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**STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL JUSTICE AND
EMPOWERMENT (2023-24)**

(SEVENTEENTH LOK SABHA)

**MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT
(DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND
EMPOWERMENT)**

**Action Taken by the Government on the
Observations/Recommendations of the Committee contained in their
Forty-Sixth Report (Seventeenth Lok Sabha) on 'Demands for Grants
(2023-24)' of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment
(Department of Social Justice and Empowerment).**



**LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
NEW DELHI**

December, 2023/ Agrahayana, 1945 (Saka)

FIFTY-SECOND REPORT

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (2023-24)

(SEVENTEENTH LOK SABHA)

MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT)

Action Taken by the Government on the Observations/Recommendations of the Committee contained in their Forty-Sixth Report (Seventeenth Lok Sabha) on 'Demands for Grants (2023-24)' of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (Department of Social Justice and Empowerment).

Presented to Lok Sabha on 21.12.2023

Laid in Rajya Sabha on 21.12.2023



**LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
NEW DELHI**

December, 2023/ Agrahayana, 1945 (Saka)

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**COMPOSITION OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL
JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (2023-24)**

SMT. RAMA DEVI - CHAIRPERSON

MEMBERS

Lok Sabha

2. Shri Deepak (Dev) Adhikari
3. Smt. Sangeeta Azad
4. Shri Bholanath (B.P. Saroj)
5. Smt. Pramila Bisoyi
6. Shri Thomas Chazhikadan
7. Shri Chhatar Singh Darbar
8. Smt. Maneka Sanjay Gandhi
9. Shri Hans Raj Hans
10. Shri Abdul Khaleque
11. Smt. Ranjeeta Koli
12. Smt. Geeta Kora
13. Shri Vijay Kumar
14. Shri Akshaibar Lal
15. Sardar Simranjit Singh Mann
16. Shri V. Sreenivasa Prasad
17. Smt. Supriya Sadanand Sule
18. Shri K. Shanmuga Sundaram
19. Smt. Rekha Arun Verma
20. Shri Devendrappa Y.
21. Shri Tokheho Yepthomi

Rajya Sabha

22. Smt. Sumitra Balmik
23. Smt. Ramilaben Becharbhai Bara
24. Shri Abir Ranjan Biswas
25. Smt. Geeta *alias* Chandraprabha
26. Shri N.Chandrasegharan
27. Shri Naryana Koragappa
28. Smt. Mamata Mohanta
29. Shri Ramji
30. Shri Anthiyur P. Selvarasu
31. Shri Mukul Balkrishna Wasnik

LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT

- | | | | |
|----|-----------------------|---|----------------------|
| 1. | Smt. Anita B. Panda | - | Additional Secretary |
| 2. | Smt. Mamta Kemwal | - | Joint Secretary |
| 3. | Dr. Vatsala Joshi | - | Director |
| 4. | Shri Krishendra Kumar | - | Deputy Secretary |
| 5. | Shri Satyakaam Yadav | - | Executive Officer |

INTRODUCTION

I, the Chairperson, Standing Committee on Social Justice and Empowerment (2023-24) having been authorized by the Committee to submit the Report on their behalf, do present this Fifty-Second Report on the action taken by the Government on the Observations/Recommendations of the Committee contained in their Forty-Sixth Report (Seventeenth Lok Sabha) on 'Demands for Grants (2023-24)' of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (Department of Social Justice and Empowerment).

2. The Forty-Sixth Report was presented to Lok Sabha and laid in Rajya Sabha on 23.03.2023. The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (Department of Social Justice and Empowerment) have furnished their replies indicating action taken on the recommendations contained in that Report on 22.06.2023. The Report was considered and adopted by the Standing Committee on Social Justice and Empowerment at their sitting held on 30.10.2023.

3. An analysis of the action taken by the Government on the recommendations contained in the Forty-Sixth Report of the Standing Committee on Social Justice and Empowerment (Seventeenth Lok Sabha) is given in Appendix.

4. For facility of reference, observations/ recommendations/ comments of the Committee have been printed in bold in the body of the Report.

NEW DELHI;

20th December, 2023
29 Agrahayana, 1945 (Saka)

RAMA DEVI
Chairperson,
Standing Committee on
Social Justice and
Empowerment

CHAPTER - I

REPORT

The Report deals with the action taken by the Government on the Observations/Recommendations of the Committee contained in their Forty-Sixth Report (Seventeenth Lok Sabha) on 'Demands for Grants (2023-24)' of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (Department of Social Justice and Empowerment).

2. The Forty-Sixth Report was presented to Lok Sabha and laid in Rajya Sabha on 23.03.2023. It contained 12 observations/recommendations. Action Taken Replies of Government in respect of all the observations/recommendations have been examined and are categorized as under: -

(i) Observations/Recommendations which have been accepted by the Government: - **(Total: 6 , Chapter: II)**

Rec. Para No. 2.18, 2.19, 4.8, 5.20,7.7 & 8.16

(ii) Observations/Recommendations which the Committee do not desire to pursue in view of the Government's reply: - **(Total: 3 , Chapter: III)**

Rec. Para No. 3.13, 9.8, 10.13

(iii) Observations/Recommendations in respect of which replies of the Government have not been accepted by the Committee and which require reiteration: - **(Total: 2, Chapter: IV)**

Rec. Para No., 6.14, 8.15

(iv) Observations/Recommendations in respect of which replies of the Government are interim in nature: - **(Total: 1, Chapter: V)**

Rec. Para No. 10.14

3. The Committee desire that action taken notes on the recommendations contained in Chapter-I and final action taken notes in respect of the recommendations contained in Chapter-V of this report may be furnished to them at the earliest and in any case not later than three months of the presentation of this Report.

4. The Committee will now deal with the replies received from the Government which need reiteration or merit comments.

A. **PRADHAN MANTRI ANUSUCHIT JAATI ABHYUDAY YOJANA (PM-AJAY)**

Recommendation (Para No.6.14)

5. The Committee, in their original Report, had recommended as follows:-

“The Committee are happy to find that the Actual Expenditure after merger of three Schemes namely, Adarsh Gram, Special Central Assistance to Scheduled Castes Sub-Plan (SCA to SCSP) and Babu Jagjivan Ram Chhatrawas Yojana, into Pradhan Mantri Anusuchit Jaati Abhyuday Yojna (PMAJAY) has substantially increased to ₹1820.32 crore in 2021-22 in comparison to the Actual Expenditure of ₹659.92 crore incurred in 2020-21, when these three Schemes were operated independently. However, in 2022-23, the Actual Expenditure of ₹29.34 crore was incurred out of the total expenditure of ₹1,950.00 crore due to delay in adoption of Single Nodal Agency (SNA) system by the State/Union Territories. The Committee feel that all the three components of the unified Scheme are important to empower the SC Community, hence there is an urgent need to set up SNAs in each State so that the funds are released to the States on time. With advanced IT tools available, the procedural formalities/changes should be implemented fast. Hence, the Committee, desire that the Department should develop a sound system to overcome the shortcomings, such as delay in submission of Utilisation Certificates by the States, unspent balance lying with the State Governments, etc. and alert them well in time because now the funds will not be released under the new provision unless the unutilised funds are surrendered by the States or Utilisation Certificates are provided by them for the release of next instalment out of the grant. The Committee also feel that the Department need to formulate an action plan and lay down the time bound targets under PMAJAY to achieve the objective of the Scheme. The Committee would also like the Department to take suitable steps so that the budgetary allocation made for 2022-23 and 2023-24 are fruitfully utilised by the implementing agencies and the new provisions are successfully implemented. In order to cover larger number of SC villages under the Scheme, the Committee recommend that the population criteria fixed for selection of village under ‘Adarsh Gram’ should also be periodically reviewed as has been done by reducing 50% SC population criteria to 40%. The Committee would like to be informed of the action taken by the Department in this regard.”

