vidyutikaran (GARV) dashboard tells

us that DDUGJY managed to connect 100% households in only 8% of the villages electrified. Modi at the launch of Saubhagya, stated that from a target of 18,000 villages, less than 3,000 are left to be electrified. However, a village is considered to be electrified if just 10% of the total number of households have an electrical connection, along with the electrification of basic public amenities like schools, panchayat office, health centres, etc. What necessitated Saubhagya is this loose operating definition of an electrified village on which rural electrification programmes of both the UPA and National Democratic Alliance governments were based.

Visibly, eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar are significantly more lit in the 2016 image. Since neither Ujala, nor DDUGJY offer any compelling explanation for the sudden spike in brightness, could it simply be reflective of the more enduring and robust correlation of NTL, population growth and ensuing economic activity?

Saubhagya is a substantive step in the right direction. Although between 2012 and 2016, the village electrification schemes are unlikely to have added significantly to NTL. If the ambitious household electrification scheme is indeed able to bring last-mile electricity connectivity in rural and urban areas by December 2018, the NTL images are bound to be significantly brighter in the coming years.

Ishita Trivedi and Swapnil Bhandari are, respectively, associate and assistant director at IDFC Institute, a Mumbai-based think/do tank. Comments are welcome at theirview@livemint.com

Shedding light on Saubhagya: on electrification scheme

The Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana ('Saubhagya') launched in September, which claims to ensure electrification of all willing households in the country, is too ambitious a project. While it makes grandiose promises to provide a free electricity connection to all willing Below Poverty Line households and to all others on a payment of 500 (which shall be recovered by the power distribution companies/power departments in 10 instalments along with electricity bills), it expects the poor to pay the bills without providing any subsidy to ease their burden. Even to the best of their abilities the poor would often not be in a position to pay regular electricity bills, which in turn could result in disconnection. The government has conveniently overlooked the fact that for the poor in some States, the inability to pay an electricity bill is a big impediment.

This new scheme is just a way of refurbishing the **Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana** (DDUGJY), the earlier scheme of rural electrification launched in July 2015, which aimed to electrify all un-electrified villages by May 2018.

Power problem — On Saubhagya scheme

Under DDUGJY, the government managed to electrify 14,701 villages while 2,760 villages remain un-electrified; out of these, work is still in progress in a total of 2,611 villages. However, out of the 14,701 villages, only in 8%, i.e. 1,198 villages, do all households have connectivity. Even if we take into consideration the fact that so many villages have been "electrified", the next point of contention is the definition used. According to the definition, a village is considered to be electrified if 10% households have an electricity connection and related basic infrastructure. Furthermore, even in these 10% of households, there is no promise of minimum hours of supply. The question we then need to ask is this: given that 90% of households may not have power supply and of those 10% with electricity not having a regular supply, can we still consider such a village to be electrified in a meaningful way?

The objective of the Saubhagya scheme is to "provide energy access to all by last mile connectivity and electricity connections to all remaining un-electrified households in rural as well as urban areas to achieve universal household electrification in the country." On the face of it, the scheme may only be able to plug the gaps and address the issues of entry barrier, last mile connectivity and release of connections, but it can guarantee neither regular electricity supply nor continuation of those connections in case of non-payment. A free electricity connection may provide some relief as far as the financial burden is concerned. However, expecting poor households to bear the recurring burden of bills as per the prevailing tariff of DISCOMs is unimaginable.

Even if the programme is successful, hypothetically, and all households are provided a connection, there would still be the problem of regular supply. Industry estimates suggest that this scheme would potentially require an additional 28,000 MW and additional energy of about 80,000 million units per annum, which is roughly 7% of India's current installed power capacity. There is a power shortage even at this moment leading to scheduled and unscheduled load shedding, often up to 10 hours or more. The problem is graver still in interior rural India. Considering the huge lapses as far as electricity availability is concerned, managing this additional demand would prove to be challenging. We should also not forget that the provision of providing one-two hours' supply a day is not the same as provision of regular supply.

