World Toilet Day – 19 November 2026: 'Safe toilets. Equal futures.'

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News

World Toilet Day is observed every year on 19 November; it is coordinated by UN-Water. The 2026 campaign theme is 'Safe toilets. Equal futures.', highlighting the link between sanitation and gender equality. Its key message is that safe toilets protect the health, safety, dignity and opportunities of women and girls. According to the UN-Water fact sheet, 3.4 billion people still live without safe toilets, including 354 million who practise open defecation. Fewer than one in three schools have menstrual waste bins in girls' toilets. Since 2015, 1.2 billion people have gained safe toilets. The day drives action towards Sustainable Development Goal 6 (water and sanitation for all).

Key facts for the exam

Point	Details
Date	19 November (official UN day since 2013)
UN resolution	A/RES/67/291 'Sanitation for All' – moved by Singapore, adopted by consensus (July 2013)
Coordinator	UN-Water
2026 theme	'Safe toilets. Equal futures.' – sanitation and gender equality
Global status	3.4 billion lack safe toilets; 354 million defecate in the open

Point	Details
SDG target	Target 6.2 – sanitation for all, end open defecation by 2030
India	Swachh Bharat Mission – launched 2 Oct 2014
Tamil Nadu (since 2014)	SBM(G): 60.25 lakh household latrines; SBM(U): 5.45 lakh

Background

- History: The World Toilet Organization, founded in Singapore in 2001, began marking 19 November as Toilet Day. The 67th session of the UN General Assembly adopted Singapore's 'Sanitation for All' resolution (A/RES/67/291) by consensus in July 2013, with more than 100 co-sponsors. Earlier, in 2010, the General Assembly (resolution 64/292) recognised safe drinking water and sanitation as a human right.
- SDG 6: Target 6.1 is safe and affordable drinking water for all; Target 6.2 is adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all by 2030, ending open defecation, with special attention to the needs of women and girls. Unsafe water, sanitation and hygiene cause the deaths of about 1,000 children under five every day (UN-Water 2026 fact sheet). Faecal–oral diseases such as diarrhoea, cholera and typhoid spread this way.
- Constitution: 'Public health and sanitation' is Entry 6 of the State List in the Seventh Schedule. Article 47 (a Directive Principle) makes raising nutrition and improving public health a duty of the State. The 11th and 12th Schedules, added by the 73rd and 74th Amendments, also give sanitation work to panchayats and municipalities. A 2013 law prohibits employment as manual scavengers, and the Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment runs the NAMASTE scheme for the safety of sewer and septic-tank workers.
- India – Swachh Bharat Mission: Under the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM), launched on 2 October 2014, more than 11.9 crore household latrines and 2.6 lakh community sanitary complexes have been built in rural areas and 63.8 lakh household latrines in urban areas since 2014 (Lok Sabha reply, July 2025). Rural Phase II aims to sustain ODF status and make villages 'ODF Plus' through solid and liquid waste management.

Tamil Nadu link: Since 2014, Tamil Nadu has built 60,24,612 individual household latrines and 9,091 community sanitary complexes under SBM (Gramin), and 5,45,101 household latrines and 92,744 community/public toilet seats under SBM (Urban), Union MoS for Jal Shakti V. Somanna told the Lok Sabha (24 July 2025). Rural sanitation is implemented by TN's Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Department.

Frequently asked questions

What is this news about?

World Toilet Day is observed every year on 19 November; it is coordinated by UN-Water. The 2026 campaign theme is 'Safe toilets. Equal futures.', highlighting the link between sanitation and gender equality.

What are the key facts to remember for the exam?

Date: 19 November (official UN day since 2013); UN resolution: A/RES/67/291 'Sanitation for All' – moved by Singapore, adopted by consensus (July 2013); Coordinator: UN-Water; 2026 theme: 'Safe

toilets. Equal futures.' – sanitation and gender equality.

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Practice questions (with answers)

1. Which country moved the 2013 UN General Assembly resolution that designated 19 November as World Toilet Day?

A) India

B) Singapore

C) Japan

D) Switzerland

Answer: B – Explanation: Singapore – 'Sanitation for All' (A/RES/67/291), adopted by consensus with over 100 co-sponsors.

2. Among the SDG targets, which one calls for ending open defecation by 2030?

A) Target 6.1

B) Target 3.3

C) Target 6.3

D) Target 6.2

Answer: D – Explanation: 6.2 – sanitation and hygiene for all. 6.1 is safe drinking water; 6.3 is water quality and wastewater treatment.

3. 'Public health and sanitation' is placed in which list of the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution?

A) Union List

B) State List

C) Concurrent List

D) Residuary powers

Answer: B – Explanation: State List, Entry 6. So sanitation is mainly the responsibility of State governments and local bodies.

4. Which Union Ministry runs the NAMASTE scheme for the safety of sewer and septic-tank workers?

A) Jal Shakti

B) Rural Development

C) Social Justice

D) Health

Answer: C – Explanation: Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment. NAMASTE – National Action for Mechanised Sanitation Ecosystem.

5. The 2026 World Toilet Day campaign 'Safe toilets. Equal futures.' links sanitation with what?

A) Gender equality

B) Climate resilience

C) Groundwater

D) Tourism growth

Answer: A – Explanation: Gender equality – safe toilets protect the health, safety, dignity and education of women and girls.

Sources: United Nations – un.org/en/observances/toilet-day; UN-Water – World Toilet Day 2026 fact sheet (un.org); UN Digital Library (A/RES/67/291); PIB, Ministry of Jal Shakti (PRID 2147695, 24 Jul 2025); PIB, Ministry of Social Justice (PRID 2335988, 13 Nov 2026). © Shanmugam IAS Academy.