Date: 04 Oct 2024

Swachh Bharat Mission 2.0

(The Hindu, 04-10-24)

Context: India has more than 3,000 legacy waste dumpsites, with 2,424 of them having a waste load of more than 1,000 tonnes. The Central government launched the legacy waste management project as part of the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) 2.0 in October 2021, for a period of five years till 2026.

What are legacy waste dumpsites?

- Legacy waste dumpsites are dumpsites that contain solid waste that have been collected and stored for years in an unscientific and uncontrolled manner.
- Municipal solid waste generation in India is estimated to be around 1,50,000 tonnes per day. With almost no installed facility in India for handling solid waste, the municipal corporations, municipal councils and nagar (city) panchayats have traditionally opted for creating **man-made garbage hills.**
- These dumpsites originally developed on the **outskirts of the cities.**
- However, with the expansion of cities, these sites are now often found in the heart of cities on barren land or in landfills.
- According to estimates of the Union Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry, approximately 15,000 acres of prime real estate is buried under nearly 16 crore tonnes of legacy waste across the country.

What are the health hazards?

- Exposure to emissions from hazardous waste can irritate the mouth and throat.
- Inhaling methane from landfills can cause nausea, vomiting, and loss of coordination.
- Ragpickers who work at landfills can develop skin allergies from years of exposure to waste.
- People who live near landfills may be prone to developing tuberculosis, asthma, diabetes, depression, cholera, malaria, and other diseases.
- They are also a source of greenhouse gas emissions, such as methane and carbon dioxide.

What is the Swachh Bharat Mission?

- The mission launched in 2014 aimed to achieve an “open-defecation free” India by October 2, 2019 coinciding with the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi through the construction of toilets.
- In 2021, the Government launched its second edition committing to making all cities “garbage-free cities” by 2026, while maintaining ODF status across 4,372 Urban Local Bodies (ULBs).
- It also has a vision of **100% source segregation**, door to door collection and scientific management of all fractions of waste, including safe disposal in scientific landfills.
- The SBM 2.0 aims to remediate all legacy dumpsites and convert them into green zones.
- The mission has also made provisions for scientific landfills to dispose of untreated inert waste and process rejects, in order to prevent fresh dumpsites being created.
- Action plans amounting to ₹3,226 crore of Central Share (CS) assistance on remediation of legacy waste dumpsites has been approved so far.

What has been the progress so far?

- As on September 2024, out of the 2,424 dumpsites, 471 sites have been remediated, remediation in 1,226 has been approved and is on-going, and 727 sites have been untouched.

- As far as area is concerned, of the total 17,039.71 acres, 27 % has been reclaimed and 73% is yet to be reclaimed.
- Among States, Tamil Nadu has the maximum area reclaimed from dumpsites at 837 acres (42%). Gujarat is the best performing State with 75% area (698 out of 938 acres) of landfills reclaimed.

An obsession with ranking is harming India's universities

(The Hindu, 04-10-24)

Context: The current obsession with university rankings and metrics in higher education has detrimental effects on teaching quality and overall educational outcomes.

What are the positive impact of global university ranking system?

- Rankings create pressure for universities to **enhance their academic standards,** facilities, and overall quality of education.
- Rankings often emphasize research output, **encouraging Indian universities to invest more** in research activities and infrastructure.
- High-ranking Indian institutions gain global recognition, **attracting international students** and faculty.
- Well-ranked universities may **attract more funding** from government and private sources.
- It pushes authorities to **grant autonomy** to several public higher education institutions thereby reducing undue political interference.
- It enabled for the creation of the Higher Education Financing Agency (HEFA) to fund rank-aspiring institutions

How has the focus on rankings negatively affected Indian higher education policies?

- It's one-dimensional, placing excessive emphasis on research output and fails to capture the multidimensional nature of universities
- The race for rankings can create undue pressure on faculty and administration, potentially compromising academic integrity.
- Global ranking criteria may not always align with local needs and contexts of Indian higher education.
- Career advancement dependent on metrics like research grants and PhD degrees awarded
- Decline in the importance of teaching and mentoring
- Pushing universities to generate their own funds, potentially through increased student fees
- High-achieving students might prefer higher-ranked foreign universities, potentially leading to brain drain.

What solutions does the article propose to address these issues?

- Creating separate tracks for research-focused and teaching-focused faculty
- Valuing the scientific content and societal impact of research over journal impact factors
- Recognizing teaching as an important function and encouraging curriculum improvement
- Replacing metrics with careful, unbiased judgment in evaluation

Can you answer the following question?

Evaluate the impact of global university rankings on the Indian higher education system. How can India balance the pursuit of international recognition with the need to maintain quality teaching and equitable access to education?