

BMC wants to process mixed waste

NEW PLAN With most citizens not segregating their garbage, the civic body is looking at installing new technologies at city's dumping grounds

Poorvi Kulkarni
poorvi.kulkarni@hindustantimes.com

MUMBAI: Dismayed by the poor response received by citizens towards segregating wet and dry waste, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has decided to explore technologies that can be installed at the city's three dumping grounds to process unsegregated waste.

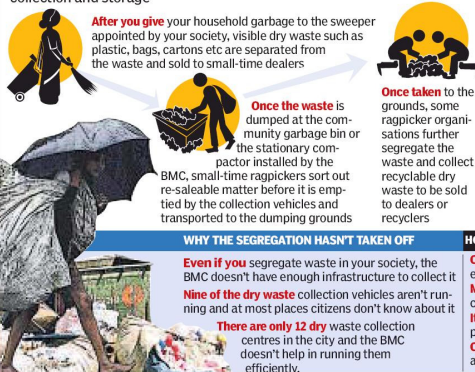
In a meeting of the BMC-appointed technical advisory committee, scheduled in the first week of December, the civic body plans to focus on technologies that wouldn't require citizens to segregate their trash. The committee, comprising experts from National Environmental Engineering Research Institute and Indian Institute of Technology - Bombay and social activists, was formed earlier this month to review waste disposal and make recommendations on other methods that can be adopted.

"Considering the composition of the waste generated in the city, which is often unsegregated, we are looking at installing technologies that can process mixed waste," said Mohan Adani, additional municipal commissioner. "If we find operators for such technologies, the need to segregate waste at source can be ruled out," he added.

HOW DOES YOUR WASTE TRAVEL FROM HOME?

IF YOU DO NOT SEGREGATE WASTE AT SOURCE

There is a network of ragpickers that operates at every level of garbage collection and storage



WHY THE SEGREGATION HASN'T TAKEN OFF

Even if you segregate waste in your society, the BMC doesn't have enough infrastructure to collect it

Nine of the dry waste collection vehicles aren't running and at most places citizens don't know about it

There are only 12 dry waste collection centres in the city and the BMC doesn't help in running them efficiently.

IF YOU SEGREGATE YOUR WASTE AT SOURCE

Wet waste is meant to be given to the waste handler of your building while dry waste is to be handed out to NGOs with which the BMC has tied up. These organisations collect dry waste from citizens once or twice a week depending upon the level of segregation carried out in the ward

The BMC has hired one dry waste collection truck for each ward to transport this waste to the designated dry waste sorting centres.



HOW NOT SEGREGATING HELPS VESTED INTERESTS

Civic conservancy staff segregate waste and earn by selling lucrative items privately

More waste means contractors in-charge of collection make more trips, get paid more

It also means that contractors who are paid per tonne garbage received, earn more

Civic officials in collusion with these lobbies also earn when more waste is generated.

One such technology that is being seriously considered is a waste-to-energy plant, which utilises unsegregated waste to produce electricity. The plant uses combustion of waste to generate steam, which is in turn

passed through a turbine to generate power.

Currently, the composting plants at the Deonar and Kanjurmarg dumping grounds can only process wet waste.

According to the Municipal

Solid Waste Rules, 2000, segregation at source by citizens is mandatory. It is also one of the service level benchmarks to be achieved by the BMC to continue receiving funds under the Jawaharlal Nehru National

Urban Renewal Mission scheme. But civic officials claim that only 15% of the waste generated gets segregated at source, which has also disturbed the BMC's system of dry waste collection and sorting in some wards.

Contractors, errant officials will benefit

Kunal Purohit
kunal.purohit@hindustantimes.com

MUMBAI: Activists and waste management experts are not surprised that the civic body has now accepted that it can't force citizens to segregate, and will try and process mixed waste.

Insiders said powerful lobbies behind the city's collection and disposal system stand to benefit if there is no segregation.

An insider in the solid waste management department explains: "The collection contractor gets to make extra trips if there is more garbage and thus he earns more. Then at the dumping ground, the contractors change us according to the weight of the garbage. The more the weight, the more they earn."

A member of the ragpicker organisation, which works with the BMC to segregate waste, said, "It is in the BMC and contractors' interests if the waste isn't segregated at the source. Lobbies of contractors earn, but ragpicker organisations lose out since the BMC doesn't organise efforts for us to segregate waste"

It's not just this alone. Even waste management experts believe that treating mixed waste is technically not a practical idea. "They [the civic body officials] are flouting Supreme Court norms, which have clearly said that segregation at source is compulsory. The BMC is playing games with the environment. They are not looking at the right options," said Rajlamar Sharma, waste management expert and activist working to promote composting. Sharma added: "A municipal corporation that encourages non-segregation and treating mixed waste should be ashamed of itself."

A waste management consultant, who did not wish to be named, said, "Dry waste is very rich and its constituents can be used to great financial benefits. Of the total waste generated in the city, nearly 30% is dry. Imagine the money that can be earned and the resources that can be saved if this dry waste is segregated at source. However the BMC has got its priorities wrong and hence, doesn't look at encouraging segregation."