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BMC wakes up to recycling waste, designs revenue model

Will sell solid waste to scrap dealers, share revenue with ragpickers

MUMBAI: The plastic, paper, glass items you discard are likely to be tapped as a revenue source by the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC). By March 2016, it plans to come up with a system to sell dry waste for recycling, with help from ragpicker organisations. The money earned will be shared equally by the BMC and the ragpickers.

THE BMC'S PLAN

BY MARCH 2015

Set up the necessary infrastructure and increase the number of dry waste collection vehicles from the current 46. Local ward offices will assess the need for more vehicles, based on the extent of segregation in areas under their jurisdiction

BY MARCH 2016

Raise public awareness and enforce segregation by imposing fines. Increasing the registrations of ragpickers for dry waste collection and sorting is also in the pipeline. Liaisons with ragpicker organisations have been planned, to create a revenue source by selling dry waste items to recyclers.

WHAT IS DRY WASTE

Paper, plastic, metal, glass, rubber, thermocol, fabric, leather, rexine, wood, wire – anything that can be kept for an extended period without decomposing

10,060 metric tonnes

Total amount of waste generated in the city daily

Out of this, amount of dry waste generated daily: **3420.4 metric tonnes (34%)**

5 Number of ragpicker organisations working to collect and sort dry waste in the city

Out of this, amount of dry waste segregated daily at source and by ragpickers: **Approximately 900 tonnes**

At present, ragpickers – both registered and unregistered – earn their daily bread by selling around 900 tonnes of dry waste they collect and sort to recycling units in the city.

After putting in six to seven hours of work daily, they earn between Rs50 and Rs250, by sorting the waste into categories such as glass, cardboard, thin paper and plastic, and selling them to scrap dealers at Re1 to Rs5 per kg.

The BMC is hoping to make the process more organised, thereby increasing the waste collection, improving segregation, and hence increasing the revenue.

“There is a value to waste. We plan to achieve 100% segregation at source by March 2016. After this, we will work out how the earnings can be shared. But, we will need to first increase the generation of dry waste

and provide adequate infrastructure to ragpickers," said Prakash Patil, deputy municipal commissioner.

In 2000, the BMC gave identity cards to more than 5,000 ragpickers from across five non-government organisations, which had been fighting for their rights. As many as 32 dry-waste sorting centres were set up, but half of them are now defunct.

These NGOs, therefore, feel the BMC should first prepare a plan to recognise the rights of and provide benefits to ragpickers.

"Ragpickers must be given a monthly honorarium for their services. Free medical care, toilets, water supply and proper sheds must be provided. Identity cards must be duly authorised," said Milind Arondekar, president, Aakar Mumbai, one of the NGOs working with ragpickers.

Arondekar added this workforce should be completely integrated into the BMC's waste management system. According to rough estimates, more than 15,000 ragpickers continue to work informally, without any recognition from the BMC.

"The purpose of registering ragpickers was to form cooperatives and increase employment opportunities for them, as many women in this business are the sole breadwinners of their families. But this purpose has not been fulfilled," said Arondekar.

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