

The early initiatives of Government of India on urban solid waste management primarily focused on promoting composting of urban municipal solid waste.

However, it was the outbreak of an epidemic in the city of Surat (Gujarat) in 1994, which actually threw light on the appalling condition and realities regarding solid waste management services. This provided a renewed impetus to the efforts of the Government. A 'High Powered Committee (Bajaj Committee, Member Planning Commission)' was constituted in 1995, which made a number of wide ranging recommendations including waste segregation at source, primary collection, levying of user charges, use of appropriate equipments and vehicles, focus upon sanitary land filling & composting and encouraging public private partnership (PPP) on a pilot basis.

Given the pathetic situation of solid waste management practices in the country and having no solution in sight, a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) was filed in the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India by Mrs. Almitra H. Patel & another vs. Union of India and others, seeking directions from the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India to the Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) as well as Government of India and the State Governments in the country, for improving solid waste management practices expeditiously.

The Hon'ble Supreme Court of India entertained the Writ Petition No. 888 of 1996 and, after several hearings, felt it appropriate to constitute a Committee vide its order dated 16.1.1998 of the following Members to look into all the aspects of solid waste management in Class-I cities of India under Chairmanship of Mr. Asim Burman, Municipal Commissioner, Kolkata Municipal Corporation (popularly known as Barman Committee) and Members from State Government/ULB/ CPWD/USAID/Ministry of Environment & Forests and NGO, Mrs. Almitra H. Patel. The Ministry of Urban Affairs & Employment, Government of India issued order No. Q-11021/1/97-PHE dated 29.1.1998 regarding constitution of Committee as mentioned above.

This Committee tabled its report in March, 1999 giving wide ranging recommendations to improve the system of waste management from storage of waste at source to its final disposal. It also covered institutional, financial, legal and health aspects. One of the key recommendations of Committee was to enable private sector participation (PSP). In addition to being a potential source of project funding, the rationale for PSP included benefits such as cost savings and improvement in efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery. PSP was also seen as a means to accessing new technologies.

Loking to the pathetic situation of Solid Waste Management practices being adopted by the Urban Local Bodies in the country due to various reasons and having no action plan to solve the problem in future, the Ministry of Urban Development dealing with the subject of Solid Waste Management decided to prepare a Manual on "Municipal Solid Waste Management" so as to assist the user agencies in proper management of solid wastes in urban areas. Accordingly, an Expert Committee was constituted by the Ministry of Urban Development, Government of India, during February 1998 to prepare Manual on 'Municipal Solid Waste Management'. The Expert Group included the members from CPHEEO, CPCB, NEERI, MNES, Municipal Corporations, WHO, Academic Institutions, HUDCO, US-AEP etc. and the committee brought out Manual in May 2000.

Pursuant to the Asim Burman committee recommendations on solid waste management for class-I cities, the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India directed the Ministry of Urban Development to set up a 'Technology Advisory Group (TAG) on Solid Waste Management' for five years period to collect information on various proven technology for processing and disposal of wastes, identify appropriate and cost effective technologies suitable under Indian condition etc. to provide technical assistance to

urban local bodies for adopting the suggested technologies where feasible. The committee was constituted in August 1999 under which three Core Groups were constituted:

- Appropriate technology, research and development
- Financial resources and private sector participation
- Capacity building, human resources development and IEC

The report of Technology Advisory Group (TAG) has been finalized by committee and accepted by Competent Authority. The report is under printing and likely to be published soon.

In September, 2000 - The Ministry of Environment & Forests notified the 'Municipal Solid Waste (Management and Handling) Rules, 2000' making it mandatory for ULBs to improve the systems of waste management as envisaged in the rules, in a given time frame ending 31st December, 2003. These rules layout procedures for waste collection, segregation, storage, transportation, processing and disposal. Further, these mandate that all cities set up suitable waste treatment and disposal facilities by December 31, 2003 or earlier. These rules also specify standards for compost quality, health control & management and closure of land-fills. This has precipitated a lot of interest and activities in the sector.

Subsequently, based on Hon'ble Supreme Court directions while hearing the Writ Petition No. 888 of 1996, a 'Task Force on Integrated Plant Nutrient Management using city compost' has been constituted under the Chairmanship of Joint Secretary (UD) by Ministry of Urban Development on 26.3.2003.

The Committee has made wide ranging recommendations on general aspects of municipal solid waste and financial recommendations to the tune of Rs.800.00 crores for capital, interest, transport and promotional subsidy which envisage setting up of 1000 compost plants and Rs.100.00 crore subsidy for existing compost plants to make them sustainable. Apart from above, recommendation on marketing and technical aspects has also been made. A Sub-Group of the Committee has also come out with the recommendations on "appropriate plant design for composting". The Committee has finalized its report and is likely to be published soon.

With poor implementation of Municipal Solid Waste (Management & Handling) Rules, 2000, Supreme Court has directed in its hearing on 3.2.2004 that a proper mechanism may be developed to monitor the progress of implementation for MSW Rules 2000. In this regard, it was decided that all Municipal Authorities will submit the progress to State Pollution Control Board, which in turn will submit consolidated report to CPCB by 15th September of every year and subsequently CPCB will submit the compiled report by 15th September every year to Ministry of Environment and Forests.

It was observed that ULBs are unable to implement proper solid waste management practices and comply with the said rules for want of resources.

In this connection, 12th Finance Commission recommendations accepted by the Government to include Rs.2,500 crore to be given as grant in aid to States for ULBs specifically for solid waste management through public-private partnerships.

Solid Waste Management disposal facilities, such as composting, vermi-composting and sanitary landfill could be supported with back ended capital subsidy. In the case of compost plant, it may be subject to

a ceiling of 50% cost of plant (if ULB owns the plant) and 30% of cost of plant (if joint venture) and interest subsidy for the entire loan repayment period with discount rate of 12%. This is based on the recommendations of the Inter-Ministerial Task Force on Integrated Plant Nutrient Management using city compost.

In this regard, Court further directed at first instance, to prepare and submit the action plan for 59 metro cities and State capitals. It was entrusted to Ministry of Urban Development to get prepared the action plan in consultation with all concerned including MOEF, which will be followed by other cities later on. Meanwhile, indicative guidelines have been circulated to all 59 towns for preparation and submission of action plan and most of them have submitted the action plan to CPCB. Simultaneously, CPCB is also in the process of coming out with fresh time frame for implementation of MSW Rules 2000, in a time bound manner, so as to cover all the urban areas in the country.