6. The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (Department of Social Justice and Empowerment), in their Action Taken Reply, have submitted as under:-

“During FY 2022-23 an amount of ₹164.01 crore has been utilized against the total allocation of ₹1,950.00 crore at the end of the Financial Year. The reason behind the less expenditure during 2022-23 is solely attributed to huge unspent lying with the SNA account of the State as well as non-furnishing of Utilization Certificates by some of the State in time. Out of the 30 State/Union territories implementing the scheme of PM-AJAY, a total of 28 State/Union Territories have already mapped the single nodal account of their respective Single Nodal Agency (SNA) in respect of the scheme and 01 Union Territory not required to map. In order to have an effective implementation and monitoring of the scheme, a centralized MIS portal for this scheme has already been put in place. Based on the issues encountered during the course of implementation of the scheme, a broad action plan for entire period of implementation of the scheme with short-term physical and financial targets to be achieved by the respective State Governments/ Union Territory Administrations is under consideration. With regard to reviewing the Scheduled Caste (SC) population criteria for selection of more villages, it would be done at the appropriate time keeping in view the status of implementation of the scheme in already selected villages”.

7. While noting the less expenditure incurred during 2022-23 due to non finalization of SNAs and delay in furnishing of utilization certificates by the State Governments, the Committee had recommended to set up SNAs in each State so that the funds are released to the States on time. The Committee are satisfied to note from the reply of the Ministry that out of 30 State/Union Territories implementing the Scheme of PM-AJAY, total of 28 States/ Union Territories have mapped the Single Nodal Account of the respective Single Nodal agency. Further, MIS portal has also been put in place for effective implementation and monitoring of the Scheme. The Committee would, however, like to impress upon the Ministry to sensitize the States with regard to the contours of the scheme and educate them with regard to the procedural requirements/ mechanism of release of funds so that the funds allocated for 2023-24 would be utilised fully. As regards to formulate an action plan and lay down the time bound targets under PM-AJAY, the Ministry has submitted that on the basis of the issues encountered during the course of implementation of the Scheme, a broad action plan for entire period of implementation of the scheme with short term physical and financial targets to be achieved by the respective State Government/Union Territory is under

consideration. The Committee are of the view that a pro-active approach and key time lines should be defined at the planning stage and then they can be considered for revision in view of the experience gained in implementing the Scheme. This would ensure a clear road-map to follow by all the stakeholders and the Ministry would be able to identify gaps between planning and implementation of the scheme. The Committee strongly believe that the disbursement should be targeted and time bound and desire that the Department should ensure the annual allocation of funds is non-lapsable and also ensure that funds allocated for the year of any particular scheme are not diverted. The Committee would like the Ministry to review the Scheduled Caste population criteria for selection of village under 'Adarsh Gram' at a certain interval so that a large number of beneficiaries are covered under the Scheme.

B. NATIONAL ACTION FOR MECHANISED SANITATION ECO SYSTEM (NAMASTE)

Recommendation (Para No.8.15)

8. The Committee, in their original Report, had recommended as follows:-
- “The Committee note that a Scheme “National Action for Mechanised Sanitisation Ecosystem (NAMASTE)” has been formulated by the Department of Social Justice and Empowerment to provide dignity to sewer and septic tanks workers. It is to be implemented jointly with Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs in 4800+ ULBs with the budgetary outlay of ₹350.00 crore during next three years upto 2025-26. In this regard, the Committee find that the Scheme has been formulated for implementation from 2023-24 after it is planned to collect basic data of number of Sewer and Septic Tank workers in the Country from ULBs and their profiling done. Also as per the norms under NAMASTE Responsible Sanitary Authencity and Emergency Response Sanitation Units are to be established in each district for the effective implementation of the Scheme. The Committee would therefore, like the Department to take necessary steps to obtain data of sewer and septic tank workers from States/ UTs ULBs and also pursue with the States/UTs continuously for establishing Response Sanitation Unit and Emergency Response Sanitation Units at the earliest so that the target fixed is achieved in the given time. The

Committee also desire that a time limit needs to be fixed for completing the work of collection of data by each ULB as well as purchase of machines for sewer cleaning by these bodies. The Committee would like to be informed with regard to the measures taken in this regard”.

9. The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (Department of Social Justice and Empowerment), in their Action Taken Reply, have submitted as under:-

“The proposed “National Action for Mechanised Sanitisation Ecosystem (NAMASTE)”, inter alia, envisages collection of basic data of sewer and septic tank workers in the ULBs of the country and their profiling. After approval of the Scheme, this exercise would be undertaken on war footing. Pending approval of the scheme, the concerned States have been requested to collect and provide the data of sewer and septic tank workers. Exercise of profiling of sewer and septic tank workers would be undertaken after approval of the Scheme. As regards, pursuing the matter of appointment of Responsible Sanitary Authority and setting up of the Emergency Sanitation Response Units, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs has been pursuing the matter with the concerned State Governments for taking action in a time bound manner. The data of sewer and septic tank workers would be collected in the first year of implementation of NAMASTE and will be subsequently updated on regular basis. As regards, purchase of machines for sewer cleaning by ULBs, it is stated the NAMASTE proposes to provide assistance to the sanitation workers and their dependants in the form of capital subsidy and interest subsidy. This component is proposed to be implemented during three years of implementation of NAMASTE. In addition, under the Swachhta Udyami Yojana of the National Safai Karamcharis Finance and Development Corporation (NSKFDC) concessional loans are provided to the ULBs and the contractors associated with ULBs for sanitation related contracts. Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, under Swachh Bharat Mission also provides assistance to the ULBs for purchase of machines/equipments for cleaning of sewers and septic tanks”.

10. The Committee note from the action taken reply of the Ministry that the proposed “National Action for Mechanised Sanitisation Ecosystem (NAMASTE)”, meant to provide dignity to sewer and septic tank workers and implemented from 2023-24, is still pending for approval. The Committee are dismayed with this tardy progress of the Scheme as the data of Sewer and Septic tank workers is still being collected from States. Since, the process as explained by the Ministry in their reply would take time, the Committee are unable to understand, how the Scheme can be implemented from 2023-24 when the basic information is yet to be collected. The Committee suggest the Ministry to get all States/local bodies on board for speedy data collection and

make time bound plan for this. The Committee are worried, the way this scheme is still in its nascent stages and much more needs to be done for NAMASTE to become a reality to provide dignity to sewer and septic tank workers. With regard to setting up of Responsible Sanitary Authority and the Emergency Sanitation Response Units with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has not given any specifics as to how many States have done so far. Hence, the Committee exhort the Ministry to take suitable action for the approval of the Scheme so that the Scheme is implemented as projected.

Recommendation (Para No.10.14)

11. The Committee, in their original Report, had recommended as follows:-

“The Committee note that as per surveys the number of elderly people is steadily increasing in our country, so, there is an urgent need to ensure that the elders remain happy, healthy, financially sound and physically active. In this connection, the Committee recall that they had examined the “Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens” Bill 2019 and presented a report thereon. The official amendment of the Bill is stated to be under preparation in the Ministry. The Committee hope that the same will be prepared soon and brought for legislation so that the maintenance of parents and senior citizens and their welfare gets a solid legal support. The Ministry is statedly taking several initiatives also, apart from implementing the Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana, AVYAY, Senior Citizens Welfare Fund, etc., one of which is SAGE, which is a portal based ‘Senior Care Ageing Growth Engine’ as a one-stop access of elderly care products and services by credible Start Ups. This portal, opened on 5th June, 2021, will invite Start Ups to be selected on the basis of innovative products and services across the sectors such as health, housing, care centres, food and wealth management, legal guidance as well as technological access linked to finances for elderly care. ₹1 crore is to be provided to such Start Ups. Appreciating this new initiative, the Committee have been informed that 12 Start Ups have been/are being supported through SAGE Portal, and desire to be apprised about the products and services developed/being developed by these Start Ups in the last two years. The Committee are happy to note that ‘Elderline’ i.e. National Helpline for senior citizens was launched on 1st October, 2021 to provide free information, guidance, emotional support, field intervention in cases of abuse and rescues in order to improve quality of life of senior citizens. They further note that 31 States/ UTs have kept the Elderline operational. The Committee acknowledge the intention of the Ministry to make programmes for elderly care a National movement involving youth and innovators and providing business opportunities to social enterprises, technological Start Ups, legal and financial services, infrastructure and managed-care systems as well as research and data driven organizations for the same. The

Committee feel a more robust elder care ecosystem can be created in India if such efforts gain momentum”.

