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SWACHHTA STATUS

A flush in India's sanitary push: City households drive the sway

A recent survey by NSSO reveals that 88.8% urban households in the country have access to sanitary toilets

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 9

IN A major boost to the government's initiative of building toilets across the country, every urban household across two states — Mizoram and Uttarakhand — now has a sanitary toilet. The all-India average for urban areas too stands high at 88.8 per cent. Some states are close to achieving the feat in rural areas also, with more than 95 per cent households in Sikkim, Kerala and Mizoram having access to a sanitary toilet.

According to a survey on Swachhta Status conducted by the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) during May-June 2015 (covering 3,788 villages and 2,907 urban blocks), Mizoram and Uttarakhand top the list in terms of household access to toilets in urban areas. When it comes to household access to toilet in rural areas, Sikkim tops the list. The survey, which covered 73,176 households in rural India and 41,538 households in urban India, examined the situation of availability/accessibility of toilets, solid waste and liquid waste management at sample village/ward level.

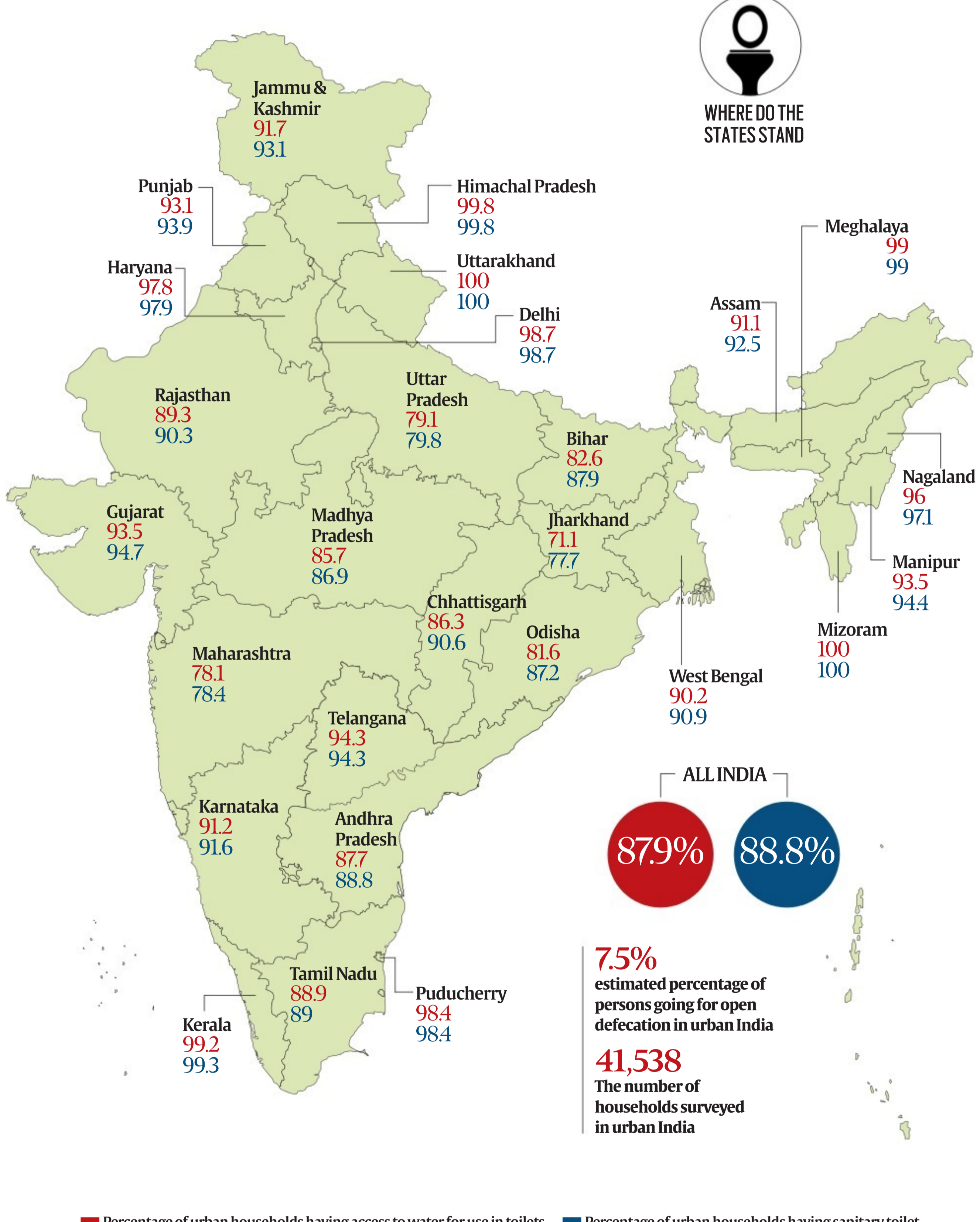
Only six states (Bihar, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra and Jharkhand) fall below the national urban average of 88.8 per cent with Jharkhand ranking the lowest (among 27 states) with only 77.7 per cent of its urban households having a sanitary toilet. Eight states fell below the national rural average of 45.3 per cent and Jharkhand stood last with only 18.8 per cent of its rural households having a toilet. The other seven are: Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Chhattisgarh.

