

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

**UNSTARRED QUESTION NO.4153
TO BE ANSWERED ON 19.08.2025**

LACK OF SAFETY GEAR FOR SANITATION WORKERS

4153. DR. M P ABDUSSAMAD SAMADANI:

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

- (a) whether it is a fact that in over 90% of the sewer deaths audited in 2022 and 2023, workers were not provided with any safety gear;
- (b) if so, the steps taken by the Government to ensure strict compliance with safety protocols by agencies engaging sanitation workers; and
- (c) whether any penal action has been taken against the defaulting agencies, if so, the details thereof?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT

(SHRI RAMDAS ATHAWALE)

(a): Audit reported that majority of the sanitation workers were engaged by the private individuals through unorganized sector without the availability of appropriate protective gears.

(b): Sanitation is a State Subject under VIIth schedule of the Constitution of India.

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.

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)
- Upfront Capital Subsidy for sanitation related machinery to sanitation workers and their groups of maximum five persons.
- Organising Workshops on prevention of hazardous cleaning of sewer and septic tanks.

In addition, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs has also 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 (ULBs) for ensuring safety of sanitation workers.
- iv. Organising Safaimitra Suraksha Shivirs nationwide through ULBs to provide health checkups and linkage to social welfare schemes.

(c): State/UT Governments are requested to get the matter of sewer and septic tank death cases investigated and ensure that provisions in 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.