12. The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (Department of Social Justice and Empowerment), in their Action Taken Reply, have submitted as under:-

“ Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Bill 2019:

- i. The Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens (MWPSA) (Amendment) Bill 2019 has been introduced in the Lok Sabha on 11-12-2019.
- ii. On the basis of the Lok Sabha Standing Committee’s Recommendations, the MWPSA (Amendment) Bill is being modified.

• Scheme of Senior-care Aging Growth Engine (SAGE):

- i. During the FY 2021-22 and FY 2022-23, a total of 13 Start-ups have been selected.
- ii. These Start-ups are engaged in developing automated devices for home dialysis that cuts the cost substantially, clinical tests at home at a very reasonable rate, elder-friendly electric cycles, lechal smart insoles that prevent fall of elderly by early warning systems, subscription based home visits by trained health personnel, medical travel and stay of the elderly etc.

• Elderline- National Helpline for Senior Citizens:

- i. The Elderline with Toll free number 14567 is operational from 8 AM to 8 PM, all 7days of a week.
- ii. National Institute for Social Defence (NISD) has been nominated as a Central Nodal Agency for Elder Line.
- iii. ₹ 82.68 crore has been released under the scheme up to 2022-23.
- iv. So far, a total of 14,77,488 calls have been received under the scheme.

13. The Committee in their original Report had *inter-alia* drawn attention of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (Department of Social Justice and Empowerment) on the “Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens (Amendment) Bill 2019” which was examined by the Committee and presented a Report thereon. The Committee had expected that the Bill would be reintroduced soon and brought for legislation so that more welfare measures/ provisions for parents and senior citizens could be added in the existing Act. The Committee, however, find from the action taken Reply of the Ministry that the Bill is still being modified. The Committee reiterate their earlier recommendation and desire that the Ministry should expedite the process of modification of the Bill and its passing so that large number of senior citizens would get more benefits.

CHAPTER-II
OBSERVATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS WHICH HAVE BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE
GOVERNMENT

(Recommendation Para No. 2.18)

The mandate of the Department of Social Justice & Empowerment is vital for the empowerment of socially, educationally and economically marginalized sections of the Society including Scheduled Castes, Other Backward Classes, Senior Citizens, Victims of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse, Transgender Persons, Beggars, Denotified and Nomadic Tribes (DNTs), Economically Backward Classes (EBCs) and Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) to enable them to lead productive, safe and dignified lives, with all their basic needs being fulfilled, and where equal opportunities are ensured for their growth and development. These objectives are fulfilled through various Programmes/Schemes of the Department for (i) Educational, economic and social empowerment of Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Other Backward Classes (OBCs); (ii) Support to Senior Citizens by way of their Maintenance, Welfare, Security, Health Care and Productive and independent living and; (iii) Rehabilitation, through 'whole person recovery' approach, of victims of substance abuse, for which the Department gets allocations each year, after due consideration by EFC/SFC. The Committee, during evidence, was apprised that under 'Mission Karmayogi', the Department of Social Justice & Empowerment is in the forefront of the capacity building programme, as compared to other Government of India Departments. As the Officers/staff of the Department of Social Justice & Empowerment are well trained with better capacity, it would, the Committee hope, result in further rise in their overall performance. Coming to the budgetary performance of previous years, the Committee note that the Budgetary Estimate of ₹10,103.57 crore in 2020-21 and ₹10,517.62 crore in 2021-22 were revised as ₹8,207.56 crore for 2020-21 and ₹10,180.00 crore for 2021-22, out of which, the Department was able to spend ₹8,236.84 crore and ₹7,459.99 crore in 2020-21 and 2021-22 respectively. The Department has furnished the reasons for low utilisation of funds to the Committee, which, inter-alia, include cancellation of GIA to Centre found non-functional, late receipt of approval for continuation of DDAC Scheme and delay in furnishing of Utilisation Certificates and proposals by States/UTs. The Committee have no doubt that the Department is taking suitable steps to resolve these issues and constraints while preparing their Annual demand/proposal and taking necessary steps to utilise the funds, as any under utilisation of funds adversely affects the Schemes. The Committee also find that certain initiatives/measures taken for effective implementation of various schemes have been taken such as Single Nodal Agency (SNA) system for Centrally Sponsored Schemes, first release of State share in Scholarship Schemes, Inspection of NGOs before release of GIA, etc. will prove to be helpful in further effective implementation of various schemes in future. The Committee, at the same time, feel that the new system of States releasing their share first may slow the pace in those cases where there are States/UTs, which may not be in a position to release their share timely due to a variety of reasons. Nonetheless, the Committee, while awaiting the positive outcomes of some of the initiatives, would also like to urge the Department to fully utilise the Budgetary Allocation for 2022-23 and 2023-24 so that the targeted sections of the society are not deprived of the benefits of the Schemes.

Reply of the Government

A. During FY 2022-23, total BE of ₹11,922.51 Crore was allocated to the Department of Social Justice and Empowerment for the FY 2022-23. Out of the total allocation to the Department, 89.25 % fund of the total Budget accounted for the Centrally Sponsored Schemes and under Centrally Sponsored Schemes funds are to be released as per revised flow of fund system through Single Nodal Agency (SNA) which was introduced during the FY 2021-22 by Department of Expenditure, Ministry of Finance. As per SNA instructions issued by DoE, MoF the unspent amount transferred to SNA need to be refunded back to CFI. Due to non-compliance by States, fresh release is not possible. Further, there has been delay in submission of UCs and proposals from States.

Further, both Pre and Post Matric Scholarship for SCs are implemented in DBT mode where Central share can be released after release of State share. This is the first year for DBT mode in Pre Matric and first year for Post Matric when State share is to be released before release of Central share, delay in release of state share by the States resulted in delay in release of Centre Share.

Also, some of the schemes are demand driven scheme. The stringent measures mentioned above, introduced for better implementation and idle parking of Central Government funds, has resulted into less expenditure, as compared to BE and as such Out of total BE of ₹11,922.51 Crore, only ₹3,088.57 crore could have been spent till 31.12.2022. However, the Department made all efforts to pace up the expenditure in the last Quarter of FY 2022-23 as a result of which the Department was able to make a total expenditure of ₹7507.74 crore by 31st March, 2023, out of the Revised Estimate of ₹10,709.94 crore during the year which was 70.10 % of Revised Estimate (RE).

The fund position of the Department during the FY 2022-23 was as follows:

Budget Estimate (BE)	Revised Estimate (RE)	Actual Expenditure (AE)
11922.51 Crore	10709.94 Crore	7507.74 Crore

B. Further for the F.Y 2023-24 following prior measures/steps have been taken so that the Budgetary allocation is fully utilised:

- i. Monthly and Quarterly expenditure Plan has been prepared and regular review of the same is done so that the expenditure under each scheme is monitored.
- ii. Single Nodal Agencies have been appointed by most of the State/UTs after repeated consultations and meetings with the States/UTs and it is expected that the releases to States/UTs may be done in timely manner.

In the view of above mentioned measures the Department is hopeful that the Budgetary allocation for 2023-24 will be fully utilized. Also, the suggestions of the Committee to fully utilize BE for FY 2023-24 is noted for compliance.

