

BENGALURU

Segregation, composting could soon be mandatory for all government officials



SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

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Proposal mooted by NGT State-level committee

The State government is mulling over a proposal to make composting compulsory for all its staff. The proposal was mooted by the National Green Tribunal's State-level Monitoring Committee headed by former Upalokayukta Subhash B. Adi and the [Karnataka](#) State Pollution Control Board (KSPCB).

According to Mr. Adi, it was mooted with the overarching objective of reducing the load on [waste](#) processing plants and particularly preventing waste from ending up in landfills and dump yards.

"All government officials can become role models for citizens by taking up composting. We have also suggested that composting be taken up compulsorily in all government quarters,

be it Central, Armed Forces, PSUs or the State government,” he said, and added that this was not restricted to Bengaluru alone. “The same has been communicated with Deputy Commissioners of various districts, including Ramanagaram, Mandya, Tumakuru, Mysuru and Dharwad. Many senior officials are already on board with the idea. The proposal has been implemented to some extent in Ramanagaram and Mandya districts,” he added.

The Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) is also keen on toeing the line. According to senior officials, the civic body is likely to write to the Additional Chief Secretary, Urban Development Department, urging the Chief Secretary to issue a circular making segregation of waste generated and composting of wet and garden waste compulsory in all government offices, buildings and quarters under its jurisdiction. “We will suggest that every government office have twin bins and that all food waste and garden waste be composted,” the source said.

Praise from experts

Waste management experts in the city have hailed the proposal. Sandya Narayanan, Solid Waste Management Round Table, said that with segregation of waste already mandatory, composting in situ is the next logical step. “Slowly, the understanding that centralised processing facilities are difficult to maintain is coming in. Kerala has made composting compulsory and the government offers a lot of support by way of incentives and subsidies,” she said.

However, many remain sceptical of whether the proposal will be successfully implemented. Urban local bodies are mandated to handle waste. “Why should citizens be forced to manage their waste because of the inefficiency of the local body is a question that begs an answer,” said an expert who did not want to be named. “People should have enough space to take up composting. However, small efforts by a few (government officials) can become a model to follow,” the expert added.

Drop in segregation levels

Segregation levels in the city remain woefully low and continue to drop. The segregation of wet, dry and sanitary waste that once stood at 45% now is 35%, claim SWM experts.

Some reasons cited for this include lack of enforcement by the BBMP health inspectors and poor aggregation of segregated waste either during door-to-door collection or secondary transportation.

In an attempt to address the problem locally, many communities are now coming together to explore options to better manage the waste generated themselves.

lot of interest among large institutions and corporates to take up initiatives in-house either to become zero-waste campuses or have zero-waste events. Many more workshops on home composting, urban gardening and terrace gardening are being held across the city. “In several localities, community members have come together to get lane composters installed. This is probably because they are tired of waiting for solutions from the civic body and feel localised processing is the best solution,” she said.

Waste management expert N.S. Ramakanth said unless defaulters (who fail to segregate waste) are fined, segregation levels may not see improvement. He also stressed on the need to provide incentives and subsidies to those who actually segregate waste and take up home composting. “It is only recently that receipt books were handed over to the junior health inspectors. Though the BBMP has floated tenders for procurement of hand-held devices to issue receipts after payment of fines, there seems to be no other progress,” he pointed out.

Ms. Narayanan added that the BBMP must focus on improving the collection and transportation of waste as separate streams, apart from a reliable door-to-door collection. “There is some hope that it will improve after the new garbage tenders are in place. The new tenders mandate separate collection and transportation of wet and dry waste,” she said.