In the past three years, we have seen a series of policies and promises urging us to ponder over the type of welfare politics India is witnessing. Symbolically, all such attempts have a lot of significance as far as the bid to secure popular support is concerned. However, there has been a

lot of debate in the past over many of the government's policies which it claims to be based on the primary goal of "ushering in development". Nevertheless, it must be a cause of worry that the government has embraced the slogans of welfare politics without being able to deliver substantial and meaningful results. Irrespective of the poor track record as far as meaningful change is concerned, such policies have aided the government in building an image of being people-centric.

Certainly, Saubhagya has some positives such as provision for households outside the reach of grid lines. However, our contention is that the policy has set a standard for itself without enough focus on its capacity to deliver results. The policy statement echoes the commitment to facilitate economic growth and social development, but we still need to ask whether this is another instance of messaging for an electoral purpose.

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The new U.S. Fed Chairman is unlikely to opt for policies that might upset the President's plan

The Union Finance Minister, Shri Arun Jaitley launches the mandatory use of Public Finance Management System (PFMS) for all Central Sector Schemes; States that PFMS would ensure that the benefits of the various Government Schemes reach to the last mile; Hopes that soon PFMS will progress towards a Government wide Integrated Financial Management System (GIFMIS) - as a comprehensive Payment, Receipt and Accounting System.

The Union Finance Minister, Shri Arun Jaitley launches the mandatory use of Public Finance Management System (PFMS) for all Central Sector Schemes; States that PFMS would ensure that the benefits of the various Government Schemes reach to the last mile; Hopes that soon PFMS will progress towards a Government wide Integrated Financial Management System (GIFMIS) - as a comprehensive Payment, Receipt and Accounting System.

The Union Minister for Finance and Corporate Affairs, Shri Arun Jaitley said that the mandatory use of Public Finance Management System (PFMS) for all the Central Sector Schemes of the Government of India would help in tracking and monitoring the flow of funds to the implementing agencies. Shri Jaitley further said that due to the monitoring of funds through PFMS, one can know the actual status of utilization of funds by the multiple implementing agencies of the Central and the State Governments. He said that the ultimate purpose of implementing any Scheme is to ensure that the benefits much reach to the last mile. The Finance Minister specifically mentioned about the implementation of various Schemes through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) mechanism in this regard. The Union Finance Minister Shri Arun Jaitley was addressing the senior Officers of the Finance and other Ministries after launching the mandatory use of the Public Finance Management System (PFMS) for all Central Sector Schemes in the national capital today. These Central Sector Schemes with a budgetary outlay of Rs.6, 66,644 crore covers over 31 percent of the total Central Government expenditure during the current financial year 2017-18.

The Union Finance Minister Shri Arun Jaitley further said that PFMS, with the capability of providing real time information on resource availability, flows and actual utilization has tremendous potential to improve programme/financial management, reduce the float in the financial systems by enabling 'just in time' releases and also the Government borrowings with direct impact on interest costs to the Government. The Finance Minister said that with the use of PFMS, there will not be much paper work and it would go a long way in monitoring and tracking of any unnecessary parking of funds by the implementing agencies and thereby minimizing the cases of delay and pending payments to a large extent. The Finance Minister hoped that soon PFMS will progress towards a Government wide Integrated Financial Management System (GIFMIS) - as a comprehensive Payment, Receipt and Accounting System.

The launch was done by the Union Minister of Finance and Corporate Affairs, Shri Arun Jaitley in the presence of the senior Finance Ministry Officers and the Financial Advisers (FAs) of different Central Government Ministries/Departments. The Finance Minister Shri Jaitley congratulated the officers and staff of the Department of Expenditure and Controller General of Accounts (CGA) in particular for executing this initiative in a time bound manner.

Earlier in his Welcome Address, the Finance Secretary, Shri Ashok Lavasa said PFMS would not only help in complete tracking of funds but would also ensure just in time transfer of funds. He informed that 13 Central Sector Schemes are now under PFMS. Shri Lavasa said that PFMS picked- up great momentum in last two years and all the States are now on board with the Central Government as far as acceptance of PFMS is concerned. He said that implementation of Schemes through PFMS has brought transparency in system and helped in easy transfer and tracking of funds. Shri Lavasa said that more than 300 Central and State Government Schemes are now riding on PFMS and payment of more than Rs. 2.91 lakh crore relating to various Schemes under DBT has been made through PFMS since 2013. He said that PFMS has enabled the Government in taking forward the ground breaking initiative of Direct Benefit Transfers (DBT) with collateral benefits of plugging leakages and eliminating ghost beneficiaries.

