

Hindustan Times

In UP, 18 lakh including graduates applied for 40,000 sanitation jobs

Shortly after Independence Day this time, the country's most populous state woke up to some fresh data that again indicated the gravity of its unemployment scenario.

Amid studies that say Uttar Pradesh will have 1.3 crore jobless youth (18-35 age) next year, municipal corporations across the state received 18 lakh applications for 40,000 sweepers.

The Kanpur Municipal Corporation (KMC) alone was flooded with seven lakh applications against its 3,275 vacancies for safai karamcharis. A staggering five lakh of them were graduates and postgraduates.

For long considered 'menial', the job also saw signs of UP's conventional caste paradigm shifting: upper-caste applicants have applied for the post that is occupied by members of the subaltern Dhanuk and Valmiki communities. No less than one lakh applicants are Brahmins, 75,000 are Thakurs and 30,000 are Banias.

It was in July this year the Uttar Pradesh government issued a notification to appoint 40,000 sweepers on contractual basis in the state's 75 districts with a monthly stipend of `15,000. The prerequisites: should pass Class 8, know how to ride a bicycle and how to wield a broom.

When the date to apply (also online) ended on August 17, the civic bodies across the state were left to choose from 18 lakh candidates. State capital Lucknow received 5.5 lakh applications against 3,142 vacancies of Safai workers.

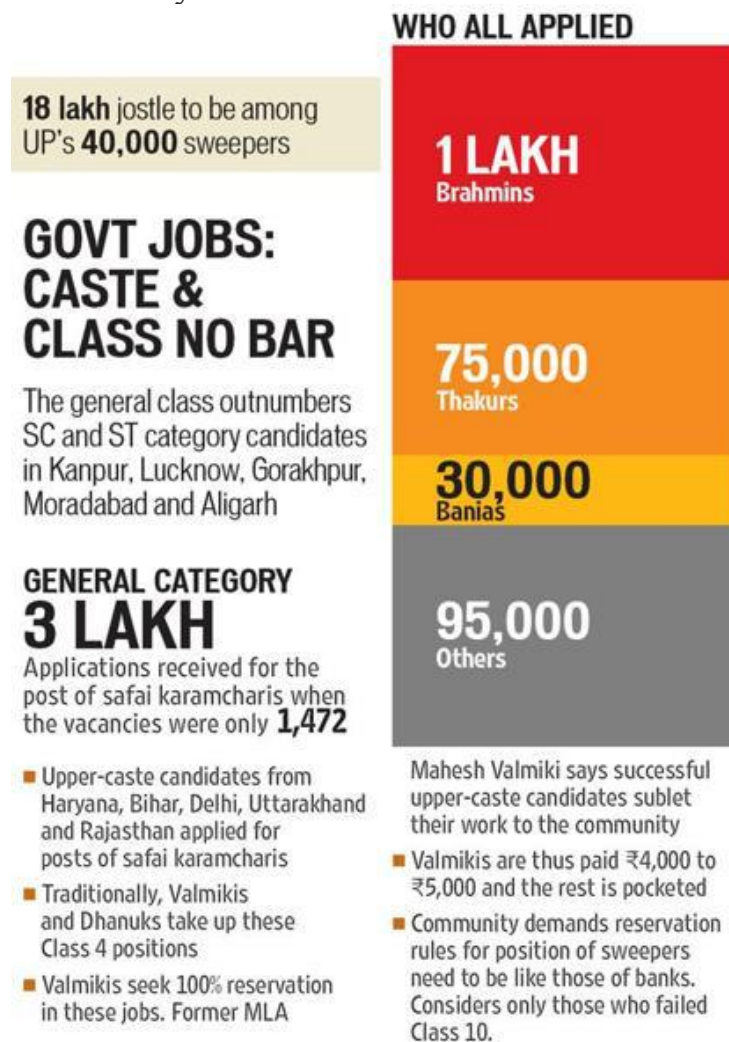
KMC, given its glut of applications, estimates two years to finish interviewing candidates. "It is unbelievable," says Kanpur mayor Jagatveer Singh Drona. "Honestly, I am at a loss of words to describe the situation."

The corporation is hiring a private company to sort out and list the applications, according to KMC officials. Feeding that data into computers will itself take two months.

The applicants are keen about a ‘sarkari’ job. Amit Gupta, who is pursuing doctorate after post-graduation in chemistry, has applied for the post in Jhansi, which needs 175 sweepers and 15,000 have applied. “The salary is better than what I get as a teacher in private colleges and schools. Jhansi is close to my home district of Hamirpur,” he shrugs. “There are no jobs anywhere. When I learnt about this one, I applied immediately.”

The situation at play is a grim extension of what the UP youth experienced a year ago. In September 2015, 23 lakh candidates applied for 368 vacancies for peons. The Agra Municipal Corporation, which had to fill 1,778 posts, got 90,000 applicants. Of them, 17,000 were graduates and postgraduates.

The age bracket was 18-40 then, and 1.25 lakh candidates each applied with the municipal corporations in Varanasi, Meerut, Aligarh and Gorakhpur besides Ghaziabad, where applications have also come from neighbouring states such as Harayana, Delhi and even Uttarakhand, officials say.



Industry chambers say jobs are “simply not available” in UP despite a high potential for employment. “The desperation is understandable,” says state Assocham president Shailendra Jain. “We signed several MoUs with the state for setting up industry. Bureaucratic rigmarole disallows them from reaching fruition. If industries come, the scene will better.”

A recent report by the National Sample Survey Organisation projected UP’s unemployed youth at one crore by the end of the 12th Five Year Plan (2012-2017), adding that the number will be in addition to 32 lakh awaiting jobs.

The workforce in agriculture has reduced from 69% to 52% in 18 years. The state’s job growth between 2005 and ’12 remained steady at 0.08%, but it was largely fuelled by the construction sector, which is now struggling.

UP has one of the lowest shares in salaried jobs (11%) among all states, just better than Chhattisgarh, Bihar and Odisha, said the World Bank’s March 2016 assessment report.

“Our state is a victim of a paradox,” says Prof SP Singh, a social scientist in Kanpur. “It produces the highest number of graduates in the country, and they don’t have employment. So they go for any government job. It gives them a sense of security.”

With a population of 19.98 crore, the state has 57 universities, second most after Tamil Nadu, that is 8.9% of all universities. And it has 4,828 colleges or 13.85% of all colleges in the country, which is the highest in India.



Applications pile up at the corporation office. State capital Lucknow received 5.5 lakh applications against 3,142 vacancies of safai workers. (HT Photo)

The state offers 20 colleges per lakh of population against the national average of 25, with an average enrolment of 1,079, which is higher than the national average of 703. The total enrolment of students in regular mode in higher education institutes in UP is 39.59 lakh.