

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE & EMPOWERMENT
RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO -2383
ANSWERED ON - 09/08/2023

ROBOT 'BANDICOOT' TECHNOLOGY TO ELIMINATE MANUAL SCAVENGING

2383. SHRI PRAMOD TIWARI

Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:-

- (a) whether the newly found robot 'Bandicoot' technology is operational and feasible to use pan India; and
- (b) if so, whether Government has a tangible plan to implement the technology and eliminate manual scavenging in the country, if not, the reasons there for?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT

(SHRI RAMDAS ATHAWALE)

(a) The requirement which products like Bandicoot deals with, is limited to removal of accumulated grit and deposits at bottom of a manhole, which could cause choking and sewer overflows. Thus local bodies have been advised to acquire appropriate manhole de-gritting machines which can be operated without need to enter inside a manhole and also set up an appropriate cleaning periodicity. The need of periodic as well as emergency de-gritting manholes can be completed by adopting much simpler machines, easily locally fabricated which will give almost the same, If not better, output while ensuring similar level of safety for sanitation workers.

Cities have been advised to use simple, cost effective mechanical products for management of their manholes and sewers.

(b) As per Section 33 of the MS Act, 2013 every local authority and other agency are supposed to use appropriate technological appliance for cleaning of sewer and septic tanks. Government has to promote the use of modern technology through financial assistance, incentives and otherwise.

As per “Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Rules,2013 (MS Rules, 2013)” it is mandatory for the employer to provide the safety gear, devices and ensure safety precautions as prescribed in the Rules.

Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs has issued Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for cleaning of sewer and septic tanks. In addition, to this, NAMASTE scheme is being implemented in all Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) in the country to ensure the following:-

- Zero fatalities in sanitation work in India
- All sanitation work to be performed by skilled workers
- No sanitation workers come in direct contact with human faecal matter
- Increased awareness amongst sanitation services seekers (individuals and institutions) to seek services from registered and skilled sanitation workers
- strengthening and capacitating Emergency Response Sanitation Units (ERSUs) to ensure safe delivery of mechanized sanitation services.
- Empowering of Sanitation workers to run sanitation enterprises and promote mechanisation of cleaning operation through availability of machines.

The scheme also formalizes sewer septic tank workers by providing occupational training, safety gears and extension of health insurance under AB-PMJAY to ensure safe cleaning with mechanized equipment and enhancing their dignity.
