

Soon, machines to collect waste from septic tanks, dump it at sewage plants

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The Delhi Jal Board (DJB) is planning to give licences for GPS-enabled, specially-designed machines to extract waste out of septic tanks and empty it at sewage treatment plants. The process will start next month.

DJB vice-chairman Dinesh Mohaniya said the lack of a proper drainage system in unauthorised colonies usually leads to residents using tankers to remove waste from septic pits, and emptying it at the Yamuna floodplains.

The board presently has registered 150 service providers who are disposing waste collected from septic tanks into sewage treatment plants as per existing norms. Mohaniya said there are around 800 providers for the service in the city, and the board expects around the same number of licences to be issued for the machines.

“The plan will be implemented in a phased manner. In the first phase, we will get service providers empanelled so they follow our norms. In the second, we will gradually switch to the machines,” said Mohaniya. Presently, pumps used by service providers are manually operated. There have been instances when workers entered the pits to remove waste, Mohaniya said.

Mohaniya said the machines are different from the ones given to over 200 manual scavengers in February, adding they will be fitted to a tanker which will collect the waste and transport it to a sewage treatment plant. “We plan to give these machines to people who are already providing this service, to improve their safety and security. The machines are at a conceptual level now, but plans are on to include a GPS system and minimise human intervention. There are machines that already exist in the market, but we want some changes in them, which our engineers will approve,” he said.

The move comes in light of the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) directing the DJB earlier this month to set up a vigilance system for checking discharge of waste from septic tanks into the Yamuna.

In April, a joint team of officials from the CPCB and the Food Safety & Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) had reportedly found tankers emptying sewage directly into the floodplains. They had also found drains discharging waste water from some areas, including habitations in Jagatpur Khadar Village and Milan Vihar, into the floodplains.

The CPCB had reportedly asked the board to plan a sewage management system in scattered colonies and submit an action plan by May 20. Mohaniya said use of the new machines and licencing of waste extractors would check disposal of sewage into the Yamuna. He added, "Work slowed down due to elections, but DJB officials would have submitted the report sought by the CPCB."