

Odisha launches scheme to improve socio-economic condition of sanitation workers

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Bhubaneswar, Sep 11 (PTI) In a bid to ensure the safety and dignity of sanitation workers in Odisha, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on Friday launched a scheme to improve their socio-economic condition and hone skills.

The 'Garima' (Pride) scheme will be implemented in all the 114 urban local bodies (ULBs) of Odisha and benefit about 20,000 core sanitation workers and their families.

"A dedicated corpus fund of Rs 50 crore will be created, and a state commission for core sanitation workers will also be constituted," Patnaik said.

The new programme is designed in a manner under which a statewide survey will identify workers engaged in core sanitation work, regulate sanitation service organisations, introduce a special age category apart from other allowances.

It will also ensure provision of health and life insurance, priority in educational institutions, 90 per cent grant as housing assistance and other grants.

"Odisha's Garima scheme is a humble tribute to Mahatma Gandhi on his 150th birth anniversary, who fought throughout his life for the rights, equality and social dignity of the underprivileged people," Patnaik said.

"Manual scavenging has been the starkest example of discrimination in the name of caste, elevating the less privileged to perform the sanitation work," he said.

The chief minister also said sanitation workers have been rendering valuable service in the fight against COVID-19, putting their lives at risk.

Housing and Urban Development Minister Pratap Jena said the scheme is the first of its kind in India, and under this initiative, all core sanitation workers will receive skilling and training.

An MoU was also signed with the Urban Management Centre, which will provide technical support for implementation of the scheme in the state, officials said. PTI

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