

India all set to be the dirtiest country in the world

We have plans in place yet cities are choking in the stranglehold of waste. Managing waste is a matter of following rules

Huge investments are made in the waste sector yet the problem looks insurmountable. **Dr Amiya Kumar Sahu**, President of National Solid Waste Management of India, explains how proper implementation of solid waste rules will bring efficiency in the waste management sector. He talks to Sonal Matharu from *Prayas*.



Q. What problems are upcoming cities facing with solid waste management? What mechanisms do municipalities have to deal with the increasing burden of waste?

The process of waste management starts with garbage collection and segregation, storage, collection, transportation, processing and disposal follow. Municipal solid waste rules were drafted in 1996 and were made official in 2000. It has all the stages of waste management described in details and every municipality is supposed to follow it. But the problem of managing waste arises as none of the municipalities following these rules.

Ideally, each household should segregate its dry and wet waste. But currently, only 0.5 per cent of segregation of waste is happening at household level. At most places, the dry and wet waste is mixed and municipalities get it in this form.

Cities are having a hard time figuring out ways to manage waste because programmes are started and investments are made without any calculation or analysis of how much waste is collected in a community or how many bins are required. Also, none of the current equipments and technology used

in the entire process of waste management is designed properly. From dustbins used at homes to community bins, to trucks used for transporting waste by municipalities, all are poorly designed.

Recently, Salem in Tamil Nadu spent Rs 56 lakh on constructing community bins. It was soon realised that the trolleys used to lift the waste do not fit inside the community bins.

Q. Are waste-to-energy plants the solution?

We cannot follow the techniques used abroad because our type of waste is different. Dry waste should be recycled and wet waste should be used in composting or bio-gas formation. If we manage this properly, there will be no waste. Waste-to-energy plants can be effective if segregation happens properly. These are not functional because we have mixed waste. Energy produced can definitely meet the deficit of power we face in the country.

The dry waste like paper, metal, glass collected can be processed in an excellent way. The current ways to recycle these are not professional. Only 30 per cent of this waste is recycled through professional methods. 70 per cent is still discarded without yielding its benefits as it mixes with wet waste and becomes useless.

Q. How implementable or expandable are the small models of waste collection and recycling? Can these be scaled up?

Small recycling projects do not address the larger problems cities face. Many of these small scale projects are limited in their reach and are not sustainable.



Q. What policy level changes do we need for better waste management in Indian cities?

India spends Rs 50,000 crore, all costs inclusive, on waste each year. Yet we are unable to manage it properly. So many recommendations have been made to the *Planning Commission* but nothing has improved. Garbage overflows from community bins. There is no secure landfill waste disposal in the

country. Ahmedabad, Coimbatore, Delhi and Mumbai are now considering it. But till date, we have no provision for any such plant. The final disposal should be on the land and there is no land reserved for disposal or dumping.

Also, there must be capacity building. Departments handling waste must have enough staff who have the knowledge to deal with this. This is lacking in every municipality. Projects now run on public private partnerships (PPP) and there is huge corruption. There is a lot of money in the garbage business. Politicians have stakes in it. There is political interference in urban development.

Q. What is the way forward for waste management in India?

If we start attaching value to garbage, people will start recycling it. There is no awareness and education among people. In future, with the unsustainable lives, the quantity of dry waste will increase and if this problem is not tackled, India will become the dirtiest country in the world.

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Reference: The Alternative.in

Link:<http://www.thealternative.in/society/india-all-set-to-be-the-dirtiest-country-in-the-world/>