



NAMASTE Scheme

Prelims: Initiatives to tackle Menace of Manual Scavenging, ULBs.

Mains: NAMASTE scheme Issues related to SC, STs

Why in News?

[Union Budget 2023-2024](#) has allocated nearly **Rs 100 crore for the National Action for Mechanized Sanitation Ecosystem (NAMASTE)** and the government is looking to enable **100% mechanical desludging of septic tanks and sewers in all cities and towns.**

- The process of extending the Scheme to all the [Urban Local Bodies \(ULBs\)](#) of the country has been initiated.

What is the NAMASTE Scheme?

- **About:**
 - It was launched in 2022 as a [Central Sector Scheme.](#)
 - The scheme is being undertaken **jointly by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs and the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment (MoSJE)** and aims to eradicate unsafe sewer and septic tank cleaning practices.
- **Objectives:**
 - Zero fatalities in sanitation work in India.
 - All sanitation work is performed by skilled workers.
 - No sanitation workers come in direct contact with human faecal matter.
 - Sanitation workers are collectivised into [Self Help Groups \(SHGs\)](#) and are empowered to run sanitation enterprises.
 - Strengthened supervisory and monitoring systems at National, State and Urban Local Body (ULB) levels to ensure enforcement and monitoring of safe sanitation work.
 - Increased awareness among sanitation services seekers (individuals and institutions) to seek services from registered and skilled sanitation workers.

What are the Key Features of the Scheme to be Implemented in all ULBs?

- **Identification:** NAMASTE envisages identifying the Sewer/Septic Tank Workers (SSWs).
- **Occupational Training and distribution of PPE Kits to SSWs.**
- **Assistance for Safety Devices to Sanitation Response Units (SRUs).**
- **Extending Health Insurance Scheme Benefits** to identified SSWs and their families under the Ayushman Bharat- Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY).
- **Livelihood Assistance:** The Action Plan will promote mechanization and enterprise development by providing funding support and subsidy (capital +interest) to the sanitation workers, to procure sanitation related equipments.
- **IEC (Information Education and Communication) Campaign:** Massive campaigns would be undertaken jointly by the ULBs & NSKFDC (National Safai Karamcharis Finance & Development

Corporation) to spread awareness about the interventions of NAMASTE.

What is Manual Scavenging?

- Manual scavenging is defined as “the removal of human excrement from public streets and dry latrines, cleaning septic tanks, gutters and sewers”.
- India banned the practice under the [Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013 \(PEMSR\)](#).
 - The Act recognizes manual scavenging as a “dehumanizing practice.

What are the Steps taken to tackle the Menace of Manual Scavenging?

- [The Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation \(Amendment\) Bill, 2020:](#)
 - It proposes to completely mechanise sewer cleaning, introduce ways for ‘on-site’ protection and provide compensation to manual scavengers in case of sewer deaths.
 - It will be an amendment to The Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013.
 - It is still awaiting cabinet approval.
- **The Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013:**
 - Superseding the 1993 Act, the 2013 Act goes beyond prohibitions on dry latrines, and outlaws all manual excrement cleaning of insanitary latrines, open drains, or pits.
- **The Building and Maintenance of Insanitary Latrines Act of 2013:**
 - It outlaws construction or maintenance of unsanitary toilets, and the hiring of anybody for their manual scavenging, as well as of hazardous cleaning of sewers and septic tanks.
- **Prevention of Atrocities Act:**
 - In 1989, the Prevention of [Atrocities Act](#) became an integrated guard for sanitation workers, more than 90% people employed as manual scavengers belonged to the Scheduled Caste. This became an important landmark to free manual scavengers from designated traditional occupations.
- **SC Judgment:**
 - In 2014, a [Supreme Court](#) order made it mandatory for the government to identify all those who died in sewage work since 1993 and provide Rs. 10 lakh each as compensation to their families.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Prelims

Q. ‘Rashtriya Garima Abhiyaan’ is a national campaign to (2016)

- (a) rehabilitate the homeless and destitute persons and provide them with suitable sources of livelihood
(b) release the sex workers from their practice and provide them with alternative sources of livelihood
(c) eradicate the practice of manual scavenging and rehabilitate the manual scavengers
(d) release the bonded labourers from their bondage and rehabilitate them

Ans: (c)

Exp:

- Rashtriya Garima Abhiyaan is a national campaign for dignity and eradication of manual scavenging launched by Jan Sahas in 2001.
- Therefore, option (c) is the correct answer.

Mains

Q. What are the areas of prohibitive labour that can be sustainably managed by robots? Discuss the initiatives that can propel the research in premier research institutes for substantive and gainful innovation. **(2015)**

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