The Finance Secretary Shri Ashok Lavasa also mentioned that PFMS is poised to develop as one of the biggest Financial Management Systems of the world, which is critical for bringing about a transformational accountability and transparency in the Government Financial Management Systems and promoting overall Good Governance. He said that as on date, payments to 34.19 crore beneficiaries have been made through PFMS and there are 21.72 lakh Programme Implementing Agencies registered on PFMS. This has been achieved on the strength of PFMS having an interface with 170 Banks including the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

The Finance Secretary, Shri Ashok Lavasa also told that for the first time, Annual Accounts of the Central Government for the Financial Year 2016-17 have been signed before 31st October, 2017. He said that there is an integration of all State Government Treasuries except that of the State of West Bengal, which is also under process.

Considering the massive preparatory work required for achieving full PFMS implementation including software/hardware up-gradation, fulfilling training needs at every level of the Government and enabling smooth on-boarding by the State and UT Governments, the Central Government decided in favour of a phased and calibrated roll-out for smooth implementation. In that direction, the Central Sector Schemes of the Government of India, numbering 613 across all civil Ministries/Departments were decided to be covered on priority with simultaneous thrust kept on the other important category of Centrally Sponsored Schemes. The targets for complete PFMS on-boarding of 613 Central Sector Schemes were also prioritized with 14 high spending Ministries taken on priority with the initial target date of completion by 31st August, 2017. The preparatory work in other Ministries/Departments have also been completed.

The PFMS Scheme has been rolled-out by the Controller General of Accounts (CGA) at the behest of Finance Ministry, Department of Expenditure as a cherished Public Finance Management (PFM) reform in the country. The Scheme aims at promoting transparency and bringing about tangible improvements in the overall Central Government Financial Management as well as implementation of various Central Government Schemes across the country. The ambit of PFMS coverage includes Central Sector and Centrally Sponsored Schemes as well as other expenditures including the Finance Commission Grants.

Considering the diversity and multiplicity of channels through which money is spent/transferred (including through Direct Benefit Transfer), the PFMS is designed to serve the pertinent need of establishing a common electronic platform for complete tracking of fund flows from the Central Government to large number of programme implementing agencies, both under Central Government and the State Governments till it reaches the final intended beneficiaries. PFMS thereby enables real time monitoring of disbursements and utilization of funds which in turn provides a sound Decision Support System across Ministries and Departments of Government of India as well as all the State and UT Governments.

Funds under the Centrally Sponsored Schemes flow almost entirely to the State Government treasuries and a substantial part of the funds under the Central Sector Schemes are also spent in the States through various Central Government agencies. The improvements brought-out in the Management of Public Funds through PFMS, it was stated, will have a cascading beneficial impact on the management of State Government Public Finances as well as efficient delivery of Public Services by the States. PFMS, therefore, reflects the true spirit of Co-Operative Federalism with the Centre and the State Governments combining their efforts to improve Public Finance Management for ultimate public good.

The mandatory PFMS on-boarding for the remaining Schemes and Programmes including the Centrally Sponsored Schemes is also targeted to be achieved in a phased manner.

DSM/KA

Can the Saubhagya scheme work?

The government's recently announced 100% household electrification scheme, Saubhagya, aims to tackle the next link for electrification, where until now most efforts focused at the village or hamlet level. The good news is that most villages are now connected to the grid, and remote locations far from the grid are slated for the creation of distributed (mostly renewable) generation. The bad news is that adding a wire to the home, as the scheme proposes, is only part of the puzzle. What one really needs is quality service (ideally 24x7) for meaningful electrification. This means we have to either strengthen or change the distribution companies (discoms) to ensure we meet this part of the social contract of electricity.

Why aren't all homes connected?

