As you are aware, flagship national sanitation programmes are being implemented under aegis of Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoH&UA) and Ministry of Jal Shakti, [Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation (DDWS)] in urban and rural areas of the country, respectively. MoH&UA, through the Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban) [SBM(U)] and AMRUT programs has been focusing, on making arrangements for comprehensive management of liquid and solid waste (including plastic waste) in urban areas. Similarly, DDWS, through Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen) [SBM(G)] Phase-II is focusing on solid and liquid waste management (including faecal sludge and plastic waste) in rural areas. At the State level, these programs are being coordinated generally by the Departments concerned with urban affairs and rural development. Depending on the State level implementation strategies, the actual project execution is taken up by respective Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) and Rural Local Bodies (RLBs) or in a cluster approach.

2. Under SBM(U), 2.0 and AMRUT (Jal Jeevan Mission(U)) programs, it has been planned to undertake construction of integrated Sewage Treatment facilities with arrangements for co-processing of feacal septage from onsite units (septic tanks). Under SBM(G) Phase-II, emphasis has been given on low-cost toilet technologies for onsite management of faecal matter and for co-treatment at an existing or planned STPs/ FSTPs in the neighbouring urban area in the district, where onsite management of faecal waste is not possible and where the villages is situated within a radius of 10-15 kms from the aforesated urban areas. For those villages, where these options are not feasible, stand-alone faecal septage management systems which are
easy to operate and maintain (viz. trenching, planted drying beds and unplanted drying beds) are to be taken up. Besides, it has been envisaged to engage private facilities/service providers in urban areas for mechanical cleaning of septic tanks/single pits in rural areas and transportation of faecal septage to nearby STPs/FSTPs.

3. For plastic waste management, the principles of 4R - Refuse, Reduce, Reuse and Recycle are being adopted in both urban and rural sanitation programs. Under SBM(G), provision for funding support to the GPs and Blocks for collection, transportation, segregation and storage at village level and setting up Plastic Waste Management Units (PWMU)/Material Recovery Facilities (MRF) at Block level has been made. It has been also envisaged to use such existing PWMU/MRF in urban areas, which have the capacity to serve the requirements of rural areas. Services of existing service providers/entrepreneurs in the urban areas are to be used for forward linkages for transportation of plastic waste from village/GP to PWMU/MRF and final disposal of plastic waste after its processing in PWMUs of rural areas.

4. As would be appreciated, the focus is on achieving economy of scale and effort through adoption of a co-ordinated approach to deal with transportable waste- the faecal septage and plastic, which covers the entire district, where possible, without being hindered by the urban-rural divide. SBM(G) Phase-II Guidelines also cater for representation of State urban development departments (UDD)/ULBs in its various committees viz. National Scheme Sanctioning Committee at national level, State Water and Sanitation Mission and District Water and Sanitation Mission at State and district levels.

5. For this purpose, the State and district authorities will need to closely look at the nature of urban rural distribution of population in a district. In the first instance, where the district is predominantly urban (>70% population residing in urban areas)-

- The districts authorities in collaboration with Urban Local Bodies may work out a plan to ensure that existing/under construction STPs/FTSPs in the urban areas are able to cater for treatment of faecal septage from rural areas lying within a suitable turnaround distance
(2-3 hrs) from plant location in the urban centre(s). The desludging and transportation operators responsible for urban onsite systems could also scale up their resources to cater for faecal septage from such rural areas.

- Similarly, the districts authorities in collaboration with Urban Local Bodies may plan transportation of plastic waste from rural areas to the MRF/PWMC through the existing service providers in urban areas.

- District authorities in coordination with ULBs may facilitate to establish forward linkages with existing entrepreneurs/service providers for final disposal of plastic waste after its processing in PWMUs of rural areas.

- In the case of construction of future STPs/FSTPs and MRF/PWMC under AMRUT/SBM (U)/other schemes, the local bodies (both urban and rural) may jointly plan in a way that the resultant capacity is able to cater to the entire catchment area’s population. In such cases, a joint coordination group may be formed at the district level to facilitate such convergence mechanism.

- The MoHU&A has recently released a toll-free number (14420) to facilitate safe and timely management of cleaning of septic tank and sewer by only registered Private Sanitation Service Organisations (PSSOs) empanelled by the Responsible Sanitation Authority (RSA). This needs to be propagated in rural areas as well to ensure safe mechanized cleaning of septic tank and sewers in villages through empanelled and competent professionals. The charges for various services offered by the PSSOs are to be fixed by the RSA.

- District authorities should publicize provisions of the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation (PEMSR) Act and requirement of mechanized cleaning. A campaign in each district in urban as well as rural areas should be undertaken for the same.

6. The above cluster approach can be suitably modified for districts with lesser urbanization. As a thumb rule, the agency responsible to manage any plant/facility should be ordinarily able to take up an additional 20-25% load through proper planning and economical retrofitting.
7. You are, therefore, requested to issue necessary directions to all the concerned to ensure that an integrated approach may be adopted by both urban and rural authorities for preparation of convergent action plan for implementation of faecal septage and plastic waste management in both rural and urban areas in a district.

Best regards

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To
Chief Secretaries /Administrators/Advisors to Lt. Governors
All States/UTs