

# New machine aims to end India's sewer death shame

November 19 2018

---



World Toilet Day is held on November 19 each year and is a campaign to raise awareness of issues surrounding health and sanitation

Hundreds of "manual scavengers" die each year cleaning out sewers in cities across India but a machine unveiled for Monday's World Toilet Day could help to end that tragic record.

Thousands of mostly low-caste Indians are employed in one of the world's dirtiest jobs unclogging [human waste](#) from underground pipes.

More than 1,300 have died, mainly suffocated, in the past three years, according to the Sulabh International charity.

The men are called "manual scavengers" because they mainly scrape the [waste](#) with their bare hands without any protective gear or masks.

The machine launched by Sulabh injects high pressure water into the tunnels and tanks and then collects the waste with a mechanical bucket operated from ground level.

A remote control inspection camera generates high-resolution images of the sewer system.

Bindeshwar Pathak, the Sulabh International founder, said that forcing humans into the sewers was "demeaning".

"We hear so often the tragic news about sewer workers losing their lives," he said.

"This machine can safely clean the waste matter and it will gradually make manual scavenging redundant.

"With this machine we hope no person will die in the sewers any more."

Indian lawmakers have passed several laws aiming to stamp out the age-old practice of manual scavenging, the latest in 2013. But many scavengers are still used through subcontractors.

In [rural areas](#), women "scavengers" clean out primitive non-flush toilets with basic tools, although the practice is now on the wane.

Pathak also unveiled a giant Indian-style [toilet](#) pot to raise awareness about sanitation in a country where some 150 million people do not have home toilets.

© 2018 AFP

Citation: New machine aims to end India's sewer death shame (2018, November 19) retrieved 16 July 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2018-11-machine-aims-india-sewer-death.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.