

Item No.05:

BEFORE THE NATIONAL GREEN TRIBUNAL

SOUTHERN ZONE, CHENNAI

Original Application No. 77 of 2021 (SZ)

(Through Video Conference)

IN THE MATTER OF:

Suo Motu proceedings initiated based on letter received

From Justice A.V. Ramakrishna Pillai, Former Judge, High Court of
Kerala, Chairman, State Level Monitoring Committee, Kerala.

...Applicant(s)

Verses

The Chief Secretary,
Government of Kerala,
Thiruvananthapuram and Others.

....Respondent(s)

Date of hearing: 03.03.2021.

CORAM:

HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE K. RAMAKRISHNAN, JUDICIAL MEMBER

HON'BLE MR. SAIBAL DASGUPTA, EXPERT MEMBER

For Applicant(s): Suo Motu by Court

For Respondent(s): Sri. E.K. Kumaresan for R1 to R3, R5 and R7.
Smt. Rema Smrithi for R4

ORDER

1. The above case has been Suo-Motu taken by the Principal Bench of National Green Tribunal on the basis of the letter dated 23.02.2019 received from Justice.

A.V. Ramakrishna Pillai, Former Judge, High Court of Kerala and the Chairman of the State Level Monitoring Committee was appointed by the Principal Bench in O.A. No. 606 of 2018 in respect of a major fire which broke out at the dump yard of the Bharampuram Solid Waste Management Plant on the outskirts of the Kochi city in Kerala State on account of unscientific dumping of waste in violation of Solid Waste Management Rules, 2016 causing huge pollution. The Principal Bench of National Green Tribunal, after getting such further reports and also expressing the displeasure of non-implementation of the Solid Waste Management Rules, 2016 in State of Kerala despite the fact that Chief Secretary was alerted in this regard, transferred this case to this Tribunal as per order dated 21.01.2021 for consideration before this Bench to be posted on 05.04.2021 by order dated 21.02.2021. That is how this matter has been advanced today for the purpose of consideration and also after impleading the necessary parties who are likely to answer the issues raised in this matter and similar matters pending before this Tribunal for consideration.

2. When the matter came up for hearing today through Video Conference, Dr. E.K. Kumaresan represented respondents 1 to 3, 5 and 7, Smt. Rema Smrithi represented 4th respondent.
3. We feel that the presence of Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) is not necessary as it is only a matter between the State administrators and the regulators namely, Kerala State Pollution Control Board (KSPCB) in implementing the Solid Waste Management Rules, 2016 in an effective manner in the respective areas. So the 6th respondent is deleted from the party array as

they are unnecessary party to the proceedings and the office is directed to carry out the amendment in the cause title.

4. Issue notice to respondents 8 to 15 along with the copy of the order and the proceedings of the Principal Bench dated 21.01.2021 in this matter with full cause title for the purpose of their information and filing their independent response regarding the manner in which the Solid Waste management Rules, 2016 are being implemented in the respective areas and their contribution of waste to the common dumping ground where it is expected to be processed in a scientific manner.
5. We feel it appropriate to direct the Kerala State Pollution Control Board (KSPCB) to file a detailed status report regarding the implementation of Solid Waste Management Rules, 2016 in respect of collection, segregation and disposal as contemplated there in and also whether the collection from each ward of the local bodies are being strictly adhered to as contemplated under the Solid Waste Management Rules, 2016 and what is the action taken by the Kerala State Pollution Control Board (KSPCB) for non implementation of the directions issued by the Principal Bench of National Green Tribunal in O.A. No. 606 of 2018 against the erring local bodies who have defaulted in implementing the directions of the Principal Bench of National Green Tribunal in this regard and submit the report to this Tribunal on or before 05.04.2021 as the connected cases relating to the same issue namely, Bharampuzha Waste Management facility namely, in *O.A. No. 442 of 2013*, *O.A. No. 20 of 2017* and *O.A. No. 276 of 2017* are now posted for the purpose of considering the question of the disposal of the

legacy waste that is lying in the dump yard and the progress of the work that has been done by them in implementing the various directions issued by this Tribunal in the above cases as well as the Principal Bench of National Green Tribunal in O.A. No. 606 of 2018.