(Recommendation Para No. 2.19)

The Committee note the successive increase in the Budgetary Estimate of the Department during the last few years. However, the percentage increase of 7.75% in Budgetary Estimate for present Financial Year 2023-24 is rather less in comparison to 13.36% increase last year i.e. in 2022-23. The merger of some schemes and modifications in certain Schemes could be one of the reasons as 37 Schemes operational in 2021-22 have been reduced to 19 Schemes in 2023-24 resulting in reduction in the budgetary estimates. The Committee are of the opinion that with a wider range of potential beneficiaries, the percentage increase in Budgetary Estimate need to increase and that it should be independent of actual expenditure incurred in previous year as the mandate of this department is completely different from other departments and is absolutely vital for accelerating the overall progress of the society. The Committee hope that the initiatives taken by the Department such as setting up of more ATFS, selection of more NGOs for DDAC, expansion of Nasha Mukh Bharat Abhiyan, etc. would be implemented effectively so that Budgetary Estimate for 2023-24 are utilised fully and lead to higher percentage increase in Budgetary Estimate in the future.

Reply of Government

It is submitted that the budgetary allocation for the schemes of the Department is done as per the annual allocation mentioned in EFC/SFC of schemes which has already been approved by Ministry of Finance. District De-Addiction Centres (DDACs) are being set up in GAP districts i.e., districts where there is no Ministry supported De-addiction facility. 10 such DDACs have already been set up and functional. 70 more DDACs are at various stages of setting up and will be functional in FY 2023-24. It is also informed that 100 additional districts were added to the list of vulnerable districts under Nasha Mukh Bharat Abhiyaan (NMBA) in year 2022. Now the total number of districts covered under NMBA is 372. Additionally, the number of ATFs is also increasing. Also, the suggestions of the Committee to fully utilize BE for FY 2023-24 is noted for compliance.

(Recommendation Para No. 4.8)

The Committee note that under Post-Matric Scholarship for SC students the Department have been able to spend ₹2,500.22 crore up to 31st December, 2022 out of the Budgetary Allocation of ₹5,660.00 crore in 2022-23, as several States have not been releasing their share first in compliance of the revised procedure that the Central share of 60% will be released only after 40% State share is released. The Committee feel that many of the State Governments are not forthcoming in bearing the expenditure. While there is no doubt about the intentions of the Department to be financially prudent in administering the scheme, the Committee are worried about the students from the community, as their studies may suffer for want of financial assistance. The Committee are, therefore, of the view that the Department should take up this issue at appropriate level. The Committee would appreciate if Budgetary Estimates for 2023-24 are utilized fully.

Reply of Government

Out of the budgetary Allocation of ₹5,660.00 Cr. in 2022-23 under Post Matric Scholarships for SC students, this Department has been able to spend ₹4,392.50 Cr. Up to 31st March, 2023 for the purpose of Scholarships under Post Matric Scholarships for SC students.

Regarding State's/UT's inability of bearing the expenditure and releasing its share first as per the revised procedure i.e. the Central share will be released after State share is released, it is informed that the States/UTs which are implementing the scheme, have already agreed/approved the funding pattern of the revised scheme guidelines and no such concerns have been raised by the State/UT Governments till date. The suggestions of the Committee to fully utilize BE for FY 2023-24 is noted for compliance.

(Recommendation Para No. 5.20)

The Committee note that the Department have introduced an umbrella Scheme, Scholarships for the Higher Education for Young Achievers (SHREYAS) for SCs comprising of four Scholarships viz National Fellowship, Free Coaching for SC, Top Class Education Scheme and National Overseas Scheme with the objective that the shortfall under one Scheme can be met from other Scheme. The Committee also are happy that the number of seats has been increased from 100 to 125 from 2021-22 under scheme of National Overseas Scholarship (NOS) for Scheduled Caste and the total family income for availing the benefits of the scheme has also been increased from ₹6 lakh to ₹8 lakh per annum. With regard to performance of the Scheme, it is seen that the actual expenditure under the Scheme was ₹216.93 crore against budgetary Estimate of ₹390.00 crore in 2020-21, ₹271.21 crore against budgetary Estimate of ₹450.00 crore in 2021-22 and ₹129.14 crore against budgetary Estimate of ₹364.00 crore in 2022-23. The Committee find that the expenditure and budgetary provisions in sub-schemes have remained fairly good except for National Fellowship for SCs, where the BE has been reduced at RE stage, during the last three years. All the sub-schemes are equally important for the educational empowerment of SC students pursuing higher education. Hence, in the opinion of the Committee, curtailment in the Budgetary Estimate at RE stage should not occur. The Committee are informed that the funds allocated under the Coaching Schemes could not be spent due to delay in verification, submission of fee deposition proof, etc. Similarly, the expenditure under Top Class education was less as there have been lot of delays in admissions and in conducting exams by the Institutions. While acknowledging that certain reasons are beyond the control of the Department, the Committee are of the opinion that periodic evaluation study, awareness campaign, etc. will bring out improvements for the effective implementation of the Scheme. The Committee firmly believe that sincere steps taken for the implementation of the Scheme would be fruitful and the students will not face problem in getting their dues. The Committee, therefore, desire that the review of the implementation of Scheme should be held at regular intervals to assess the shortcomings and take necessary measures to overcome the shortcomings. The Committee also desire that there is a need of extensive publicity of the Schemes for giving wide coverage so that large number of students participate and get benefits of the Scheme. The Committee would look forward and hope that the Budgetary Estimates for 2023-24 would be spent fully and none of the

difficulties faced by the Department would become a major hurdle in implementing the Schemes to the best extent possible.

Reply of Government

A. With regard to National Overseas Scheme for SCs (NOS) an evaluation study report of NOS was carried out by the Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi which submitted its report to this Department in March 2020. Impact evaluation of the NOS Scheme is also done by way of Google survey. From time to time the division conducts Google survey wherein responses from the students regarding various aspects of the scheme are sought and incorporated as required.

To generate awareness regarding the NOS scheme the department has taken various progressive steps which are as follows:

- i. Twitter Campaigns
- ii. Newspaper Advertisements
- iii. Letters to Principal Secretaries to disseminate information regarding NOS scheme in their states.

B. With regard to National Fellowship for SCs (NFSC) :- Monitoring mechanism adopted by the Ministry for monitoring of the scheme are :

- i. Disbursal of the fellowship by the implementing agency is monitored every month in the Ministry. Further, for release of funds provisional/audited UC is being provided by the implementing agency.
- ii. A portal for National Fellowship Management and a Grievance redressal portal were launched by the Hon'ble MSJ&E on 6th Dec 2021, which will allow a student-centric administration of the fellowship and would substantially reduce the vexation paper work for timely release of the fellowship.
- iii. The Ministry is making due efforts to create awareness of the Scheme throughout the country. The NFSC guidelines are widely publicized and are also readily available on the Ministry's website and students can easily go through the guidelines and apply accordingly.

The funds sanctioned for 2022-23 and 2023-24 under National Fellowship for SCs have been reduced as the funds allocated in 2021-22 and 2020-21 could not be spent. In this regard it is stated that NFSC is a demand-driven scheme. The payments are released to the implementing agency (NSFDC is the implementing agency from 01.10.2022) as and when the requirement arises. The suggestions of the Committee to fully utilize BE for FY 2023-24 is noted for compliance.

