

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT
LOK SABHA**

**UNSTARRED QUESTION NO.257
TO BE ANSWERED ON 22.07.2025**

SAFETY OF SANITATION WORKERS

257. MS. PRANITI SUSHILKUMAR SHINDE:

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

- (a) whether the Government is aware of the findings of a recent Union Government commissioned social audit conducted in various locations in Maharashtra regarding the safety of sanitation workers;
- (b) if so, the details thereof, including specific lapses identified in cities such as Mumbai, Pune, Parbhani, Satara and Shirur;
- (c) whether these lapses are in violation of the provisions of the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013;
- (d) if so, the actions taken or proposed by the Government against the authorities and contractors found to be in breach of the law; and
- (e) the steps being taken to ensure strict compliance with safety protocols, provision of protective gear, emergency response systems and mandatory training for sanitation workers in the country?

ANSWER

**MINISTER OF STATE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT
(SHRI RAMDAS ATHAWALE)**

(a) & (b): Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment got commissioned a social audit on deaths of sanitation workers in September, 2023. The study covered 54 death cases which occurred in the year 2022 and 2023 in 17 districts of 8 States which also included 4 districts of Maharashtra i.e. Mumbai, Pune, Parbhani and Satara.

Major findings of social audit is at **Annexure**.

(c): Deaths have occurred in States/UTs due to hazardous cleaning of sewers and septic tanks and non observance of safety precautions as prescribed under the "Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013 and MS Rules, 2013" as well as Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) issued by Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.

(d): State/UT Governments are requested to get the matter of sewer and septic tank death cases investigated and ensure that provisions in the the “Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013 and “Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Rules, 2013 (MS Rules, 2013) are strictly adhered and action against the persons responsible for engaging the persons for hazardous cleaning of sewer and septic tanks in violation of section 7 of the MS Act, 2013 may be initiated.

(e): To tackle hazardous cleaning of Sewer and Septic Tank, Department of Social Justice and Empowerment in convergence with Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs has launched the “National Action for Mechanised Sanitation Ecosystem (NAMASTE)” Scheme in 2023-24 for implementation in all Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) of the country. The objective is to ensure safety and dignity of Sewer and Septic Tank Workers (SSWs) and empower them socially and economically.

The scheme envisages provision of :-

- PPE Kits, AB-PMJAY cards and occupation safety training to sewer and septic tank workers.
- Safety devices to Emergency Response Sanitation Units (ERSUs)
- Capital Subsidy for sanitation related machinery to sanitation workers.
- Workshop on prevention of hazardous cleaning of sewer and septic tanks.

In addition, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs has issued the following advisory for safe cleaning of sewer and septic tanks:-

- i. Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for cleaning of Sewer or Septic tank.
- ii. Advisory for technical and managerial interventions for ensuring safety during sewer and septic tank cleaning through Emergency Response Sanitation Unit (ERSU).
- iii. Ready Reckoner for Urban Local Bodies for ensuring safety of sanitation workers.
- iv. Organising Safaimitra Suraksha Shivirs nationwide through ULBs to provide health checkups and linkage to social welfare schemes.

Annexure referred in reply to parts (a) and (b) of the Lok Sabha Unstarred Question No. 257 for answer on 22.07.2025 regarding Safety of Sanitation Workers.

Major findings of social audit

- **Hiring Mechanism:-** For 8 cases the deceased workers were employed by Private Agency, in 5 cases the deceased workers were employed by Agency of Government Department, in 38 cases the deceased workers were contacted personally/individually and in 3 cases the deceased workers who were working in government sector were hired by a private employer for the particular work when death occurred.
- **Use of Safety Equipment:-** In 47 death cases no mechanized equipment and safety gears for cleaning of sewers and septic tanks were made available to the workers. However, only in 2 cases in Parbhani and Satara district, these safety gears and equipment were provided. It was also found that in Satara district, training was also given on how to use the safety gears and tools by the concerned agency.
- **Awareness related Issues:-** In 42 death cases it was found that there was no awareness about hazardous cleaning as per Manual Scavenger Act. In addition, only in 7 death cases out of the total 54 cases covered, awareness related to the MS Act was partially done after the deaths and for districts namely; Chennai and Kancheepuram under Tamil Nadu and Satara district under Maharashtra state, the awareness provided was found to be quite good.
- **Lack of Institutional Set-up:-** In 41 sites related to death cases it was found that there are no emergency response sanitation unit and in 5 death case (1 in West Delhi district, NCT Delhi, 3 in Kancheepuram district, TamilNadu and 1 in Satara district, Maharashtra) sites it was available. However, in 4 death cases (2 in Gurugram and 2 in Sonipat, Haryana) sites the emergency response was not operational.
- **Lack of Prompt Response Readiness with Requisite Equipment:-** Out of the total 54 cases covered, in 45 death cases, it was found that there is still no equipment readiness on the part of the concerned Agency carrying out such work. In 4 cases (2 in Tirupathi district, Andhra Pradesh and 2 in Hisar district, Haryana) the equipment's readiness were found to be average and in 1 case (Satara district, Maharashtra) the equipment readiness was good and satisfactory.
- **Lack of Awareness among workers engaged in hazardous cleaning about safety of precaution and provisions of Act/Rules:-** Out of total 54 cases, in 18 cases (8 cases in Tamil Nadu, 5 in Maharashtra, 2 cases in Haryana, 2 cases in Uttar Pradesh and 1 case in Gujarat) the written consent of the worker was taken but they were not counselled about the risks involved in the work. In 27 death cases the consent of the workers was not taken.

- **Lack of PPE Kits and Safety Devices:-** Out of the 54 death cases covered, in 49 death cases no safety kit was worn by the sanitation workers at the time of death . only in 1 death case (Satara district, Maharashtra) it was found that the deceased victim was wearing only gum boots and gloves at the time of death and in another 5 deaths (2 in Tirupathi district, Andhra Pradesh and 2 in Kachchh district, Gujarat) cases it was found that the deceased workers were wearing only gloves at the time of death. Furthermore, there were no safety preparation for the sanitation workers at the site. The safety preparation at Satara district, Maharashtra was found to be average as per the findings of social audit team.