While Gujarat ranked 10th when it came to having access to a toilet in urban area, it ranked 14th when it came to access to toilet in rural areas. Interestingly, Gujarat tops the list when it comes to street cleaning in the wards. The survey found that as high as 94.5 per cent of the wards in Gujarat had a system of street cleaning, Haryana came next with 94.1 per cent of the wards with a system of street cleaning.

There was also a wide gap between urban and rural India when it comes to access of water for use in toilets for households. While the figure stood at 87.9 per cent for urban India, only 42.5 per cent of the rural households had access to water for use in toilet and comes across as a major issue for the rural areas.

Other than sanitary toilets at home, the survey also looked at the access of community toilet in villages and urban blocks. While 42 per cent of the wards in 2,907 urban blocks had a community toilet, 13.1 per cent of the 3,788 villages surveyed as a community toilet.

While the infrastructure has improved in cities, the survey reveals that they are also being maintained well. The survey shows that the toilets in almost 91.4 per cent wards were being cleaned up either by the person employed with the municipal body or employed by the residents' welfare association regularly. While 56.4 per cent wards reported to have sewer network for disposal of liquid waste, 78.1 per cent wards reported having a system of street cleaning. Also, 64.2 per cent wards had a dumping place for solid waste and almost 50 per cent of them were cleaned every day whereas the remaining were cleaned on a weekly or a monthly basis. Only 4.9 per cent wards were such where the solid waste dumping place was not cleaned.



TASK FORCE ON MIGRATION Panel seeks PDS transfer within states, better data collection

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A TASK force on migration, formed by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation, has asked for portability of Public Distribution System (PDS) within states, provision of dormitories in cities as well as better data collection so as to ensure that there are no barriers to voluntary movement of migrant workers across the country.

Among the five chief recommendations of the panel are creation of migrant helplines and a review of migration-related legal framework at the federal and state levels. These include acts and schemes such as the Interstate Migrant Workers Act 1979, the Unorganised Workers' Social Security Act 2008, Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojna and National Rural Employment Guarantee scheme.

Three out of 10 people in India are internal migrants with the National Sample Survey estimating the migrant population to be 326 million. The first-ever migration task force, headed by Partha Mukhopadhyay from the Centre for Policy Research, was set up a year ago. Ministry officials said that the panel is expected to submit its final report in a few months. "We have circulated the recommendations made in the draft report to all concerned ministries. The report will be finalised once they send their suggestions," said the official.

In its set of preliminary recommendations, it has said that there must be inter-state arrangements similar to the Memorandum of Understanding signed between Andhra Pradesh and Odisha so as to ensure the continuance of PDS and other benefits to migrants.

The panel notes: "One of the major benefits that migrants, especially short term migrants or migrants who do not move with their household lose at the time is access to PDS." It makes a case for accelerating the portability of PDS within states by using Aadhar as an identification system once the migrant enrolls in the destination state.

In terms of housing, the panel has asked for a two-pronged focus on provision of basic services in informal settlements while creating rental housing. This, it states, could be in the form of dormitories where there should be no restriction on duration of stay.