6. The Kerala State Pollution Control Board (KSPCB) is also directed to incorporate in their report apart from Bharampuram, whether there are any other dumping grounds available in Ernakulam District and what is its status regarding the legacy waste and the disposal mechanism that is being adopted in such waste management facilities while submitting the report for consideration of status report by the respective local bodies and also by the State of Kerala regarding the review mechanism that is being adopted by them as directed by the Principal Bench of National Green Tribunal in O.A. No. 606 of 2018 in respect of such issues for appreciation of the case.
7. The Kerala State Pollution Control Board is also directed to submit the report to this Tribunal on or before 05.04.2021, by e-filing in the form of searchable PDF/OCR Support PDF and not in the form of Image PDF along with necessary hard copies to be produced as per rules.
8. The Registry is directed to communicate this order to the official respondents including the local bodies who have been arrayed as parties and also to the Chief Secretary, State of Kerala, Principal Secretary of local administration, State of Kerala, the Secretary for Environment, State of Kerala for their information and the action taken by them in view of the directions issued by the Principal Bench

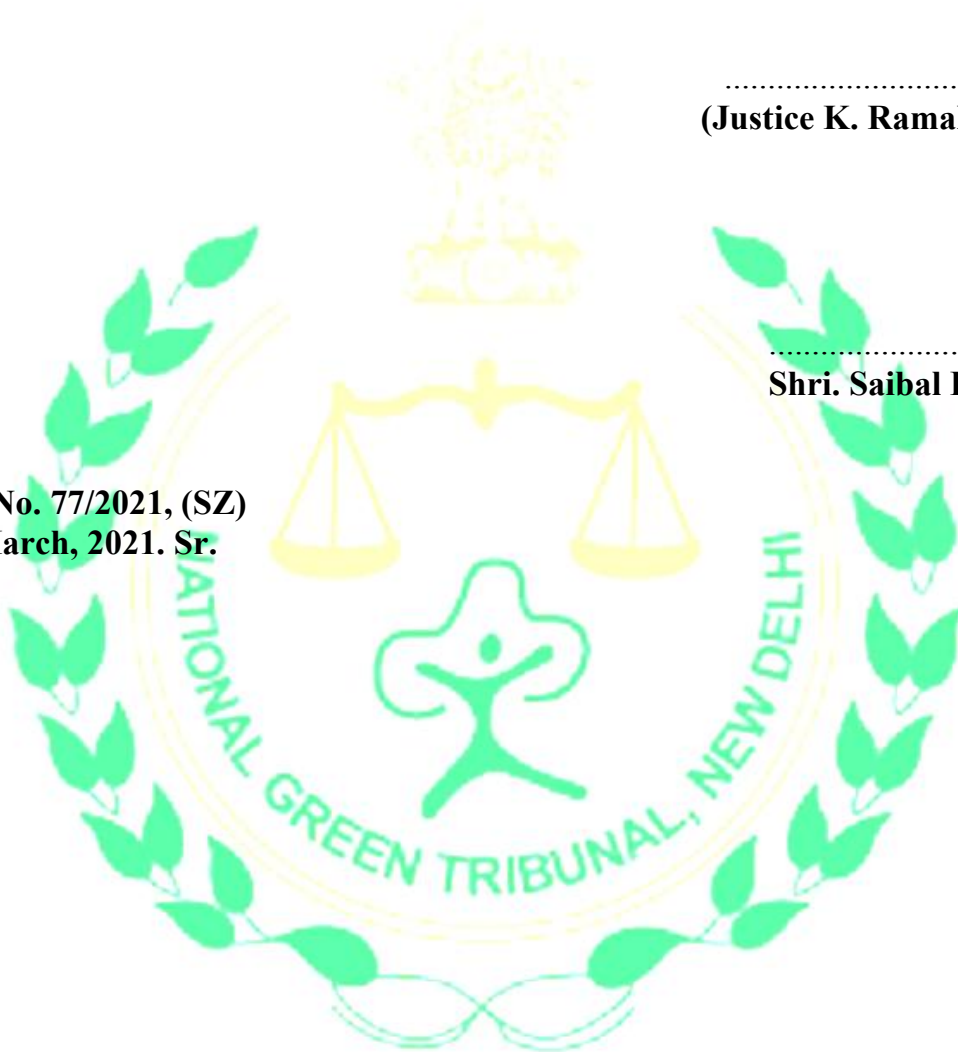
of National Green Tribunal in *O.A. No.606 of 2018* in respect of these issues in compliance with the order dated 21.01.2021 specifically.