(Recommendation Para No. 7.7)

The new Scheme for Residential Education for students in High School in targeted area (SRESHTHA) for SC has replaced the earlier scheme of 'Assistance to VOs for SC' from 2022-23 onwards. As revised, the Scheme is being implemented in two modes. In Mode-I, a specified number of meritorious students in the Country will be selected for quality residential education in top class residential schools through a nationwide entrance test conducted by National Testing Agency. Under Mode-II, the financial support to VOs/ NGOs would continue for ongoing Projects of Residential / Non-Residential Schools. The Committee feel that the Budgetary Allocation of ₹104.65 crore made for 2023-24 Budgetary Allocation should increase in comparison to previous years as a new component to provide quality residential education in top class residential schools to specified number of students has been added in SRESTHA from 2022-23. The Committee note that the school fees and residential charges fixed at present are quite less, in comparison to actual fees and residential charges of top residential High Schools. The Committee would, therefore, like the Department to revise the charges proportionately and make them compatible with the prevailing fee structure of the top residential High Schools.

Reply of Government

Under SHRESHTA scheme, in F.Y. 2022-23, ₹89.00 crore was allocated and same could not be fully utilized as the targeted number of beneficiaries *i.e.*, 3000 were not found in mode-1 (as per scheme) and as per revised scheme, GIA to VOs/NGOs for their school/hostel projects, are being considered only SC beneficiaries. However, Budget Allocation has been increased in F.Y. 2023-24 as 104.65 crore under the scheme.

During 2021-22, ₹75,000/- (per student for 9th & 10th class) and ₹1,25,000 (per student for 11th & 12th class) were reimbursed to schools for school fees and residential charges, same were increased for F.Y. 2022-23 as ₹1 Lakh for 9th, 1.1 Lakh for 10th, 1.25 for 11th and 1.35 Lakh for 12th class and released to CBSE schools. The rates are approved by EFC up to FY 2025-26.

(Recommendation Para No. 8.16)

Total number of 1035 sanitation workers have died while cleaning the sewer and septic tanks out of which 74 are yet to be paid compensation despite Supreme Court Judgement dated 27th March 2014 which directed that the State Governments /UTs must ensure payment of compensation of ₹10.00 lakh to the family of a victim in case of death of a worker while cleaning sewer/septic tank. The Committee are happy to note that for identification of such workers, the Department have launched a new mobile app called 'Swachhata App' to verify the information about the existence of manual scavenging in the States/UTs. The Committee desire that the Department should ensure from all the State/UT Governments that their States/UTs are manual scavenging free. The Committee would also like the Department to ensure that the

rules framed under Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013 are strictly implemented by all the States/UTs. They would also urge the Department to take suitable measures so that the compensation to the victims' families of 74 deaths is paid immediately. The Committee feel that these norms with regard to penalty and conviction for engaging sewer and septic workers by the Contractors are strictly implemented so that the Contractors are immediately held and convicted for any violation of norms. The Committee would like to be informed of the action taken in this regard. They urge for a country wide mechanization of sewer cleaning work as early as possible.

Reply of Government

1. National Commission for Safai Karamcharis (NCSK)

- A. As per the information available with this Commission, total 1081 sewer deaths have been reported in various States/UTs in the country from 1993 till 31.03.2023 and compensation in 925 cases has been paid and 115 are yet to be compensated. Rest of 41 cases have been temporarily closed by various State/UTs Governments due to non-traceability of legal heirs. However, it may be noted that this data is based only on the information received by this Commission from States/UTs/ Print and electronic media reports etc. and actual data may vary. Further, this is a dynamic data which keeps changing/update upon receipt of information by the Commission.
- B. To ensure all the States/UTs be manual scavenging free and the rules framed under Prohibition of Employment as Manual scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013 are strictly implemented by all the states/UTs, the Commission has circulated a 20 points check list for collecting information from States/UTs relating to implementation of the Act. The 20 points checklist includes the information on survey conducted by states/UTs regarding total number of manual scavengers in rural/urban areas and the date of last survey. In response to the said check-list some of the States and UTs have furnished desired information about Manual Scavengers and implementation of Rules. To ensure the timely payment of compensation to the legal heirs of deceased in sewer death cases, the Commission conducts regular monthly VC meetings with state officials and also writes D.O letters at various levels in the State including the Chief Secretaries of the states for expeditious payment of compensation, implementation of various provisions of M.S. Act, 2013 and for disposal of grievance petitions of Safai Karamcharis. As far as payment of compensation is concerned, legal heirs of the deceased has been paid 10 lacs as compensation in total number of 159 sewer death cases during last financial year 2022-23. Through such meetings and D.O letters the Commission presses on following check points for implementation. These are:

- i. Relevant provisions of M. S. Act, 2013 be invoked in FIRs registered in sewer/septic tank death cases, investigation & trial should be fast tracked.
 - ii. Most of the states have no separate budget head and no allocation of funds for payment of compensation under the Supreme Court judgment dated 27.03.2014. Accordingly, they were advised to open appropriate budget heads and allocate funds for the purpose.
 - iii. Mechanization of sewer/septic tank cleaning be made on war footing in order to stop loss of valuable human life during such cleaning.
 - iv. Quick compensation be paid in the light of the Supreme Court judgment dated 27-03-2014.
 - v. Compensation be paid in terms of the Supreme Court judgment over and above any payment made in pursuance of any other act/rule/guideline.
 - vi. Cases where legal heirs are not traceable, advertisement be made at least four times in one local and one national newspaper. Where partial payment had already been made, the details of the legal heirs might be ascertained from the bank account or payment voucher of the legal heirs.
 - vii. State Level Monitoring Committee meetings as well as District Vigilance Committee meetings need to be convened in the States in terms of M. S. Act, 2013 regularly.
 - viii. State Level Commission be constituted or any agency designated in terms of M. S. Act, 2013 on priority to look after the issues of Safai Karamcharis in the States.
 - ix. States were also requested to regularly monitor the implementation of M.S. Act 2013 in true letter & spirit.
- C. The Commission has also recommended that a direction should be issued to all the State governments/Municipalities/Corporations to incorporate a clause in the agreement with the contractor or the agencies that the provision of the MS Act, 2013 shall be applicable and also the directions given by the Supreme Court judgment dated 27.3.2014 with regard to sewer death cases will be complied with by the Contractor/Agency engaging the Safai Karamcharis.
- D. Further the Hon'ble Chairperson, Hon'ble Vice-Chairperson and Hon'ble Member(s) make extensive tours to make on the spot assessment of various problems of Safai Karamcharis and make recommendation to the Government of India on various measures to be taken for effective implementation of M.S. Act, 2013, for socio-economic development of Safai Karamcharis. During the tour they hold meetings with local bodies, Port Trust, Railway Authorities. Regional National Conferences are also organised by the Commission to discuss various problems of Safai Karamcharis and to increase awareness about the rights and requirements of Safai Karamcharis. Two such conferences were organised during 2021-22.

- E. So far as registration of FIRs under M.S. Act, 2013 in sewer death cases is concerned, the Commission impresses upon State Authorities/Police/Local Bodies through various meetings/conferences /communications to register FIRs under M.S. Act, 2013 and fast-track legal proceeding in order to punish who-so-ever is found responsible. Consequently states have started taking proactive action in this regard.
- F. As regards mechanization through 20 points check-list the States/UTs have intimated various measures taken in this regard..

2. National Safai Karamcharis Finance and Development Corporation (NSKFDC)-

After enactment of the "Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013" (MS Act, 2013) and the issue of orders dated 27.3.2014 by the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India, the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment initiated action for collection of data of deaths of workers while cleaning sewer/septic tanks, since the year 2013 and status of payment of compensation to them. The Ministry is regularly following up with the State Governments and District Administrations for payment of full compensation of ₹10.00 lakh in each case. However, many cases of deaths compiled in the process of collection of data, are very old. Therefore, despite regular follow up and sincere efforts due to the following reasons, in some cases the payment of compensation could not be made or partial compensation has been made:-

- (i) The case is very old and the dependant family members are not traceable due to migration etc. therefore, no compensation has been paid to the family of victim.
- (ii) In pre Supreme Court direction cases, partial compensation was paid to the family of victim under the applicable rules at the time of death and efforts are being made for payment of remaining part of compensation.