At the risk of oversimplifying, there were two main reasons utilities (discoms) have not connected every home. First, they didn't have enough power to meet the demand. For the first time in recent memory, shortfalls are very low to the extent that people talk of a power surplus, though some instantaneous or "peak" shortfalls may remain. Second, they didn't have the money. Wiring the last set of (mostly rural) consumers is expensive, and these users overwhelmingly have regulator-approved prices (tariffs) well below the true costs to serve.

Saubhagya provides capital support for wiring unconnected homes, a measurable fraction if not majority of costs for serving new users. Today, most tariffs for wiring a new home rarely cover the upfront infrastructure costs, which have to be socialized. Costs will vary based on how far the user is from the grid, and, unfortunately, the last to be connected are likely to be the farthest away and most sparsely populated. If one is further than an electric pole's span, then costs approach Rs2 lakh per km. Saubhagya averages at only about Rs4,000/home, inclusive of a metre and limited in-home wiring. In the absence of data, one can only guess that per home costs may end up far higher than sanctioned.

Equally challenging are usage or energy charges. For a new user consuming, say, 30 kilowatt-hours (kWh) per month (a possible threshold for a "lifeline user"), the full cost of service may be some Rs150-200/month, but the tariffs set by the regulators are often far lower for the first tier of residential users.

Mandating a metre is welcome and key—consumers are meant to pay notified tariffs, which is important even if the tariff is low and embeds a cross-subsidy by other users. This creates the mindset of paying, and also provides visibility to the utility on consumption. This can also help limit subsidized or free consumption to a lifeline level if so desired.

What else is needed?

The first need is obviously to execute the physical wire to the homes. Hopefully there are enough skilled contractors to handle the enormity of the task—India's 40 million unconnected homes is roughly triple the next two countries', Nigeria and Ethiopia. Insufficient capital outlay can be supplemented by state budgetary support or special Central grants. Thinking holistically, there is money available. Instead of subsidizing (oil company's under-recovery for) kerosene, the same money could progressively be re-allocated for rural electrification—a greater amount annually than the Saubhagya budget.

Discoms have historically been wary of adding "expensive" and non-remunerative consumers. Their worries can be addressed in several ways. Retail tariffs for residential users should be updated to meet the marginal costs of supply, to cover the incremental (mainly fuel) costs of

generation procured by discoms. Even with new coal-based plants, on average this would only be some Rs2.3-2.5/kWh, inclusive of technical losses. Assuming 30 kWh (units) per month lifeline supply, plus adding the typical capacity or fixed monthly charge, this would still be under Rs100/month—not unreasonable, and an amount many rural users are willing to pay for microgrids, that too for a lower number of units.

If even this is deemed too expensive, states are free to offer any usage subsidies above and beyond regulator-approved cross-subsidies. If other consumers (excluding agriculture and marginal households) had to cross-subsidize even all the 30 kWh/month for these 40 million homes, the burden would be under 2%. This is without any tariff increases, at an average subsidy of Rs4/kWh, a level that even covers the fixed costs of new generation capacity.

Importantly, will such consumers only use lifeline supply? Discoms are understandably wary of over-usage, especially at the peak. If we want to ensure that heavily subsidized or free household power is only for lifeline consumption, a metre helps, but manages energy only, not capacity. A smart metre can do far more, allowing for capped peak usage (say, limited to 300 watts), beyond which the consumer could either choose to be current-limited or pay a "higher" (rather, non-subsidized) tariff. Feeder separation helps improve supply but only at an aggregate level; smart systems can do so with far better granularity.

Under Saubhagya, microgrids are perhaps the biggest theoretical loser, but better coordination can reduce such conflicts. They can be complementary instead of competitive, especially for remote locations. This requires serious discussions on microgrid designs. For example, cheaper DC-based microgrids cannot synergize with an AC grid, due to which investments are viewed as short-term only.

Top-down pushes have been the norm for electrification, worldwide, since we cannot rely on the market to chase such consumers. Saubhagya addresses up-front costs, but we also cannot expect such users to immediately pay the full costs of service. We need new mechanisms and frameworks to also help ensure quality supply. Below-cost models of service provision, even for a public good, risk inefficient consumption, not to mention limit the provider's ability or appetite to scale and sustain. Getting the wire to the home should only be a matter of time. It's now time to tackle the other challenges in the ecosystem.

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Comments are welcome at theirview@livemint.com