9. Post along with the connected cases for consideration of report, on 05.04.2021.

.....J.M.
(Justice K. Ramakrishnan)

.....E.M.
Shri. Saibal Dasgupta)

O. A. No. 77/2021, (SZ)
03rd March, 2021. Sr.



National Green Tribunal
Principal Bench
New Delhi
Public Grievance Cell

No. NGT/PB/1/2018-PG (Part)

Dated: 16.03.2019

Sub -Letter Petitions received off-line/E-mail- Regn. Nos. 2152/2019 to 2161/2019, Dated 13.03.2019.

Ref: As per order/direction dated 6.12.2018.

Kind attention is invited to various communications registered during the month of March, 2019 on dated 13.03.2019 in Letter Petition Section/PG Cell NGT, PB from different corners seeking redressal of respective letter petition (s).

Accordingly, Ten (10) letter petitions are placed opposite as per annexure -A duly diarized/registered under Nos. Regn. Nos. 2152/2019 to 2161/2019, Dated 13.03.2019.

Submitted for necessary orders/directions on the same.

(LTS)
16/3/19

Consultant (PG)

Co-ordinator (Environment Research)

S.No. 2), 3), 4), 5), 6), 7), 9) and 10) may
Kindly be considered &.
Submitted &. Baline
16.5.2019

am
16.05.19.

Ld (R/G.)

DR (S) *20.5.19*

Hon'ble Dr. S. S. Garoyal, Expert Member

1/5

Manly
2/5

am
22/05/19

Amuliyar
22/5/19.

(PNSCA)

326/LP
16/3/19

78/ERC
16.5.19

1536/R4
16/5/19
22/5/19
1797/DR (S)
17/5/19

159/H EM/SS4
21/05/19

Preceding notes may kindly be perused.

As per directions at pre-page, the complaints / grievances under registration no. 2152, 2153, 2154, 2156, 2158 and 2160 have been registered as O.As. as per details given below:-

Sr. No.	PG No.	Reg. No.	Name of Complainant	Subject	O.A. No. Allotted
1.		2152/2019	HC Dharmender No. 597/SD, PS Maidan Garhi, New Delhi	Intimation regarding commercial and atmospheric pollutant activities at behind makkar farm house, near Nala, Bhati Road, Dera More South Delhi	509/2019
2.		2153/2019	Aditya Singh Chauhan Umiya Complex, Godasar Ahmedabad Gujarat	PLI For Excessive Air and water pollution by Industries located at CETP, Narol Ahmedabad	510/2019
3.		2154/2019	Aakriti Pandey (OSD) Akhil Bhartiya Vanvasi Sewa Trust Gram Post Rameshwar Tehsil Rajatalab, Distt Varanasi	Violation of NGT order dt 30.01.2019 regarding ban on construction within 50 mtr area of Varuna River	511/2019
4.		2156/2019	Devi Ram S/o Late Sh Shobha Ram, Gram Salta Basai, Tehsil Thana Gaji, Distt Alwar Rajasthan	Request to stop illegal mining cutting of mountains in gram Salta Basai Tehsil Thana Gaji, Distt Alwar, Rajasthan	512/2019
5.		2158/2019	Mohd. Imran Kadri Muslim Rastriya Manch Distt Rohtas, Bihar	Request to close the right of Aditya Multicim of sand mining in Distt Rohtas & Aurangabad for saving of Son River	513/2019
6.		2160/2019	Justice A V Ramkrishna Pillai Former Judge, High court of Kerala	To Bring on notice of NGT regarding major fire incident occurred at the yard of the Brahmapuram slid waste treatment plant situated at outside of Kochi City	514/2019

Forwarded to Judicial section for further action.

