Making cities ‘Garbage Free’

(Mains GS 3 : Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.)

Context:

The recently released Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) 2.0 guidelines shows commitment to make all cities ‘Garbage Free’ and ‘Water Secure’, in order to contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 2030, which will ultimately improve the quality of life and ease of living of urban populations, thus leading to urban transformation.

Vision of SBM-U 2.0 :

- SBM-U 2.0 envisions to make all cities ‘Garbage Free’ and ensure grey and black water (used water) management in all cities other than those covered under AMRUT.
- It makes all urban local bodies ODF+ and those with a population of less than 1 lakh as ODF++, and Water+, thereby ensuring that no untreated used water is discharged in open to pollute water bodies, thus achieving the vision of safe sanitation in urban areas.
- The Mission will also focus on source segregation of solid waste, utilizing the principles of 3Rs (reduce, reuse, recycle), scientific processing of all types of municipal solid waste and remediation of legacy dumpsites for effective solid waste management.

Emphasis on solid waste management:

- The Mission is moving on the path of sustainable sanitation with over 3,300 cities and over 950 cities being certified ODF+ and ODF++ respectively, and 9 cities certified Water+, which entails treatment of wastewater and its optimum reuse.

- The thrust on scientific waste management is evident with waste processing in India going up by over four times from 18% in 2014 to 70% today.
- Solid waste management also goes beyond the efficient collection and transportation of waste and brings focus on processing all types of waste like plastic, construction and demolition waste, as well as providing budgetary support for remediating old waste disposed in all dumpsites.
- Its components include source segregation; door-to-door collection of waste; separate transportation of different types of wastes; processing of wet waste, dry waste, and construction and demolition waste.

Bring marked difference:

- The Mission has been able to bring about a marked difference in the lives of sanitation workers and informal waste workers.
- The active participation of 20 crore citizens (comprising over 50% of India's urban population) in the program has successfully transformed the Mission into a people's movement, a true Jan Andolan.
- The launch of operational guidelines of SBM-Urban 2.0 has set the stage for States/ UTs and ULBs to begin the next phase of their journey towards transforming Urban India.

Transformative hurdles:

- Urban local bodies (ULBs) in several States had prepared detailed project reports (DPRs) for setting up waste processing systems for wet and dry waste as part of SBM.
- But the process of setting up these facilities was delayed due to lack of funding and techno process knowledge, and delayed DPR approvals.
- This resulted in unprocessed waste being dumped in several sites, which needs to be processed through bioremediation before space can be created for new waste processing plants.

Funding from SBM 2.0:

- The total funding dedicated for implementation of SBM 2.0 is ₹1.41 lakh crore of which about ₹39,837 crore is set aside for solid waste management.
- This mission commits to providing financial assistance to set up fresh waste processing facilities and bioremediation projects across all the ULBs.
- Financial assistance to to set up construction and demolition waste processing facilities is limited to a chosen 154 large cities which have a population of over 5 lakh.

Financial assistance varies by State:

- The commitments made by the Government of India (GoI) for solid waste management projects are as follows: 90% for ULBs in the Northeastern and Himalayan States;

- 100% for ULBs in Union Territories without legislature; 80% for ULBs in Union Territories with legislature; 25% for other ULBs with more than 10 lakh population; 33% for other ULBs with more than 1 lakh but less than 10 lakh population; 50% for other ULBs with less than 1 lakh population.
- The remaining project cost will be paid from the 15th Finance Commission grants.
- SBM was providing 35% funding from the GoI irrespective of the population size of cities.

Achieving the target:

- Lack of funds was one of the main reasons for the partial success of SBM in solid waste management.
- Now, since SBM 2.0 is committing to paying a significant portion of the project cost, the ULBs are likely to take up projects by matching the shortfall with their reserved funds, thereby hoping to achieve the GoI target of waste disposal sites being free from old waste by March 2023.
- Also, the transformation of waste disposal sites to processing sites is likely to produce 72 lakh tonnes of organic compost per annum from 4.8 crore tonnes of waste generated across all ULBs in the country.

Conclusion:

- Organic compost recovered from the wet waste, which is 60% of the total waste, can be used to enrich the soil quality and can meet about 10-12% of the country's fertilizer demand.
- That will reduce the amount of chemical fertilizer imported and save about ₹2,600 crore of subsidy paid by the government.