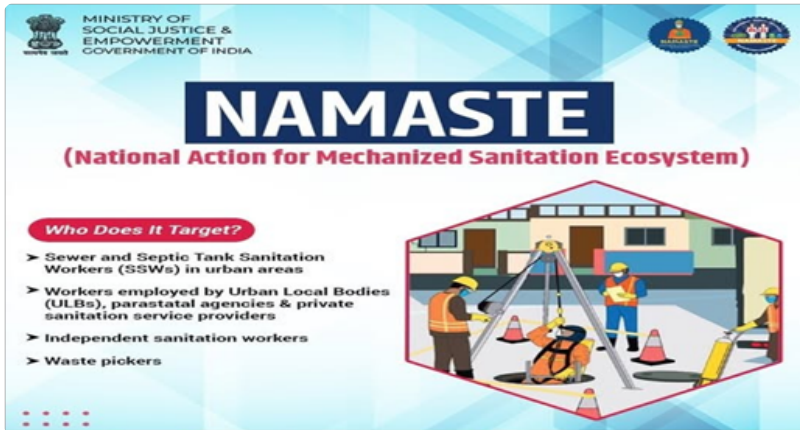




KAMARAJ IAS ACADEMY
Only IAS Academy by Grandson of "Perunthalaivar Kamarajar"

NAMASTE Scheme: Advancing Dignity and Safety of Sanitation Workers

Published On: 25-04-2026



The National Action for Mechanised Sanitation Ecosystem (NAMASTE) Scheme has achieved a significant milestone in ensuring the dignity, safety, and social security of sanitation workers, marking progress toward the elimination of hazardous manual cleaning practices in India.?

Background and Context

Sanitation workers, particularly those engaged in cleaning sewers and septic tanks, have historically faced unsafe working conditions, social stigma, and lack of institutional protection. Despite legal prohibition under the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013, instances of hazardous manual cleaning persist. In this context, the NAMASTE Scheme represents a systemic shift from manual to mechanised sanitation, aligning with India's broader social justice and public health goals.

About the NAMASTE Scheme

The NAMASTE Scheme is a Central Sector Scheme launched in 2023, jointly implemented by the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment and the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs. It is executed through the National Safai Karamcharis Finance and Development Corporation (NSKFDC). The scheme aims to profile, train, and rehabilitate sanitation workers, while promoting the use of mechanised equipment to eliminate human involvement in hazardous cleaning tasks.

Key Achievements and Progress

The scheme has recorded notable achievements in a short span of time. Over 90,000 sanitation workers engaged in sewer and septic tank cleaning have been identified, out of which around 89,000 have been validated through digital profiling. A large number of workers have been provided with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), ensuring safer working conditions. Additionally, more than 76,000 workers have been brought under health

Kamaraj IAS Academy

Plot A P.127, AF block, 6 th street, 11th Main Rd, Shanthy Colony, Anna Nagar, Chennai, Tamil Nadu 600040
Phone: 044 4353 9988 / 98403 94477 / Whatsapp : 09710729833

insurance coverage, particularly under schemes like Ayushman Bharat. The deployment of Emergency Response Sanitation Units (ERSUs) has been strengthened with the provision of safety devices and mechanised tools, enabling quicker and safer responses to sanitation-related emergencies.

Objectives of the Scheme

The primary objective of the NAMASTE Scheme is to eliminate manual scavenging and hazardous sanitation practices by promoting full mechanisation. It seeks to ensure zero fatalities during sanitation work, provide dignified livelihoods, and enhance social security and financial inclusion of sanitation workers. The scheme also emphasizes skill development, entrepreneurship (Sanipreneurship), and capacity building, enabling workers to transition into safer and more sustainable occupations.

Key Components and Features

The scheme includes digital profiling and database creation of sanitation workers to ensure targeted intervention. It provides PPE kits, safety training, and mechanised equipment, reducing dependence on manual labour. Workers are linked with health insurance schemes and financial assistance, while skill development programs are conducted to facilitate alternative livelihood opportunities. The strengthening of Emergency Response Sanitation Units (ERSUs) ensures preparedness and safety during high-risk operations. Recently, the scheme has also expanded its scope to include waste pickers, further broadening its social impact.

Significance for Social Justice and Governance

The NAMASTE Scheme is a crucial step toward addressing the historical marginalisation of sanitation workers, who largely belong to vulnerable socio-economic groups. It promotes inclusive development, dignity of labour, and human rights, aligning with constitutional values under Articles 14, 17, and 21. By reducing occupational hazards and promoting mechanisation, the scheme contributes to public health, urban governance, and labour welfare reforms.

Linkages with National and Global Goals

The scheme complements flagship initiatives such as the Swachh Bharat Mission 2.0 and contributes to achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly:

SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation)

SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth)

SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities)

Challenges and Way Forward

Despite progress, challenges remain in terms of complete mechanisation, behavioural change, and enforcement of legal provisions. There is also a need to ensure last-mile implementation in smaller urban local bodies and improve access to advanced sanitation technologies. Strengthening monitoring mechanisms, increasing budgetary support, and enhancing awareness can further accelerate the scheme's impact.