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Third NAMASTE Day Marks the Push for Mechanised Sanitation

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CURATED & WRITTEN BY

**Bharat Choudhary**

UPSC Educator & Content Creator

[in linkedin.com/in/epicbharat](https://www.linkedin.com/in/epicbharat)

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Third NAMASTE Day Marks the Push for Mechanised Sanitation

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WHY IN NEWS

On , the **third NAMASTE Day** was observed, with the main event at **Rabindra Sadan, Kolkata**, led by the **Union Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment, Virendra Kumar**, and parallel events across **Urban Local Bodies**. **NAMASTE**, the **National Action for Mechanised Sanitation Ecosystem** (<https://ujjyari.com/schemes/namaste/>), aims to **end hazardous manual sanitation** through mechanisation and to ensure the **safety and dignity of sewer and septic-tank workers**.

WHAT NAMASTE IS

NAMASTE is a flagship scheme designed to change how India cleans its sewers and septic tanks. Its central purpose is to move the country away from **hazardous manual cleaning**, in which workers physically enter sewers and tanks, toward a **mechanised ecosystem** in which machines do the dangerous work and human workers operate and supervise them with dignity and safety.

The scheme is run **jointly by two ministries**, which is a defining feature and a common exam point.

FEATURE	DETAIL
Scheme	Ujjayi Current Affairs - ujjayi.com · Free Daily Current Affairs for UPSC & State PCS NAMASTE (National Action for Mechanised Sanitation Ecosystem)
Implementing ministries	Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MoSJE) and Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA)
Core goals	Zero fatalities in hazardous cleaning and 100 per cent mechanisation of sewer and septic-tank cleaning
Beneficiaries	Sewer and septic-tank workers, waste-pickers, and rehabilitated manual scavengers
Predecessor scheme	Self-Employment Scheme for Rehabilitation (https://ujjayi.com/vocab/rehabilitation/) of Manual Scavengers (SRMS)

The Twin Goals

The scheme's ambition is captured in two numbers. The first is **zero fatalities**, an end to the deaths that occur when workers enter sewers and septic tanks and are overcome by toxic gases. The second is **100 per cent mechanisation** of the hazardous cleaning of sewers and septic tanks, so that no person has to do this work by hand. Together they reframe sanitation from a task imposed on the vulnerable into a mechanised public service.

WHO IT PROTECTS

NAMASTE deliberately widens the net beyond a single category of worker. It covers **sewer and septic-tank workers, waste-pickers, and rehabilitated manual scavengers**, recognising that these groups face overlapping risks and often the same social disadvantage. By profiling these workers, providing safety training, offering protective equipment and linking them to capital and livelihood support, the scheme tries to move them from **precarious** (<https://ujjayi.com/vocab/precarious/>), stigmatised labour into safer and more secure work.

THE LEGAL AND POLICY BACKDROP

NAMASTE does not stand alone. It **complements the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013**, the law that bans manual scavenging and the hazardous cleaning of sewers and septic tanks. The Act established the legal prohibition; NAMASTE is the operational push meant to make that prohibition real on the ground through machines, training and rehabilitation.

The scheme also **succeeds the earlier Self-Employment Scheme for Rehabilitation of Manual Scavengers (SRMS)**, marking a shift in approach: where SRMS focused on rehabilitating individuals, NAMASTE aims to build an entire **mechanised ecosystem** so that the hazardous work disappears rather than merely changing hands.

THE DEEPER QUESTION

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The persistence of manual sanitation, more than a decade after it was banned, exposes the **gap between legal prohibition and ground reality**. A law can forbid a practice, but only investment, technology and social change can end it. This is where NAMASTE meets constitutional principle. The **dignity of labour** and the guarantee of a life of dignity under **Article 21** are directly at stake when a worker is asked to enter a sewer. The issue is also inseparable from **caste**, since sanitation work in India has historically fallen on specific communities. NAMASTE, at its best, is an attempt to use **technology as a tool of social justice**, replacing a degrading and often fatal task with mechanised, dignified work.

UPSC RELEVANCE

GS Paper 2: Government schemes and welfare mechanisms for vulnerable sections, the role of ministries, and the interface of law, technology and social justice.

Prelims pointers:

- **NAMASTE** stands for **National Action for Mechanised Sanitation Ecosystem** and is run jointly by the **Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MoSJE)** and the **Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA)**.
- Its goals are **zero fatalities** in and **100 per cent mechanisation** of hazardous cleaning of sewers and septic tanks.
- It covers **sewer and septic-tank workers, waste-pickers and rehabilitated manual scavengers**.
- It **complements the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013**.
- The earlier scheme was the **Self-Employment Scheme for Rehabilitation of Manual Scavengers (SRMS)**.

Mains question: “Ending manual scavenging requires more than a legal ban; it requires a mechanised ecosystem and a change in social attitudes. In light of the NAMASTE scheme, examine how technology can serve as a tool of social justice and discuss the gap between legal prohibition and ground reality in hazardous sanitation work.” (15 marks, 250 words)

FACTS CORNER

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Event: Third NAMASTE Day, July 14, 2026; main event at Rabindra Sadan, Kolkata, led by Union Minister Virendra Kumar.

Full form: National Action for Mechanised Sanitation Ecosystem.

Ministries: MoSJE and MoHUA, jointly.

Goals: zero fatalities and 100 per cent mechanisation of hazardous sewer and septic-tank cleaning.

Beneficiaries: sewer and septic-tank workers, waste-pickers, and rehabilitated manual scavengers.

Law and predecessor: complements the 2013 Manual Scavengers Act; succeeds the SRMS.

Sources: *PIB* (<https://pib.gov.in/>), *Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment* (<https://socialjustice.gov.in/>)

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Specialised district-level police units tasked with investigating...

KEY TERM

Anganwadi

A government-run village-level child care and mother care centre under...

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 [linkedin.com/in/epicbharat](https://www.linkedin.com/in/epicbharat) [Read Full Article on Ujiyari →](#)<https://ujiyari.com/daily/2026/07/14/namaste-day-mechanised-sanitation-2026/>

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