

Odisha launches welfare scheme for sanitation workers

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IANIS

September 12, 2020, 08:53 IST



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Bhubaneswar: Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on Friday launched Garima, a first-of-its-kind state-wide scheme for the safety and dignity of core sanitation workers.

This scheme puts in place several initiatives to ensure a life of dignity and safety for all formal and informal sanitation workers engaged in core sanitation services in urban areas of the state.

Garima will be implemented by the Housing and Urban Development (H&UD) Department through 114 Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) of Odisha.

An initial corpus fund of Rs 50 crore will be made available to extend financial support for the implementation of the scheme.

"In spite of the nation making several strides in various sectors competing with the best in the world, these underprivileged people were made to render this invaluable service to the society for generations, deprived of safety, dignity and a decent livelihood, apart from suffering social stigma and exclusion," said the Chief Minister.

"Our conscience can never be calmed if we don't take steps to correct this injustice. My government has therefore decided to launch a scheme to ensure safety and dignity of core sanitation workers," he added.

H&UD Minister Pratap Jena said the scheme is a first-of-its-kind by any state in the country to provide a comprehensive package institutionalising and regulating the core sanitation services, providing service level benefits, social security and financial benefits to core sanitation workers and their families.

Approximately, 20,000 core sanitation workers and their families with about one lakh population will be benefited by the scheme, Jena said.

As stipulated in the scheme, the working hours of sanitation workers will be limited to 6 hours per day, and they, along with their family members, will also be covered under a health insurance scheme with periodic health check-ups.