Ministry also follows up with the concerned States, District Administrations etc. for ensuring that case is registered against the violators of the provisions of the MS Act, 2013 regarding hazardous cleaning of sewers and septic tanks.

Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment is also collecting the information from all districts whether they are manual scavenging free. So far, 510 districts have confirmed their status as manual scavenging free.

For mechanization of sewers and septic tank cleaning operations, NAMASTE proposes to provide assistance to the sanitation workers and their dependants in the form of capital subsidy and interest subsidy for purchase of sanitation related machines and equipments. This component is proposed to be implemented during three years of implementation of NAMASTE. In addition, under the Swachhta Udyami Yojana of the National Safai Karamcharis Finance and Development Corporation (NSKFDC) concessional loans are provided to the ULBs and the contractors associated with ULBs for sanitation related contracts. Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, under Swachh Bharat Mission also provides assistance to the ULBs for purchase of machines/equipments for cleaning of sewers and septic tanks.

With a view to sensitise and make aware the officers, engineers, sanitation inspectors, supervisors, sanitation workers, contractors etc. about the provisions of the MS Act, 2013, particularly about the hazardous cleaning of sewers and septic tanks, National Safai Karamcharis Finance and Development Corporation (NSKFDC) also organises workshops with the ULBs etc. So far, 1177 such workshops have been held since 2017-18.

CHAPTER- III

OBSERVATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS WHICH THE COMMITTEE DO NOT DESIRE TO PURSUE IN VIEW OF THE GOVERNMENT'S REPLY

(Recommendation Para No.3.13)

The Committee find that the Budgetary Allocation under Pre-Matric Scholarship Scheme for SC & Others has been reduced to ₹500.00 crore for 2022-23 and 2023-24, whereas it was ₹725.00 crore in 2021-22 i.e. in the year of merger of two Schemes namely Pre-Matric Scholarship Schemes for SC and Pre-Matric Scholarship Scheme for the Children of parents/ guardians engaged in unclean and hazardous occupation. However, it is still 18 crore more than the amount of ₹482 crore proposed by the Department for 2023-24. As regards the utilization of funds during 2020-21, the Committee note from the deposition of the Department that it was the first year of implementation of merged Scheme and the Scholarship Portals of many States/UTs were not ready. The Committee hope that with States/UTs making special efforts to identify the poorest eligible households from various sources and enrolling students under the scheme in Mission mode, there would be higher demand under the Scheme. The Committee also urge that the findings of an Evaluation Study on the Pre-Matric Scholarship Scheme for children or parents/guardians engaged in unclean and hazardous occupation, on matters, such as processing of applications, definition of terms, etc. inter-alia noted by the Plan Division of the Department, would be addressed urgently. The Committee desire that concerted efforts should be made by the Department with the Ministry of Finance for revision of the academic allowance in the interest of the beneficiaries. The Committee would like to be apprised of the action taken by the Department in this regard. In so far as publicizing these scholarship schemes are concerned, the Committee note efforts with regard to the Portal and through print media. In this connection, the Committee further suggest that for better coverage of beneficiaries, the publicity should be undertaken in unaided-private schools too since some percentage of students from marginalized sections study there, as mandated by the Right to Education Act. The Committee recommend measures like setting up of help desks in schools, reaching out to Management Committees of schools, announcement of scholarship schemes during Morning Assemblies etc., which, they are sanguine, will result in better response from the potential beneficiaries of the scheme.

Reply of Government

It is submitted that the allocation under the scheme has been made as per the annual allocation mentioned in EFC/SFC of schemes which has already been approved by Ministry of Finance. However, it is mentioned that in the case of higher demand of Budgetary Allocation than the allocated budget under the Scheme, request for additional grants will be made under the Scheme.

The Pre Matric Scholarship scheme for the children of parents/guardians engaged in unclean and hazardous occupation (Pre-Matric Scholarships Scheme for SCs and Others, Comp-II as of now) was evaluated by third party during 2020. Thereafter, the

scheme guidelines of Pre-Matric Scholarships Scheme for SCs and Others (Comp-II: Pre-Matric scholarship for children of parents/guardians engaged in Unclean and hazardous Occupation) was revised on 14.03.2022.

As regards revision of Academic Allowance, it is informed that the scheme was recently revised, with the approval of the Cabinet, after considering all the facets of the scheme. However, the recommendations of the Committee have been noted.

Department of Social Justice and Empowerment/Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment is taking various steps to spread awareness among the people. Regular advertisements have been published in print media and Electronic media. Information about the scheme is spread through various social media platforms like twitter, facebook etc. In addition, the scheme guidelines envisages awareness generation/identification programme through State Governments/UTs, which are as under:-

- I. States/UTs are required to adopt methodology suitable to the local conditions for identification of poorest SC students e.g. SC majority districts/blocks/villages may be taken first for identification of poorest students or students leaving class 10th or 12th class may be tracked in association with the education department or data emanating from other Central/State schemes indicating the dropouts rates or other sources as deemed fit.
- II. Every State Government is required to undertake a campaign every year in March/April to identify SC students and mentor them to enroll and avail scholarships. Such students will be helped for identification of courses also as per their skills.
- III. Awareness drive is required to be undertaken by the State Governments/UTs about the scheme through the Gram Panchayats Notice Boards, School committees and discussions in the parent-teacher association meetings and other public awareness measures, in order to extend its coverage and also minimize any misuse by unscrupulous elements.
- IV. The States are required to take up identification of the students for fresh enrolment by taking up systematic drive covering all the higher secondary schools and encouraging the students who have dropped out after Class 12th to come back to higher education.

(Recommendation Para No.9.8)

The Pradhan Mantri Dakshta Aur Kushalta Sampann Hitgrahi (PM-DAKSH) Yojana is a National Action Plan for skilling of marginalized persons covering SCs, OBCs, EBCs, DNTs, Sanitation Workers and waste pickers. The Scheme is implemented through three Corporations namely NSFDC, NBCFDC and NSKFDC. The Committee find that NSFDC has submitted Utilisation Certificates of ₹38.63 crore against ₹50.82 crore released during

2020-21 and 2021-22 and has requested to release ₹16.00 crore for the Financial Year 2022-23. Similarly, NBCFDC has requested release of ₹14.13 crore for the Financial Year 2022-23 as they have submitted Utilisation Certificates for ₹36.81 crore against ₹48.70 crore released in 2020-21 and 2021-22. In order to optimally utilise the Budgetary Allocation during 2023-24, the Committee would like the Department to develop a digital system where Utilisation Certificates for usage of 75% of the allocation of funds are received timely and the remaining grant is automatically transferred to the Implementing Agencies. The Committee would also urge that the SNA system under PFMS established by the Ministry of Finance for better monitoring of funds should be implemented without any further delay by all the States/UTs to avoid under utilisation of allocated funds. The Committee would also urge the Department that the funds requested for release by NSFDC and NBCFDC against the Utilisation Certificates submitted are released immediately so that the work of skilling SCs, OBCs, EBCs, DNTs, Sanitation workers are continued. The Committee would like to be informed of the status of initiatives taken by the Department.

Reply of Government

- I. Department of Social Justice and Empowerment is implementing Pradhan Mantri Dakshta Aur Kushalta Sampann Hitgrahi (PM-DAKSH) Yojana with the objective to provide skilling training for the persons belonging to the Scheduled Castes, Other Backward Classes (OBCs), Economically Backward Classes (EBCs), De-notified, Nomadic and Semi-nomadic Tribes (DNTs), Safai Karmacharis including Waste pickers through three Corporations namely NSFDC, NBCFDC and NSKFDC.
- II. Payments are being made through PFMS, PFMS portal contains the information pertaining to funds released by Corporations.
- III. Central Nodal Agency Accounts (CNA) of NSFDC, NBCFDC & NSKFDC has been opened as per guidelines issued by Ministry of Finance, Government of India.
- IV. ₹8.9 crore was released to National Scheduled Castes Finance and Development Corporation (NSFDC) under PM-DAKSH Yojana during FY-2022-23.

