

## Mavallipura has woken wasteful Bangalore from its slumber

### Our common concern:

It takes simple sensitivity on the part of every family and business in Bangalore to prevent people in villages surrounding from *dying* due to the *waste* that is now dumped on them. If everyone segregated waste at source ensuring recyclable plastics, bottles and metals were given to a local *raddivala* (for a small gain, or free even, so they may not have to scavenge it out of dustbins) and composted organic matter at home (household refuse is mostly organic), 60% of the *waste* generated in Bangalore would not exist then.

Such actions are easily managed at every household and business levels, and can easily become a community initiative in apartments, streets, layouts, schools, public offices, banks, etc. The manure produced or composted organic waste can help create urban vegetable gardens and the money earned from trading recyclables can go to neighbourhood kids to get some sports kits or set up a local community library. Only non-recyclable and hazardous material needs to be disposed in appropriately designed and sited landfills. The area such disposal sites would be negligible, compared with what we are doing today; at least 14 legal and illegal landfills exist around Bangalore and highly putrid, infectious and increasingly toxic solid waste is dumped here and in hundreds of other locations including lakes, forests, raja kaluves, roadsides, grazing pastures, farming areas, etc.

Our municipalities are duty bound to ensure communities engage in segregating waste at source, an effort that does not take too much money or time at all, if done sincerely. Instead, Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) invests almost all of the money allocated to solid waste management (which is part of the health component of the budget) in transporting waste and in creating massive toxic landfills 20-30 kms. out of the city. This is totally avoidable and the costs of trucking waste out is a whopping Rs. 450 crores every year; beneficiaries clearly are the contractors who own these trucks. This is tremendous waste of subsidised diesel, costs India's exchequer dearly and causes avoidable damage to the climate, in addition to the landfills, which are land intensive, hurting local environment and public health.

### Mavallipura Communities have had enough of BBMP abandoning its civic duty:

Communities in Mavallipura and other villages north of Bangalore have been impacted by solid waste dumping in BBMP landfills for a decade now. Suffering from a variety of diseases, loss of livelihoods and associated social stigma, they are deeply worried about the long term consequences of the approximately 15 lakhs tonnes of waste dumped in their village commons: 48 acres landfill operated presently by Ramky in the village grazing pastures and the abutting 36 acres landfill forced shut in 2006 when villagers exposed that a local farmer Bailappa and BBMP were operating this on forest land. In addition, for several years now communities have raised concerns that the birds attracted by these landfills pose a serious danger to India's defense security as the Yelahanka Air Force Training base is merely 5 kms away. It has been recently confirmed that at least 11 aircrafts of the base have suffered bird hits in the past year alone. The question looming large is if we are waiting for the inevitable to happen, were such conditions allowed to continue?

Local communities have had enough of this and they are unwilling to risk any more damage to their health, livelihoods and their environment. In this context, the recent decision of the Karnataka State Pollution Control Board to shut down the landfill operated by Ramky, on grounds that the company has totally violated all the clearance conditions and applicable legal norms (the facility has absolutely no environmental and health safeguards), is a welcome step, though delayed measure. The additional direction that all the waste now lying there should be processed, composted and the refuse translocated to Mandur landfill within 3 months will be closely monitored by the local communities. This this action must be earnestly implemented and the environmental health of affected villages restored to the clean and livable state that it was before, is a long pending demand, and must be ensured.

Rather than take up this task sincerely, BBMP is now pushing into Mavallipura another toxic facility: a waste to energy project. When this project was cleared, it was done in total violation of the norms and rules contained in the Environment Impact Assessment Notification, 2006 and the Municipal Solid Waste Management Rules, 2000, and also without any statutory consultation with local communities as required by law. People of Mavallipura and other villages will not tolerate any further abuse of their lives, livelihoods, their commons, their properties and their futures, if BBMP does not drop this project immediately. Quite simply, BBMP can invest the same money in forcing Bangalore's population to segregate waste at source and composting waste locally, then such landfills and incinerators would be unnecessary.

### **Mavallipura water super-contaminated:**

Environment Support Group has been monitoring various surface and ground water sources in Mavallipura and downstream villages for several years now. Samples collected earlier this month were analysed at the laboratory of the Karnataka Dept. Of Mines and Geology, and the results are shocking.

All ten points monitored reveal shocking levels of pollution. Not only is any water source not potable in this entire area now, additionally these waters are extremely corrosive. It is no wonder that sheep and cattle forced to drink such waters are sickly and dying by the droves, and people are increasingly affected and dying due to various chronic and infectious diseases. A quick analysis of the water sampling is enclosed and is self-explanatory.

### **Next steps:**

Keeping all these circumstances in view, communities of Mavallipura demand that the following actions follow:

1. That BBMP, Karnataka Government, KSPCB, Ministry of Environment and Forests and the Defense Ministry must take immediate action and shut down the Mavallipura landfill operated by Ramky immediately. The Waste to Energy project proposed here must also be cancelled.
2. That all the waste that is now accumulated in these landfills must be safely processed to recover their organic manure content, and the non-recyclable and toxic refuse taken to other appropriate landfills such as Mandur. This is essential as both Ramky and Bailappa's landfills have no environmental safeguards whatsoever (there are no linings to contain long term contamination of ground water from leachates that seep), and are contaminating several lakes and streams feed the Arkavathy River, a major drinking water source of Bangalore.
3. All families who have lost a member due to such pollution, or have people suffering from diseases, must be comprehensively taken care and compensated humanistically and lawfully. Free medical health camps must be organised regularly in all villages to ensure no family suffers any further.
4. Hundreds of cattle and sheep have been lost due to pollution or attacked by packs of vicious dogs that live in the landfills. Livestock owners must be suitably compensated and BBMP must ensure that veterinarians regularly visit the affected villages to remedy this situation.
5. All false cases filed against key leaders and activists of the local villages resisting the landfill must be immediately withdrawn.
6. Criminal action must be initiated against all involved in contaminating water, soil, air and public health of Mavallipura and other villages. Decontamination of water and soil must be undertaken at the operators cost.
7. KSPCB must pursue the criminal cases filed against Bailappa to its logical conclusion. The agency must similarly initiate action against Ramky.
8. Safe and potable drinking water must be supplied to the affected villages, by building a branch line from the Cauvery Water pipeline servicing the airport.
9. BBMP must invest the necessary resources immediately in educating Bangalore's population to segregate waste at source, enforce household and community composting facilities and grossly minimise the need for landfills.

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