One of the chief recommendations of the report is the need to improve data collection on migration in India. Presently, data on internal migration is available from the Census, conducted once every 10 years, and the National Sample Survey Organisation's quinquennial migration surveys. So as to make available more updated data on which policies could be based, the panel has said that the NSSO's quarterly labour force survey could include questions relating to migration. Moreover, census data which is available only till district level, should be released at the sub-district and village levels too, it states.

Sustainable real estate: Supply gap, awareness vacuum persist

SHUBHRANSHU PANI

IN THE past decade, Indian as well as global corporates have shifted a lot of their focus on green commercial buildings. This increasing interest has led to an accelerated availability of such products, services and also enthusiasm from builders catering to this segment.

There has also been a significant increase in 'green' growth in the residential segment. There are now investors such as International Finance Corporation, UK government's Department of International Development (DFID) and the National Housing Bank, which is significantly boosting this relatively new segment.

Today, many more Indian developers have understood that green certification can attract more customers and investors, and are aligning themselves with green concepts. However, the supply gap is still quite significant, and there is still a definite need to create a broader spectrum of awareness among end-users.

Another lacuna is on the banking front. Bank loans are an integral factor driving the residential property market, and unless bankers and lending agencies are trained on the benefits and importance of green

real estate and insist on such features, we will not see awareness and traction of sustainable properties increase much.

In commercial properties, there needs to be more clarity on who reaps the benefits: The owner or the tenant. In view of this, codes have to be made mandatory. The Energy Conservation Building Code has to be simplified, and the state governments have to ensure that it is made mandatory for all concerned local bodies. The way things are now, local urban bodies do not have the wherewithal for implementation.

Indisputable benefits

Green building concepts, when implemented to the required extent and intent, will help save water through rainwater harvesting and recycling of waste water, and in reaping benefits from the water energy nexus. The compounded annual growth rate of electricity in the residential segment is over 8 per cent. One-third of electricity used in the country is for residential and commercial buildings. Whether it is water or energy, one can easily achieve benefits to the tune of 25 per cent or more.

Green buildings also address the major concern area of waste disposal in most Indian cities. We already face decreasing



availability of landfill sites in these cities, and green buildings with their integrated waste disposal and recycling systems can contribute significantly towards decreasing dependence on them.

Incentives & concessions

At present, Indian cities which offer incentives and concessions for green building development include Kolkata, Noida, Hyderabad and Pune. Examples of such in-

centives include higher (floor area ratio) FAR and property tax incentives by Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation, the Pune Eco-housing programme, etc. Linking property tax to actual performance and mandating a simplified region-specific list will help achieve attain green goals faster and in more cities. A holistic approach is preferable to a piece-meal approach. The positive impacts will accrue faster when green construction parameters are made mandatory and implemented by all concerned stakeholders like urban local bodies (municipalities and development authorities), builders, owners, tenants, electricity distribution companies, pollution control bodies, water supply and sewerage departments, and state and central governments.

Rating & Certification

Today, there are a number of rating and certifying agencies for green construction existing in India. These include Indian Green Building Council, US Green Building Council (EDGE Program), Green Globes, Eco Housing program and MNRE's GRIHA. Almost all of the certification programmes have common elements of focus, and the benefits of savings in energy and water, and using local materials are invariably achieved.

The time is now

There is no question that population growth in most parts of the urbanised and urbanising world is exceeding these areas' ability to accommodate it. Unsustainable growth inevitably leads to environmental changes which, if they cannot actually be reversed, at least must be slowed down. The onus of reducing environmental degradation obviously does not fall solely on the shoulders of sustainable real estate. However, green buildings are definitely an obvious available solution, since designing and buildings real estate which results in lower emissions is in every developer's reach today. It is only a question of awareness and willingness. In a massively populated and increasingly populating country like India, the government is already severely challenged in making basic resources like water and electricity available and managing waste. The situation will not improve without proactive intervention, and in fact only worsen. Sustainable real estate can make a significant dent in this resource deficit if it is deployed in the required magnitude, so we as a country need to 'go green' sooner rather than later.

(Writer is managing director, strategic consulting, JLL India)