(Recommendation Para No.10.13)

The Committee note that the population of 60 plus years in the country is likely to rise to 17.32 crore in 2026 from 10.38 crore in 2011 as per National Commission on Population. The Committee are happy to note that the Department proposes to cover each district of the country with at least one senior citizen home under State Action for Senior citizens and aims to cover each district of the country under the Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana. The Committee find that 296 districts have been covered under Integrated Programme for Senior Citizens (IPSrC). The Committee also find that the Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana launched on 1st April 2017 to provide assistive devices free of cost to eligible Senior citizens belonging to the BPL category or senior citizen with monthly income less than ₹15,000 have been able to cover 264 districts of the country. However, since no time lines have been drawn in this regard, they desire that phase-wise time line should be fixed to cover all the districts in the country. The Committee also find that the Budgetary Estimate of ₹300.00 crore for IPSrC in 2021- 22 was reduced to ₹150.00 crore in 2022- 23 and the Department could only spend ₹33.14 crore as the Department did not get

complete proposals from the States/UTs. Hence they recommend that suitable measures should be taken by the Department so that the Budgetary allocation are utilized fruitfully and the number of Beneficiaries are enhanced. The Committee hope that the recommendations made by Indian Institute of Public Administration in their Evaluation Study of IPSrC conducted in 2019 must have been implemented and would have brought some improvement in implementation of Scheme and expect that the third Party evaluation study proposed during 2023-24 would also bring out good suggestion to lay the roadmap for implementation of the Scheme in future.

Reply of Government

1. With regard to Integrated Programme for Senior Citizens (IPSrC):

A. Reasons for reduced utilization of Budgetary Estimate have been identified as given under:

i. During the FY 2022-23, under Integrated Programme for Senior Citizens (IPSrC), an amount of ₹72.31 crore has been released through two instalments to Implementing Agencies, covering 296 districts.

ii. As per internal policy adopted by the Department, the third and the last instalment (i.e., 25% of GIA) for the FY 2022-23 would be released to the Implementing Agencies in the first Quarter of FY 2023-24.

iii. GIA is released to the projects on the basis of the number of beneficiaries found during inspection.

iv. About 139 projects have been closed in the FY 2022-23 due to sub-standard services found during inspection conducted by Project Monitoring Unit (PMU).

B. In an effort to utilise Budgetary allocation fruitfully and thus enhancing the number of beneficiaries under Integrated Programme for Senior Citizens, following measures will be taken during the FY 2023-24:

i. Adding more number of projects in gap/uncovered districts. Video Conferences and Regional Conferences will be arranged with all stakeholders for awareness generation clearance of doubts in seeking grant under IPSrC and SAPSrC.

ii. The 139 projects closed during 2022-23 may be processed for re-consideration in FY 2023-24, if the Implementing Agencies improve their services at the Old Age Homes as per the Standard Norms laid down in the Scheme.

2. With regard to Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana (RVY):

i. Under RVY, a total of 12,24,458 assisted living devices have been distributed free of cost in camp mode to 3,02,176 senior citizens.

ii. Detailed Plan of Action will be made so as to cover more districts and more beneficiaries in the Financial Year 2023-24.

CHAPTER-IV

OBSERVATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS IN RESPECT OF WHICH REPLIES OF THE GOVERNMENT HAVE NOT BEEN ACCEPTED AND WHICH REQUIRE REITERATION.

Recommendation (Para 6.14)

The Committee are happy to find that the Actual Expenditure after merger of three Schemes namely, Adarsh Gram, Special Central Assistance to Scheduled Castes Sub Plan (SCA to SCSP) and Babu Jagjivan Ram Chhatrawas Yojana, into Pradhan Mantri Anusuchit Jaati Abhyuday Yojna (PM-AJAY) has substantially increased to ₹1820.32 crore in 2021-22 in comparison to the Actual Expenditure of ₹659.92 crore incurred in 2020-21, when these three Schemes were operated independently. However, in 2022-23, the Actual Expenditure of ₹29.34 crore was incurred out of the total expenditure of ₹1950.00 crore due to delay in adoption of Single Nodal Agency (SNA) system by the State/Union Territories. The Committee feel that all the three components of the unified Scheme are important to empower the SC Community, hence there is an urgent need to set up SNAs in each State so that the funds are released to the States on time. With advanced IT tools available, the procedural formalities/changes should be implemented fast. Hence, the Committee, desire that the Department should develop a sound system to overcome the shortcomings, such as delay in submission of Utilisation Certificates by the States, unspent balance lying with the State Governments, etc. and alert them well in time because now the funds will not be released under the new provision unless the unutilised funds are surrendered by the States or Utilisation Certificates are provided by them for the release of next instalment out of the grant. The Committee also feel that the Department need to formulate an action plan and lay down the time bound targets under PM-AJAY to achieve the objective of the Scheme. The Committee would also like the Department to take suitable steps so that the budgetary allocation made for 2022-23 and 2023-24 are fruitfully utilised by the implementing agencies and the new provisions are successfully implemented. In order to cover larger number of SC villages under the Scheme, the Committee recommend that the population criteria fixed for selection of village under 'Adarsh Gram' should also be periodically reviewed as has been done by reducing 50% SC population criteria to 40%. The Committee would like to be informed of the action taken by the Department in this regard.

Reply of Government

During FY 2022-23 an amount of ₹164.01 crore has been utilized against the total allocation of ₹1,950.00 crore at the end of the Financial Year. The reason behind the less expenditure during 2022-23 is solely attributed to huge unspent lying with the SNA

account of the State as well as non-furnishing of Utilization Certificates by some of the State in time. Out of the 30 State/Union territories implementing the scheme of PM-AJAY, a total of 28 State/Union Territories have already mapped the single nodal account of their respective Single Nodal Agency (SNA) in respect of the scheme and 01 Union Territory not required to map. In order to have an effective implementation and monitoring of the scheme, a centralized MIS portal for this scheme has already been put in place. Based on the issues encountered during the course of implementation of the scheme, a broad action plan for entire period of implementation of the scheme with short-term physical and financial targets to be achieved by the respective State Governments/ Union Territory Administrations is under consideration. With regard to reviewing the Scheduled Caste (SC) population criteria for selection of more villages, it would be done at the appropriate time keeping in view the status of implementation of the scheme in already selected villages.

Recommendation (Para 8.15)

The Committee note that a Scheme "National Action for Mechanised Sanitisation Ecosystem (NAMASTE)" has been formulated by the Department of Social Justice and Empowerment to provide dignity to sewer and septic tanks workers. It is to be implemented jointly with Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs in 4800+ ULBs with the budgetary outlay of ₹350.00 crore during next three years up to 2025-26. In this regard, the Committee find that the Scheme has been formulated for implementation from 2023- 24 after it is planned to collect basic data of number of Sewer and Septic Tank workers in the Country from ULBs and their profiling done. Also as per the norms under NAMASTE Responsible Sanitary Authenticity and Emergency Response Sanitation Units are to be established in each district for the effective implementation of the Scheme. The Committee would therefore, like the Department to take necessary steps to obtain data of sewer and septic tank workers from States/ UTs ULBs and also pursue with the States/UTs continuously for establishing Response Sanitation Unit and Emergency Response Sanitation Units at the earliest so that the target fixed is achieved in the given time. The Committee also desire that a time limit needs to be fixed for completing the work of collection of data by each ULB as well as purchase of machines for sewer cleaning by these bodies. The Committee would like to be informed with regard to the measures taken in this regard.

