

# High court slams BMC for lacking civic sense

## GARBAGE GOAL

- ▶ The BMC has given a private company the project to create a sanitary landfill in Kanjurmarg on design, build, own, operate and transfer basis for 25 years
- ▶ The site has an area of 141 hectares. Environmental clearance has been given for the landfill site to be on 65 hectares. The rest of the area is mangrove land
- ▶ As per project details, a bioreactor plant of 3,000-tonne capacity is to be set up. The HC is hearing PILs that say clearance was for windrow composting
- ▶ The project is important since the city's other two dumping grounds—Deonar and Mulund—are near full

## CONTROVERSY

The MPCB and the state environment department have found violations at the site and have issued notices to the BMC

## COMPOSTING

**WINDROW** | The method includes an open shed with compartments, in which wet garbage is mixed with wet soil to make compost. No odour is emitted because of the soil covering. After a week, compost is taken out for agricultural use or sale. The method does not cause pollution

**BIOREACTOR** | The method includes a hollow, inverted cone open at the top. Garbage is dumped inside without segregation and left to rot. This gives rise to stench and produces leachate. The liquid is poured back into the bioreactor to accelerate decomposition. Bioreactors should be installed in locations away from human habitation



## WORK STATUS

Work has stalled after people living near the Kanjurmarg landfill site complained of foul smell emitted by the bioreactor

## VIOLATIONS

- ▶ MPCB officials found that waste at the landfill site was not being dumped according to Municipal Solid Waste (Management and Handling) Rules
- ▶ Waste was not being segregated before being dumped
- ▶ Obnoxious odours were being emitted
- ▶ Waste collection, disposal and treatment was unscientific, leading to pollution
- ▶ A buffer zone had not been created around the site
- ▶ Untreated leachate was being leaked to surrounding areas



Rosy Sequeira | TNN

The Bombay high court blasted the BMC on Thursday while hearing petitions against illegal waste dumping and wetland reclamation in Kanjurmarg.

"Please understand. You are not behaving as the municipal corporation for the maintenance of Mumbai, but as the municipal corporation for the destruction of Mumbai. You are incorrigible," said Justice Dhananjay Chandrachud, who, along with Justice Amjad Sayed, was hearing PILs by the NGO Vanshakti and MLA Mangesh Sangle.

The petitioners told the court the BMC had environmental clearance to conduct windrow composting on 65 hectares in Kanjurmarg. They said that violating the clearance, the BMC had installed bioreactors, causing pollution and giving grief to locals.

The Maharashtra Pollution Control Board (MPCB) had said in an affidavit in January: un-segregated waste was being handled at the site, leading to obnoxious odours and complaints from locals; the landfill

site neither had a buffer zone around it nor was covered with soil; leachate was flowing into mangrove land (Wikipedia says 'leachate' is a liquid that has dissolved or entrained harmful substances, which may then enter the environment). The MPCB said borewell monitoring

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**High Court**

showed the presence of toxic heavy metals in groundwater—a result of pollution by leachate. Vanshakti's advocate Kranti LC told the court that the MPCB issued a prosecution notice to the BMC four months ago, but had received no response.

MLA Sangle's advocate Snehalata Paranjape showed the court a site visit report made by the Maharashtra Coastal Zone Management Authority in April. Reclamation was rampant in the area and solid waste

handling had taken a backseat, as per the report. "It says wetlands are being reclaimed and mangrove patches destroyed. A 12-feet high, 5.2-km-long compound wall has been built on the high-tide line," Paranjape told the court.

The judges asked the BMC's lawyers if it had environment clearance for bioreactors and was using land in excess of the allowed 65 hectares. The lawyers replied that the BMC had environment clearance and was not using excess land. The judges sought the name of the civic officer on whose instructions the lawyers made their statement and warned of punishment if false declarations were made to the court. "If the statement is found to be false, the officer will go straight to jail," Justice Chandrachud said.

The judges asked the BMC's lawyers how it could bypass the Union ministry of environment and forests to switch technologies (from windrow to bioreactor composting). They told the lawyers to present in court on Friday a statement from a "responsible, high-ranking BMC officer" on the project's status and clearances for it.