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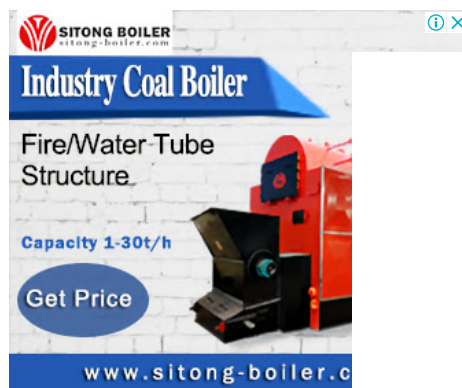
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HIMALAYAN NEWS SERVICE

Kathmandu, May 5

Although people's access to sanitation has been increasing over the last decade, there is still a long way to go to address sanitation problems in urban areas, according to the Faecal Sludge Management Regulatory Framework recently issued by the Ministry of Water Supply and Sanitation.



Sanitation coverage rose to 64 per cent (91 per cent in urban and 56 per cent in rural areas) in 2011 from 24 per cent in 2001.

Many rural municipalities, municipalities and districts are competing to declare themselves open defecation free zones with the implementation of the National Sanitation and Hygiene Master Plan, 2011.

Citing a report of National Management Information Project (2014), the framework said total coverage of basic sanitation had already reached 70 per cent nationwide. Sanitation coverage in cities depends on households using pit latrine, improved latrine and septic tank latrine.

“Urbanisation is rapidly growing in Nepal. It is estimated that the urban population has increased to 40 per cent recently from 17 per cent in 2011. Latrines of nearly 30 per cent urban population have been connected to sewerage system while the latrines of 48 per cent are attached to septic tank. “Around 12 per cent of urban population have ordinary latrines and nine per cent still lack such sanitation facilities,” the framework said, adding that the status of one per cent of the urban population was not known.

According to the framework, cities have not been able to make systematic the process of evacuating, collecting, transporting and managing faecal sludge from household septic tanks.

Individual labourers are hired to clear the septic tanks. “There is no practice of clearing septic tanks on a regular basis. It is not cleared until the faecal sludge starts overflowing. To make the matter worse, faecal sludge and wastewater are disposed of into the nearest river without treatment,” it said.

The framework warns that untreated faecal sludge not only pollutes sources of ground and underground water but causes adverse effects on public health and environment.

It also stresses the need to find economic and sustainable ways to reduce the burden of pollution on rivers and other water sources.

A version of this article appears in print on May 06, 2017 of The Himalayan Times.

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