

Safaimitra Suraksha Challenge

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In News

On November 19, 2020, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs launched the “Safaimitra Suraksha Challenge”.

Ministry: Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs

Aim: Preventing ‘hazardous cleaning’ of sewers and septic tanks and promoting their mechanized cleaning.

About Safaimitra Suraksha Challenge

- The Challenge was launched on the **occasion of World Toilet Day**.
- The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs launched the Safaimitra Suraksha Challenge **across 243 Cities** to ensure that no life of any sewer or septic tank cleaner is ever lost again owing to the issue of ‘hazardous cleaning’.
- Representatives from 243 cities across the country took a **pledge to mechanize all sewer and septic tank cleaning operations by 30th April 2021**.
- The Initiative is in **line with** the core of the **Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban (SBM-U)**
- The actual on-ground assessment of participating cities will be conducted in May 2021 by an independent agency and results of the same will be declared on 15 August 2021.
- Cities will be awarded in **three sub-categories** –
 - population of more than 10 lakhs,
 - Population 3-10 lakhs,
 - population up to 3 lakhs,
 - with total prize money of ₹52 crores to be given to winning cities across all categories
- The **Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and**

their Rehabilitation Act (2013) and various judgements of the Supreme Court **prohibit hazardous cleaning, i.e. manual entry** into a septic tank or sewer without protective gear and observing operating procedures.

The Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and Rehabilitation Act, 2013

- The Government of India has legislated **The Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and Rehabilitation Act, 2013** to protect manual sewer cleaners. The act aims to prohibit manual entry into a sewer without protective gears.
- The Key Features of the Act are as follows
 - To prohibit construction or maintenance of insanitary toilets
 - To prohibit persons employed in hazardous cleaning
 - To prohibit employment of an individual as a manual scavenger.

Supreme Court on Manual Scavenging

- The Supreme Court of India, in 2014, made it mandatory to provide Rs 10 lakhs as compensation to the families of those who have died during sewerage works.

GoI measure to prevent Manual Scavenging

- The Central Government is currently demolishing insanitary latrines. The insanitary latrines are being converted into sanitary latrines. Also, it provides rehabilitation packages to the manual scavengers. It includes access to education for children of former manual scavengers, alternate livelihood and other skill development programmes.