Reply of Government

The proposed "National Action for Mechanised Sanitisation Ecosystem (NAMASTE)", inter alia, envisages collection of basic data of sewer and septic tank workers in the ULBs of the country and their profiling. After approval of the Scheme, this exercise would be undertaken on war footing. Pending approval of the scheme,

the concerned States have been requested to collect and provide the data of sewer and septic tank workers. Exercise of profiling of sewer and septic tank workers would be undertaken after approval of the Scheme. As regards, pursuing the matter of appointment of Responsible Sanitary Authority and setting up of the Emergency Sanitation Response Units, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs has been pursuing the matter with the concerned State Governments for taking action in a time bound manner. The data of sewer and septic tank workers would be collected in the first year of implementation of NAMASTE and will be subsequently updated on regular basis. As regards, purchase of machines for sewer cleaning by ULBs, it is stated the NAMASTE proposes to provide assistance to the sanitation workers and their dependants in the form of capital subsidy and interest subsidy. This component is proposed to be implemented during three years of implementation of NAMASTE. In addition, under the Swachhta Udyami Yojana of the National Safai Karamcharis Finance and Development Corporation (NSKFDC) concessional loans are provided to the ULBs and the contractors associated with ULBs for sanitation related contracts. Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, under Swachh Bharat Mission also provides assistance to the ULBs for purchase of machines/equipments for cleaning of sewers and septic tanks.

CHAPTER-V

OBSERVATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS IN RESPECT OF WHICH REPLIES OF THE GOVERNMENT ARE INTERIM IN NATURE.

(Recommendation Para No.10.14)

The Committee note that as per surveys the number of elderly people is steadily increasing in our country, so, there is an urgent need to ensure that the elders remain happy, healthy, financially sound and physically active. In this connection, the Committee recall that they had examined the "Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens" Bill 2019 and presented a report thereon. The official amendment of the Bill is stated to be under preparation in the Ministry. The Committee hope that the same will be prepared soon and brought for legislation so that the maintenance of parents and senior citizens and their welfare gets a solid legal support. The Ministry is statedly taking several initiatives also, apart from implementing the Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana, AVYAY, Senior Citizens Welfare Fund, etc., one of which is SAGE, which is a portal based 'Senior Care Ageing Growth Engine' as a one-stop access of elderly care products and services by credible Start Ups. This portal, opened on 5th June, 2021, will invite Start Ups to be selected on the basis of innovative products and services across the sectors such as health, housing, care centres, food and wealth management, legal guidance as well as technological access linked to finances for elderly care. ₹1 crore is to be provided to such Start Ups. Appreciating this new initiative, the Committee have been informed that 12 Start Ups have been/are being supported through SAGE Portal, and desire to be apprised about the products and services developed/being developed by these Start Ups in the last two years. The Committee are happy to note that 'Elderline' i.e. National Helpline for senior citizens was launched on 1st October, 2021 to provide free information, guidance, emotional support, field intervention in cases of abuse and rescues in order to improve quality of life of senior citizens. They further note that 31 States/ UTs have kept the Elderline operational. The Committee acknowledge the intention of the Ministry to make programmes for elderly care a National movement involving youth and innovators and providing business opportunities to social enterprises, technological Start Ups, legal and financial services, infrastructure and managed-care systems as well as research and data driven organizations for the same. The Committee feel a more robust elder care ecosystem can be created in India if such efforts gain momentum.

Reply of Government

❖ Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Bill 2019:

- i. The Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens (MWPSA) (Amendment) Bill 2019 has been introduced in the Lok Sabha on 11-12-2019.
- ii. On the basis of the Lok Sabha Standing Committee's Recommendations, the MWPSA(Amendment) Bill is being modified.

❖ **Scheme of Senior-care Aging Growth Engine (SAGE):**

- i. During the FY 2021-22 and FY 2022-23, a total of 13 Start-ups have been selected.
- ii. These Start-ups are engaged in developing automated devices for home dialysis that cuts the cost substantially, clinical tests at home at a very reasonable rate, elder-friendly electric cycles, lechal smart insoles that prevent fall of elderly by early warning systems, subscription based home visits by trained health personnel, medical travel and stay of the elderly etc.

❖ **Elderline- National Helpline for Senior Citizens:**

- i. The Elderline with Toll free number 14567 is operational from 8 AM to 8 PM, all 7days of a week.
- ii. National Institute for Social Defence (NISD) has been nominated as a Central Nodal Agency for Elder Line.
- iii. Rs. 82.68 crore has been released under the scheme up to 2022-23.
- iv. So far, a total of 14,77,488 calls have been received under the scheme.

NEW DELHI;

20th December, 2023

29 Agrahayana, 1945 (Saka)

**RAMA DEVI
Chairperson,
Standing Committee on
Social Justice and
Empowerment**

MINUTES OF THE SECOND SITTING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (2023-24) HELD ON MONDAY, 30TH OCTOBER, 2023

The Committee met from 1130 hrs. to 1200 hrs. in Committee Room No.1, Parliament House Annexe Extension Building, New Delhi.

PRESENT

SMT. RAMA DEVI - CHAIRPERSON

MEMBERS

Lok Sabha

2. Shri Thomas Chazhikadan
3. Shri Abdul Khaleque
4. Smt. Ranjeeta Koli
5. Shri Y. Devendrappa

Rajya Sabha

6. Smt. Sumitra Balmik
7. Smt. Ramilaben Becharbhai Bara
8. Shri Abir Ranjan Biswas
9. Shri Narayan Koragappa
10. Shri Mukul Balkrishna Wasnik

SECRETARIAT

- | | | | |
|----|-----------------------|---|------------------|
| 1. | Smt. Mamta Kemwal | - | Joint Secretary |
| 2. | Dr. Vatsala Joshi | - | Director |
| 3. | Shri Krishendra Kumar | - | Deputy Secretary |

2. At the outset, the Chairperson welcomed the Members to the sitting of the Committee. Chairperson informed the Members that 26 subjects have been selected by the Committee for detailed examination during the year 2023-2024. She also mentioned that the committee has already held two meetings with the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities on "Deendayal Disabled Rehabilitation Scheme" during the previous term of the Committee *i.e* 2022-2023. The report on the subject is being drafted and will be presented before the Committee for consideration and adoption in due course.

3. Thereafter, the Committee took up for consideration of the draft Report on Action Taken Report on Forty-Sixth Report on 'Demands for Grants for the year 2023-24' pertaining to the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (Department of Social Justice and Empowerment).

4. The Chairperson then requested the Members to give their suggestions, if any, on the draft Report. The Committee suggested that recommendation contained in Para No.7 of the draft Report may be suitably amended to incorporate that the annual allocation of funds is non-lapsable and also the funds allocated for the year are not diverted to any other Scheme. The Committee then authorized the Chairperson to finalize the draft Report and present the same to both houses of Parliament.

5. The Report was adopted by the Committee with the suggested change.

The Committee then adjourned.

APPENDIX

ANALYSIS OF ACTION TAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENT ON THE RECOMMENDATIONS CONTAINED IN THE FORTY-SIXTH REPORT (SEVENTEENTH LOK SABHA) OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT ON 'DEMANDS FOR GRANTS (2023-24) OF THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT).

		Total	Percentage
I.	Total number of Recommendations	12	
II.	Observations/ Recommendations which have been accepted by the Government:- Rec. Para No.2.18, 2.19, 4.8, 5.20, 7.7 & 8.16	06	50%
III.	Observations/Recommendations which the Committee do not desire to pursue in view of the Government's reply:- Rec. Para No. 3.13, 9.8 & 10.13	03	25%
IV.	Observations/Recommendations in respect of which replies of the Government have not been accepted by the Committee and which require reiteration:- Rec. Para No. 6.14 & 8.15	02	17%
V.	Observations/Recommendations in respect of which replies of the Government are interim in nature:- Rec Para No.10.14	01	8%
			100%