

What is NAMASTE Scheme?

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Why in news?

- The Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has said that only 508 districts out of the total 766 districts in the country have declared themselves manual-scavenging free.
- The data was revealed in a booklet the Ministry has prepared to outline its achievements under the current government since 2014.

What is NAMASTE Scheme?

About

- NAMASTE stands for National Action for Mechanised Sanitation Ecosystem.
- It has been launched with an objective to ensure safety and dignity of sanitation workers in urban India as well as providing sustainable livelihood to these workers.
- **Ministries involved:** It is launched as a joint initiative of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MoSJE) and the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA).
- **Implementing agency** – National Safai Karamchari Financial Development Corporation (NSKFDC) would be implementing agency for NAMASTE.
- **Coverage:** Five hundred cities (converging with AMRUT cities) will be taken up under this phase of NAMASTE. It will be implemented for the period 2022-26.

What are the Aims of NAMASTE Scheme?

- 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 collectivized into SHGs and are empowered to run sanitation enterprises
- All Sewer and Septic tank sanitation workers (SSWs) have access to alternative livelihoods

What are the Components of NAMASTE Scheme?

- **Extending Insurance Scheme Benefits**
 - These workers and their families will be covered under the Ayushman Bharat- Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY).
 - The premium for AB-PMJAY for those identified SSWs families who are not covered earlier shall be borne under NAMASTE.
- **Livelihood Assistance**
 - The Action Plan will promote mechanization and enterprise development.
 - Identified SSWs and their dependants will be given counselling on available livelihood choices and an opportunity to acquire alternative skills, if they so desire.
 - An SSW may choose to continue working in the sanitation sector, thereby becoming eligible for receiving capacity building training.
 - Alternatively, the worker may choose to explore an alternative livelihood option or an entrepreneurial venture.
- **Saturation with Social Security Schemes' benefits**

- The identified SSWs and their family members will be extended benefits of all the social security schemes.

- **Other assistance**

- The scheme will include capital subsidies of up to ₹5 lakh on sanitation machinery costing up to ₹15 lakh and interest subsidies on loans.
 - Interest rates will be capped between 4-6% for the beneficiaries.
- The scheme also provides for training the workers in the use of these machines, during which time a stipend of up to ₹3,000 per month will be provided.

News Summary: Social Justice Ministry report on manual scavenging

Status of manual scavenging in India

- **Deaths related to manual scavenging**

- The Social Justice Ministry has maintained in almost every Parliament session in the last two years that there are no manual scavenging deaths taking place across the country.
- These deaths have been attributed to hazardous cleaning of sewers and septic tanks.
 - As per the officials, the Ministry have differentiated manual scavenging from hazardous cleaning of sewers.
 - They maintained that the surveys conducted in 2013 and 2018 had identified all existing manual scavengers (about 58,000).
 - Hence, manual scavenging no longer existed in the country.

- **Districts as manual scavenging free**

- 508 districts have reported themselves as manual scavenging free.

- **Rehabilitation of manual scavengers**

- According to the scheme for rehabilitation of manual scavengers, the 58,000 identified sewer workers have been given a one-time cash pay-out of ₹40,000 each.
 - Self-Employment Scheme for the Rehabilitation of Manual Scavengers (SRMS) was started in 2007.
 - Under the SRMS, the Social Justice Ministry had identified a total of 58,098 eligible manual scavengers in a nationwide survey conducted in 2018.
 - After identifying the scavengers, the Ministry of Social Justice had announced that the practice of manual scavenging no longer takes place in the country.
 - This is because ***all manual scavengers had been accounted for and enrolled into the rehabilitation scheme.***
- In addition, around 22,000 of them (less than half) have been connected to skills training programmes.
- Subsidies and loans are available to any of them wishing to set up their own business.

- **NAMASTE scheme**

- The scheme for rehabilitation of manual scavengers has now been merged with the NAMASTE scheme for 100% mechanisation of sewer work.
 - The guidelines for this scheme are yet to be finalised, according to the Ministry.
 - The **FY 2023-24 Union Budget** showed no allocation for the rehabilitation scheme and ₹100 crore allocation for the NAMASTE scheme.
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Q1) What is manual scavenging?

Manual scavenging refers to the degrading and hazardous practice of manually cleaning, handling, and disposing of human excreta, solid waste, and other hazardous materials. It involves individuals, often from marginalized communities, known as manual scavengers, who are engaged in physically removing waste from insanitary latrines, open drains, septic tanks, and sewers using basic tools like brooms, buckets, and baskets.

Q2) What is Self-Employment Scheme for the Rehabilitation of Manual Scavengers (SRMS)?

The Self-Employment Scheme for the Rehabilitation of Manual Scavengers (SRMS) is a government initiative in India aimed at providing alternative livelihood options to manual scavengers and their dependents. The scheme was introduced as part of the broader efforts to eliminate manual scavenging and uplift the socio-economic conditions of affected individuals.

Source: [Only 66% districts in country free of manual scavenging: Social Justice Ministry report](#) | [PIB](#)

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