

Garbage disposal problem mounts to new highs

Delhi produces over 9,000 MT of municipal solid waste every day

Damini Nath

NEW DELHI: As vultures circle a mountain of trash at the Ghazipur landfill site — a much-touted solution to the Capital's garbage problem — a waste-to-energy plant lies idle adjacent to the dump, having missed numerous deadlines.

Delhi produces over 9,000 metric tonnes of municipal solid waste every day, of which about 2,500 metric tonnes is brought to the 70-acre East Delhi sanitary landfill site. With a horrid stench enveloping the locality, the landfill today stands taller than a 10-storey building.

"The landfill has reached 40 metres in height. It surpassed its capacity of 15 metres over 10 years ago. We will have to continue to dump garbage there till we find an alternative land," said EDMC Chief Engineer P.K. Khandelwal.

The other two sanitary landfill sites in Delhi at Okhla in South Delhi and Bhalswa in North Delhi have also been stretched way past their lifespan as the authorities pass the buck.

"We can't do anything because we haven't got the land for new sites from the Delhi Development Authority," said East Delhi Municipal Corporation spokesperson Y.S. Mann.

The waste-to-energy plant is meant to reduce the pressure on the landfill and also to alleviate the shortage of electricity. The plant is expected to use 1,300 metric tonnes of solid waste to produce 450



HEIGHT OF MOUND OF WASTE NOW

40
metres

BRIMMING TO CAPACITY

9,000-9,200
metric tonnes per day

Municipal solid waste (MSW) generated in Delhi

2,500
metric tonnes per day

MSW dumped in Ghazipur landfill site

Waste-to-energy plant will use

1,300
metric tonnes per day

Power Potential

10
mega watts

tonnes of refuse-derived fuel, which will eventually give 10 MW of power.

The EDMC and its private partner, Infrastructure Leasing & Financial Services (IL&FS), said the Ghazipur plant will start production in July or August this year. The original deadline was September 2011 as decided by the erstwhile unified MCD.

"Currently, the work is going on full-swing with regards to all packages like the switchyard and boiler. Our pre-processing plant is almost ready,"

said Col. (retd.) Gyan Misra, IL&FS vice-president of special projects.

For residents in the 2,000-strong community of ragpickers, having the plant in their area has turned out to be bittersweet.

"My son was working in the plant in the house-keeping staff for eight months and then he and around 20 others protested against the lack of clean drinking water and weekly holidays, so they were fired," alleged Noor Mohammad, a rag picker.

Having moved to Delhi from Haldia in West Bengal 20 years ago, Mohammad and his family made their livelihood from the landfill. He wanted his son to stop going to the landfill, but after the job at the plant didn't work out, he sent the dejected 18-year-old back to their ancestral village. Whether or not the community ends up benefitting from the waste-to-energy plant remains to be seen. Till then, the mountain of waste will keep growing, casting a shadow on the entire area.

Govt., civic bodies pulled up for 'trash mountains'

Staff Reporter

NEW DELHI: The three landfill sites in Delhi have become an environmental hazard that could amount to a human rights violation, the National Human Rights Commission said on Wednesday.

The NHRC sent notices to the Union Environment and Forest Secretary, Delhi Chief Secretary and Commissioners of the three municipal corporations. It has asked for reports within four weeks on the "monstrous trash mountains" — the sanitary landfill sites at Ghazipur, Okhla and Bhalswa.

"Rag pickers roaming in these landfills are contracting various diseases. The Corporations in Delhi have given no thought to manage them nor is the Delhi Pollution Control Committee taking steps to check the pollution," the statement said.

