

Garbage Management: Fishing in Troubled Water?

The main cause of plague disease outbreak has been poor health and hygiene in cities mainly due to improper management of domestic garbage. The situation in many cities in Maharashtra is serious in terms of management of garbage or municipal solid wastes as given in the Municipal Solid Wastes Management Rules notified under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986. No city in the State is compliant of the Rules. There are Supreme Court Orders issued on the basis of Burman

Committee appointed by the Court. Even these orders are also not properly followed. There is PIL in Mumbai High Court and orders are issued by the High Court but implementation is tardy.

This is not say that nothing is being done by the local bodies. The Civic Administration is simply not equipped to deal with the complex urban issues related to the environmental protection and management. There is dearth of resources and technical know how. This situation is favorable to certain merciless vendors for fishing in the troubled water with or without involvement of local leaders ignorant of environmental protection.

Often decisions are vendor driven especially in the absence of knowledge. In Mumbai tariff it is about Rs. 450 per MT as reported in a daily news paper covering the news on public interest litigation (PIL) filed in Mumbai High Court by Rishi Agrawal, an environmental activist. In contrast to the above, there are many other cities where Local Body i.e. Municipal Corporation or Council is not paying any amount for treatment/processing of the garbage. The Vendor is receiving the garbage at his site at no cost to him and the same vendor is treating/processing garbage at no cost to the local body. In fact at some places vendor is also sharing profit with local body.



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The Vendor is making compost manure out of organic (bio-degradable) material for sale in the market. Plastic is separated and sold for recycling. Other material with calorific value is converted in to the Refuse Derived Fuel pallets (RDF) and sold. All other inert material remaining along with building or construction debris is converted into the bricks that could be used in construction activities. There is no landfill required. The major cities who have adopted or are in the process of

adopting above technique are Chennai (1400 tons per day plant at Perungudi and 300 tons per day at Pallavaram-Tambaram-Alandpur) and Navi Mumbai (750 tons per day plant at Turbhe). Other cities are: Karnal, Indri, Yamunanagar, Rohtak and Jagadhari (all in Haryana); Raibarely, Etawah, Kannauj, Mainpuri, (all in Uttar Pradesh); Barmer, Nagour, Beawar, Jaipur, Kota, Sriganganagar, Pali (all in Rajasthan); Ahmednagar and Parbhani (all in Maharashtra).

There are contradictions in terms of tariff and technology applications. One vendor is charging for garbage management while other is doing free of cost and even, at times, shares profit with local body. The State Pollution Control Board is responsible for the enforcement of garbage management rules. In case of failure, the Board has power to prosecute the local body and there is provision of punishment of imprisonment and fine for the violation. Rules are notified in the year 2000 but so far there is no conviction in any case. That means 'command and control' approach needs to be shifted to 'proactive' and regulatory agencies have to act like a facilitator. A separate Authority must be created to facilitate investments and creation of common infrastructure for environment protection in the State.