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**Delhi's garbage mountains and the environmental waste management challenges**





# Delhi's garbage mountains and the environmental waste management challenges

The National Green Tribunal in 2019 had asked the authorities to start the biomining of legacy waste in the landfills in Delhi, namely Ghazipur, Bhalswa and Okhla. It was estimated that it would take about a decade to flatten the largest landfill in Ghazipur.

The data shows that around 3 lakh tonnes were assessed in 2019/20 and were bio mined. In 2021 authorities processed 4.81 Lakh tonnes. According to studies, even if authorities process 4 lakh tones every year still, it would take them about 33years to clear out the entire mountain. This is if fresh waste is not added to it every day. In 2021 the fresh waste added to Delhi's landfills was more than the legacy waste processed in the same year.

Every year we witness numerous fires break out on these sites. The reason behind this is the anaerobic decomposition of organic waste that leads to heat generation and creation of the combustible methane gas. This will continue to happen until proper access roads and a gas collection system are implemented.

NGT also took cognizance of the fires and promptly directed authorities to take preventive actions. The tribunals termed these dumpsites a time bomb, as they pose a constant threat of explosion.

These landfills have been flouting the Solid Waste Management guidelines of 2016. The rules state that materials that are non-usable, non-combustible, non-biodegradable, non-recyclable, and non-reactive inert waste should go to a 'sanitary' landfill, and leachate should be treated; however, these rules are not being followed.

The economic survey of Delhi mentioned that segregation of waste at source as governed by the Solid Waste Management Rules Bylaws for Delhi is implemented in 32% of the 294 wards. Former South MCD Mayor Narender Chawla says that the officer faces a lot of pressure from political wings to not fine the violators.

Alongside menthane, landfills produce hazardous levels of carbon dioxide and nitrogen. The landfills also generate a large amount of leachate that contaminates groundwater. The borewells in Bhalswa and Ghazipur contain chlorides, copper, cadmium and total dissolved solids in excess of permissible limits.

To make sure that the waste is disposed properly, segregation should begin at the source, and it should be non-negotiable. Only organic waste should be sent to compost centres, and waste generators should share the responsibilities.



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