

## Govt. seeks help to end manual scavenging

In a bid to eliminate the need for manual scavenging, the Centre on Wednesday launched a challenge asking innovators, NGOs, research institutions, companies and cities to propose technology and business solutions to clean urban sewers and septic tanks without human entry.

The challenge will be part of the Mahatma Gandhi International Sanitation Convention to be held on October 18 this year, according to an official statement from the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs. The objectives are to identify technological and business process innovations, endorse viable business models and pilot test shortlisted technologies and solutions in select project cities.

Activists working with manual scavengers expressed some scepticism about the proposal. The machines to clean sewers and septic tanks are already available globally, but they need to be adapted to Indian conditions, and the government needs to show the political will to use the technology on the ground, they said.

“By asking individuals, companies and NGOs to submit proposals for an award, the government is washing its hands of its responsibilities,” said Bezwada Wilson, national convener of the Safai Karamchari Andolan.

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