



Government of Odisha launches India's first comprehensive scheme, "Garima" for welfare of core sanitation workers

Bhubaneswar: Chief Minister of Odisha, Shri Naveen Patnaik, launched Garima, the first-of-its-kind state-wide scheme for safety and dignity of core sanitation workers. Sanitation workers have been at the bottom of the social and economic ladder who suffer from untold miseries and huge social stigma. 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 Odisha. Garima will be implemented by the Housing & Urban Development 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 implementation of the scheme.

Announcing the scheme, the Hon'ble Chief Minister, Shri Naveen Patnaik said, "Manual scavenging has been the starkest example of discrimination in the name of caste practiced in India, relegating the less privileged to perform the sanitation work handling human faecal matter. 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. Our conscience can never be calmed if we don't take steps to correct this generational injustice. My government has therefore decided to launch a scheme called Garima for Safety and Dignity of Core Sanitation Workers."

In India, over 5 million sanitation workers are engaged in a plethora of sanitation services. Out of them many work in cleaning & maintenance of toilets, drains, sewer systems, septic tanks, septage and sewage treatment facilities in unsafe and undignified work conditions dealing directly with human faecal matter and suffer from social stigmas attached to these critical but essential public services. Garima paves way for inclusive development of these core sanitation workers by ensuring essential working rights and benefits for them as well as their families. It is directed at promoting livelihoods, security and social dignity of sanitation workers through targeted measures.

Some of the essential components of the scheme include state wide survey & identification of sanitation workers engaged in core sanitation jobs to creating a database on the "Swachh Sahara Odisha" portal of Govt. of Odisha, registration of private sanitation service organizations (PSSOs) with ULBs for authorization to render sanitation services through certified sanitation workers, inclusion of core sanitation work in scheduled employment to ensure enhanced minimum wage, introduction of risk & hardship allowance, provision of health insurance, priority in educational institutions for the children of core sanitation workers, 90% grant as housing assistance, 90% grant for buying a 2 wheeler, regulating the core sanitation work environment, mandatory provision of personal protective equipment and safety devices etc.

To connect the sanitation workers with digital facilities, every sanitation worker will be equipped with a standard mobile phone to access "Ama Sahara"- an app of Housing & Urban development Department for registering and resolution of their grievances. This will be integrated with a state-level management implement system (MIS) along with the web application "Swachha Sahara Odisha" to record, collate and analyse the progress of implementation of the scheme. The utilization of corpus fund will also be managed through this system.

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 Health Insurance Scheme and would get periodic health check-ups. The corpus fund will also ensure ex-gratia payment to compensate the sanitation workers in case of partial and permanent disability due to accidents and injury. Additionally, Employees' Provident Fund, retirement benefits and post service benefits such as "Family Pension" are also listed under the provision of the scheme.

Mr. G. Mathi Vathanan, the Principal Secretary of Housing & Urban Development Department, Odisha said, "Government of Odisha has always believed in inclusivity and the launch of this scheme reiterates the idea of inclusive governance and development. Creating frameworks and policies that protect sanitation workers is critical to India's journey towards a sanitation ecosystem (which operates informally on caste basis) that is inclusive and sustainable."

The Housing & Urban Development Department, Government of Odisha has signed an MOU with the Urban Management Centre, for providing the technical support to implement the scheme.