

NGT slaps Rs 5-crore fine on BMC for improper solid waste management

LAXMAN SINGH

MUMBAI, NOVEMBER 22

THE NATIONAL Green Tribunal (NGT) has fined the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) for failing to carry out proper waste management in the city. The NGT has imposed a fine of Rs 5 crore after it was found that the civic body's garbage dumping and management at all three of its dumping grounds was not as per the Solid Waste Management (SWM) Rules, 2016.

According to the NGT order, passed last month, the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), Maharashtra Pollution Control Board (MPCB), district collector and representatives of the BMC had carried out joint inspection of all three dumping grounds—Deonar, Mulund and Kanjurmarg—to check whether the SWM rules were being followed.

Currently, the city generates 7,500 metric tonne waste daily, of which 3,000 metric tonne is dumped in Kanjurmarg, 2,000 metric tonne at Deonar and the remaining 1,500 metric tonne at Mulund dumping ground. However, the BMC is in the

EXPLAINED

E. No alternatives, BMC fails to shut its dumping sites

THE BMC'S long pending issue of closure of all three dumping grounds—Deonar, Mulund and Kanjurmarg—is taking a toll on waste management in the city. In 2005, for the first time, the civic body had attempted scientific closure of the three dumping grounds and waste-to-energy plants, but after almost 10 years, it has failed to yield results even after spending crores on the project.

All three dumping grounds reached saturation level years ago. But due to non-availability of alternatives, the BMC is forced to continue dumping waste at the same sites without systematic disposal. A major fire in Deonar and frequent fires in Mulund dumping ground have had an adverse effect on the city's air quality. Also, the NGT's order pointed out no treatment of leachate at dumping grounds. Leachate is a toxic liquid coming from heaps of garbage that can lead to soil and water pollution.

process of shutting down Mulund dumping ground, but it is stuck pending some clearance from the MPCB.

The report concludes that municipal solid waste dumping sites were not complying with rules and waste is being dumped in a haphazard manner at

Deonar site... No leachate collection and treatment plant is there and fire incidents have also taken place," reads the order.

It further states that, "Similar is the condition at Mulund and Kanjurmarg sites. The inspection report shows serious failure of the Municipal Corporation of

Greater Bombay. Damage to the environment and public health is self-evident."

NGT initiated action after a complaint was filed regarding improper waste management at all three dumping sites. An official from the BMC's Solid Waste Management (SWM) department, who was part of the inspection team, told *The Indian Express*: "In August, a complaint was filed alleging that illegal dumping of waste was taking place in Deonar and other two dumping grounds without following SWM rules. After this, the NGT directed CPCB and MPCB to conduct joint inspection to check the facts. The inspection was carried in October 31."

After series of fires in Deonar dumping ground in February, 2016, caused severe air pollution in most part of the city, a team comprising of representatives from the Ministry of Environment and Forest, CPCB and MPCB had visited the dumping yard and directed BMC to start immediate closure of dumping ground and set up a waste-to-energy plant. However, there is still a long way to go as civic body is not able to find contractor for the closure.

Calling the improper dumping a violation of law, the NGT ordered BMC to deposit Rs 5 crore environmental compensation for damage to environment. The amount is to be deposited with the CPCB within one month.

Meanwhile, speaking to *The Indian Express*, Minesh Pimple, deputy chief engineer, SWM department, said: "We have filed an appeal in the Supreme Court against the NGT order as we were not given a chance to present our side. The NGT did not seek any reply from the BMC on the inspection report. Also, there is a High Court-appointed monitoring committee for Deonar dumping ground. We submit our detailed reports for every development pertaining to dumping ground to the committee."

He added: "The order says that were the inspection team was supposed to give action plan on the problems but that was also not given. The BMC is taking a lot of efforts to streamline dumping issue from reducing the garbage quantity reaching at dumping ground to processing of waste at source. Soon, Kanjurmarg will start taking more garbage."

laxman.singh@expressindia.com

