

PRESS RELEASE : Bangalore : 29 August 2012

Mayor of Bangalore dumps Mavallipura landfill

In a momentous decision the Hon'ble Mayor of Bangalore Shri. Venkatesh Murthy accepted the demand of communities impacted by the municipal solid waste management land fill operated by M/s Ramky at Mavallipura, that the landfill closure order issued by the Karnataka State Pollution Control Board (KSPCB) would be respected. The Mayor also committed to initiating criminal action against the operator for serious violations of contractual obligations, non compliance with various environmental and social standards, and for contaminating soil and water in Mavallipura and surrounding villages.

The Mayor conceded that a decade of pollution in this region (caused by the accumulated waste of 40 lakhs tonnes in the Ramky landfill and an earlier one handled by Bailappa) has completely devastated the environmental quality of the region to such an extent, that the water has turned toxic and unpotable. The Mayor also confirmed that he would present to the Council the need to compensate those suffering from various chronic illnesses caused by the pollution and to families of 8 people who have lost their lives already. In addition he has conceded that the Waste to Energy project proposed by Ramky at the Mavallipura site will be abandoned. Local villagers also raised concerns that various fabricated criminal cases have been filed against them for protesting pollution and this was also taken on record. It was finally decided that a Joint Committee of BBMP and KSPCB officials and representatives of local communities, and the report will be presented to the Council for effective action soon.



The meeting was attended by Shri. Vishwanath, Member of Legislative Assembly (Yelahanka), in whose electoral jurisdiction Mavallipura is located, the Deputy Mayor Shri. Srinivas and witnessed the active participation of various Corporators, representatives of political parties, progressive movements, farmers leaders, etc. Shri. Nagaraj, Shri. Srinivas and Shri. Ramesh of Dailt Sangarsh Samithi (Coordination) led the delegation of affected villagers that included local Panchayat members and families of those who have lost their lives.

Background:

It may be recalled that the KSPCB had issued a closure order on 11 July 2012 (accessible [here](#)), on grounds that Ramky had operated the landfill without any consent from the Board and in comprehensive violation of the Environment Protection Act and the Municipal Solid Waste Management Rules. The Board had directed Ramky to comprehensively clean up about 22 lakh tonnes (2.2 million) of waste lying in the 48 acres landfill within three months, but the operator failed to comply with this direction as well. This decision of the Board has been supported by the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests in its letter of 16 July 2012 (details [here](#)).

Last week, Shri. Ashokaa, Deputy Chief Minister and Home Minister of Karnataka pushed reopening of the Ramky landfill by deploying over 600 police to beat back resistance from the villagers. His reasoning was that there was nowhere else to dump the waste. Local communities argued that the city must learn to segregate waste at source and not resort to dumping in villages destroying lives, livelihoods and the environment. In the *melee* that ensued, 37 year old Srinivas protesting the reopening of the landfill, died of cardiac arrest. He leaves behind a young family with three small children.

In consideration of this situation, the High Court of Karnataka directed BBMP in response to a Public Interest Litigation that it must prepare a plan of action in 3 days to sustainably manage waste without resorting to dumping on villages. As the High Court observed villagers have a Fundamental Right to a Clean Environment and that cannot be jeopardised by the 5000 tonnes of waste that is produced daily by the city and dumped in various legal and illegal landfills in surrounding villages. They Court also observed that villagers are right in protesting such waste dumping. Hit by this observation, with nowhere to dump the waste and with garbage accumulating all over the city, BBMP has been hunting out various private plots and abandoned quarries to dispose the waste. This is clearly an unsustainable solution and is not in conformance with law and norms.

Sustainable solutions are pending attention of BBMP:

Such a crisis could have been completely avoided if BBMP had comprehensively adopted the standards and norms of the Municipal Solid Waste Management Rules, 2000 and the direction of the Supreme Court that the standards contained in the Rules will be implemented by 2003. Over the past several years, many not-for-profit voluntary organisations have systematically worked with BBMP to develop sustainable and comprehensive waste management solutions based on segregation of waste at source, by reworking door-to-door contracting to enable recovery of value of recyclable material in the local area and ensuring that only inert material that has absolutely no value is disposed. Such engagements have informed the development of the Draft Policy on Integrated Solid Waste Management by BBMP. It is critical that this policy is adopted immediately and without any further delay.

To support BBMP out of its current mess, various voluntary organisations working on solid waste management initiatives have come together to formulate simple and pragmatic Guiding Principles to Sustainably manage Bangalore's solid waste based on segregation of waste at source. These guiding principles will inform actions that can be immediately deployed, which require no major reworking of infrastructure, will save money and also benefit public health and the environment. The Guidelines are enclosed.

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