

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

**UNSTARRED QUESTION NO.488
TO BE ANSWERED ON 06.02.2024**

DIFFERENTIATING BETWEEN SEWER CLEANER AND MANUAL SCAVENGERS

488. DR. SHASHI THAROOR:

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

- (a) the basis on which the Government differentiate between manual scavengers and those indulging in hazardous cleaning of sewers and septic tanks;
- (b) whether the Government has received reports from all districts confirming that they are free of manual scavenging;
- (c) if so, the details thereof and if not, the steps taken by the Government in this regard;
- (d) whether the Government has details regarding mechanisation of septic tanks and sewers as it was claimed in Budget 2023-24 that there will be 100% mechanisation; and
- (e) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

ANSWER

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

(a): The differentiation between Manual Scavengers and those engaged in hazardous cleaning of sewers and septic tanks are given in the Prohibition of Employment As Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013 which is as under:-

“Manual Scavenger” means a person engaged or employed by an individual or a local authority or a public or private agency, for manually cleaning, carrying, disposing of, or otherwise handling in any manner, human excreta in an insanitary latrine or in an open drain or pit into which the human excreta from insanitary latrines is disposed of, or on a railway track or in such other spaces or premises, as the Central Government or a State Government may notify, before the excreta fully decomposes in such manner as may be prescribed, and the expression “manual scavenging” shall be construed accordingly.

“Hazardous Cleaning” by an employee, in relation to a sewer or septic tank, means its manual cleaning by such employee without the employer fulfilling his obligations to provide protective gear and other cleaning devices and ensuring observance of safety precautions, as may be prescribed or provided in any other law, for the time being in force or rules made thereunder.

(b) and (c): As on 31.01.2024, out of 766 districts in the country, 729 districts have reported themselves as manual scavenging free.

(d) and (e): Swachh Bharat Mission – Urban (SBM-U) 2.0, launched on 1st October, 2021, includes a new component, i.e. Used Water Management (UWM) with one of the objectives of eradication of hazardous entry into sewers and septic tanks, through mechanization of sewer and septic tank cleaning operations for which Central share funds for Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) with population less than 1 lakh are released for procuring adequate numbers of septic tank desludging equipments.

For replacing manhole with machine hole, additional central assistance is provided under SBM-U 2.0 for procurement of mechanized desludging/cleaning equipment, training of SafaiMitras, capacity building and public awareness. A protocol was developed, highlighting the minimum standards in mechanization of sewer and septic tank cleaning operations to minimize the need for hazardous manual entry and prevent casualties of Safaimitras.
