



Empowering Lives: NAMASTE Scheme Delivers Tangible Change for Sanitation Workers

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The National Action for Mechanised Sanitation Ecosystem (NAMASTE) Scheme has marked a significant milestone in advancing dignity, safety and sustainable livelihoods for sanitation workers across the country. Union Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment Dr Virendra Kumar has said that the scheme reflects the Government's strong commitment to ensuring dignity, safety and economic empowerment for sanitation workers. Since its launch in FY 2023–24, the initiative has demonstrated measurable impact through targeted interventions, community engagement and a focused approach to eliminate hazardous manual cleaning practices.

A total of 90,942 sewer and septic tank workers have been profiled, of which 89,248 have been validated. As many as 87,037 workers have been provided with PPE kits, while 76,247 have been covered under various health insurance schemes. An upfront capital subsidy of ₹34.17 crore has been released to 983 sanitation workers for procurement of 364 vehicles. Additionally, 1,562 workshops on prevention of hazardous cleaning of sewers and septic tanks have been conducted across the country. To further strengthen safety infrastructure, 753 safety devices have been dispatched to Emergency Response Sanitation Units (ERSUs) established in larger municipal corporations and districts.

Since June 2024, waste pickers engaged in solid waste management have also been included as a target group under the scheme in both urban and rural areas. A total of 3,78,547 waste pickers have been profiled, of which 2,52,163 have been validated through e-KYC. Around 1,31,864 waste pickers have received PPE kits, and data of 1,24,835 waste pickers has been processed for generation of Ayushman Cards.

During 2025–26, key enhancements have been made under the scheme. The ceiling for upfront capital subsidy under the Swachhata Udyami Yojana (SUY) has been increased from ₹5.00 lakh to ₹7.50 lakh for individual projects and from ₹18.75 lakh to ₹25.00 lakh for group projects (up to five beneficiaries). A new component has also been introduced to provide upfront capital subsidy of 25% of the project cost to Private Sanitation Service Organisations (PSSOs) and private contractors for procurement and deployment of mechanised cleaning equipment and vehicles. As a result, ₹14.84 crore has been released as upfront capital subsidy for 320 beneficiaries (Sanipreneurs), an increase from 250 beneficiaries in the previous financial year.

The NAMASTE Scheme represents a paradigm shift—it is not merely a welfare initiative but a transformative social reform movement. By integrating technological innovation with a rights-based approach, it is paving the way for an India where sanitation workers can live and work with dignity, security and independence.

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