

## SOLID WASTE: EMERGING PROBLEM AND ITS DISPOSAL

Solid waste management in India is a major cause of concern in the country, looking at the plight of our cities which are fast becoming dumping grounds due to lack of organized collection and disposal of the waste to proper land fill sites. A number of efforts have been initiated by NGOs and the government to tackle the menace. The waste is not only household waste but also industrial waste, non biodegradable waste, and toxic wastes. Some important actions and initiatives as reported in newspapers and magazines over the year 2003 have been discussed here.

Greenpeace, an international NGO, returned poisonous waste from the Bhopal Gas Tragedy site to its rightful owner Dow Chemicals. The waste has been collected from the site which was abandoned by the owners after the tragedy which killed 8,000 people and injured half million. The waste has been lying there since 1984 and poisoning the people, aggravating the situation of the people already reeling under the effects of the tragedy.

Bhopal gas tragedy waste returned to its owners.

Disposal of hospital trash a major problem in cities.

Government taking measures to monitor hospitals method of bio-medical waste.

Hospital trash such as syringes, scalpel blades, plastics, surgical material etc have become a problem especially in cities where hospitals are growing fast. In a startling incident a city hospital asked the relatives of an amputee to dispose of the cut limb. This is in gross violation of the Bio-Medical Waste Management Act, 2001. On the other hand Maharashtra govt. decided to check if hospitals were following the Act and prosecute the ones who did not. According to Act bio-medical waste should be incinerated separately as it contains infectious germs and not be disposed off in the usual fashion.

In an example of resident action for a cleaner environment, residents of Vasant Kunj decided to use their kitchen and garden waste for producing manure. A Nagpur based chemical scientist successfully invented a technology to convert plastic waste into fuel. The process is slow and creates 800ml of petrol from 1 kg of plastic waste, hence more successful on small scale. She finally got a patent for her invention.

To make the system of garbage disposal more efficient, MCD decided to privatize the transportation of waste to the land fill sites. The corporation has also initiated the new segregation rule. Residents were asked to segregate wastes and put them in two different bins which were to be made available. MCD's failure to maintain cleanliness is visible from the dumping ground being made around two monuments in Green Park. ASI only criticized the corporation but did nothing. Another problem for MCD is that the existing landfill sites are filled to capacity and new sites are not available.

Waste from Haryana is the main reason for high ammonia content in Yamuna. CPCB too confirmed that Haryana was discharging untreated effluent in to the river.

Scientist invents device to change plastic waste to fuel.

MCD plans to privatize collection of waste and include segregation at source process for residents.

Calcutta seeks Japanese help for waste disposal.

Goa and Andamans reeling under plastic menace.

Calcutta Municipal corporation has sought the help of the Japanese to cleanse the city of the over piling solid waste which includes collection, transportation and disposal of the same.

Goa, a major tourist hot spot can be seen littered with polythene and ubiquitous plastic bottles, the only distraction in an otherwise stupendously attractive landscape. The authorities are trying to curb the menace and have banned use of polythene bags less than 40 microns thick and made some plastic free zones,

but there is always scope for more say NGOs. The Andaman and Nicobar islands are facing a similar problem too. Polythene is destroying the ecology of the islands by interfering with the flora and fauna under the sea. They get deposited on the shoreline acting as eyesores for the tourists Karnataka state pollution control board started a new facility to dispose hazardous waste from the city. Expertise from a German company has been sought to run the facility. Also proposed is cleaning of the sewage water in eight towns along the banks of Cauvery and Krishna rivers.

A new type of waste which is emerging is electronic waste or e-pollution. Rejected computer parts, electronic items, household gadgets etc are the source of this pollution.

Karnataka has major problem of hazardous waste disposal.

E-pollution emerging as new waste type.

Need of ragpickers and kabadiwalas for segregation and recycling.

Hazardous waste in Bangalore polluting the ground water.

At a seminar in Noida experts voiced the opinion that the ragpickers can play an important role in solid waste management as they not only help in segregation but also enable recycling of a lot of waste which otherwise is simply dumped. In a seminar by MoEF the same concept was discussed in greater detail, proposal to arm the *Kabadiwala* with compactors to increase the collection. The buy back policy for mineral water companies and others using PET bottles was discarded as the process is cumbersome and unhygienic.

The country's third hazardous waste management site has been decided at Haldia. A Mumbai based group was given the responsibility of setting up the facility. Bengal government also banned use of plastic bags in the vicinity of Victoria Memorial and other such heritage sites. The sites identified for hazardous waste disposal is not successful in stopping their dumping in the city. Bangalore is an example where industrial and hazardous wastes are becoming a common eye sore. Sewage and industrial waste in the city is also polluting the

ground water in the city. Over 50% of the ground water is not potable. 74% samples also revealed bacteriological pollution.

The union environment ministry's rules for hazardous waste management have been condemned by environmentalists saying it is more industry friendly than environment friendly. They also mention that the rules are likely to allow imports of hazardous waste which is not desirable under any circumstances.

In a workshop organized by German Technical Corporation for Hazardous Waste Management in association with an NGO talked about the hazardous nature of household wastes such as tubelights, aerosols, dry battery cells, outdated medicines etc. The leakage of mercury from these items into ground water is probable and therefore dangerous. It also pointed out that professionals are required to make a recycling centre function properly.

An article in the Hindi daily Jansatta talked about omnipresent plastic, its indestructibility and its harmful effects for the environment, to bring awareness amongst people about the nuisance. UP too is switching to traditional methods of serving liquids in earthen glasses to restrict use of plastics and at the same time improve economic conditions of the claysmiths.

Union ministry's policy for waste disposal condemned. Household wastes too can be hazardous. Plastic as a nuisance is being voiced all over and many reverting to old traditional methods. Stricter norms for industries required.

All the articles are calling for our attention to the huge magnitude of the problem of waste disposal. Not only are they environmentally degrading but also an eye sore for the people. The rules for industries need to be tightened as far as disposing hazardous and toxic waste is concerned. Residents need to be aware of the problems and made responsible for waste disposal rather than totally

relying on civic authorities to clean their environment. Efforts are underway and need of the hour are accelerated efforts in the direction.

WWF-India as an ENVIS Centre/Node has been keeping a tab on the media activity on environment related issues and carries out analysis on different issues in media.

**For further information contact:**

G. Areendran  
Head-ENVIS Centre/Node

Indira Gandhi Conservation Monitoring Centre  
World Wide Fund for Nature-India  
172-B, Lodi Estate, New Delhi - 110 003  
Telephone : +91-011-51504791/51504794  
Fax : +91-011-51504779/4795  
E-mail: [igcmc@wwfindia.net](mailto:igcmc@wwfindia.net)

Website : <http://www.wwfenvis.org> / [www.wwfindia.org](http://www.wwfindia.org)