Amrinder Singh
Consultant (Filing & PG)

Chanda
5/2/19
Assistant

193-1954/197-199/12/11
08/02/19

3

Observations of Research Coordinator as per Rule 9, Form 4 of NGT Act, 2010
Letter Petition (Regn No. 2152/2019 to 2161/2019)
Dated 13.03.2019

O.A. No. 514/2019

S. no	Issue raised	Significance	Suggested solutions
9	<p>1) Major fire broke out at the yard of the Bharampura Solid Waste Treatment Plant which is situated at the outskirts of Kochi city.</p> <p>2) The atmosphere around the yard gives a cloudy look due to emission of smoke which is likely to spread to the nearby parts of the city.</p> <p>3) It is alarming from health point of view because of the poisonous nature of the smoke.</p> <p>4) The solid waste is being dumped including non-</p>	<p>Background of Legacy Waste :-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Until the 1970s, there were few dumpsites existed in India. • Since Vedic times, household discards mostly food waste, which went back to the soil along with stable wastes via compost pits. • Urban discards were collected by farmers, to convert it into compost and utilize it in farming and bring their product to town/city. • With the introduction of plastic in the 70s, the composition of city waste started changing and people started discarding plastic along with kitchen waste. • These plastics blanketed the fields and made them infertile, as less rain could enter and few seeds could germinate. • So farmers stopped collecting urban mixed waste and cities were left with an unexpected burden. • Initially most town and cities in India started dumping all this unwanted waste outside city limits, along roadsides which were unsupervised and dumped in no man's land. • Uncontrolled and continuous dumping of Municipal Solid Waste ultimately led to mountains of legacy waste. • After three decades of neglecting, these open dumps have grown larger and higher, becoming sources of pollution. • Waste rotting in these airless heaps produce leachates, a foul dark liquid that kills vegetation around dumps and irreversibly pollutes ground water due to leachate generation. • The heaps of garbage also produce methane, a Green House Gas that causes 21 times more global warming than carbon dioxide. Besides, contaminating air quality, which further, worsens due to frequent fire incidences. 	<p>✓ Hon'ble NGT directed the Chief Secretaries of all the states and union territories of India to furnish report when they appear in pursuance of order dated 16.1.2019 in O.A. No. 606/2018 with regard to compliance of directions of the Tribunal on certain significant environmental issues mentioned therein such as; Waste Management, 351 Polluted River Stretches, 102 Non-attainment cities, 100 Critically Polluted Industrial Clusters, Industrial Pollution Control, Sewage Treatment and utilization of treated effluents, Sand mining, Wildlife conservation, Marine pollution, Ground water, Training, Prosecution, compensation, penalties etc., Rewarding on compliance, and declaration for environmentally complying cities, towns,</p>

<p>degradable plastic waste.</p> <p>5) The dumping yard covers large stretch of land the heap keep mounting day by day. Photographs of burning fire is enclosed.</p> <p>6) Ragging inferno.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many municipal authorities across the country are opting for "capping" as a solution to the legacy of mixed waste, which is not the first option in the order of priority for environmentally safe legacy waste management as per clause (J) of schedule I of the SWM rules, 2016. ➤ Bio-remediation and Bio-mining of old municipal dumpsites refers to the excavation of old dumped waste and make windrow of legacy waste thereafter stabilization of the waste through bio-remediation i.e exposure of all the waste to air along with use of composting bio-cultures, i.e. screening of the stabilised waste to recover all valuable resources (like Organic fines, bricks, stones, plastics, metals, cloths, rags etc) followed by its sustainable management through recycling, co-processing, road making etc. ➤ Addition of composting bio-cultures speeds up decomposition and rapidly creates biological heat within the waste that helps to dry it out and reduce its volume by 35-40%. ➤ This happens through loss of moisture and by decomposition of some of the aerated waste to carbon dioxide and water vapour. This is called bio-remediation which makes the waste dry enough for screening. ➤ Waste is called stabilised when there is no generation of heat or landfill gas or leachate, and seeds are able to germinate in it. ➤ Bio-mining below-ground waste ➤ Many cities and towns choose abandoned quarry-pits to dump untreated waste, without realising the permanently harmful effects of this. ➤ Leachate oozing out at the bottom of the pit cannot be seen or captured or treated and enters both shallow and deep ground water aquifers through fissures in the rock. ➤ The hydrostatic pressure in deep quarries forces the leachate even more forcefully into the cracks. Dark and smelly water pollution begins to show up in nearby wells and bore wells after a year or further away even after 3-4 years, after which the damage is irreversible. ➤ Leachate in an airless rotting mass continues to form for up to thirty years, so further damage can be prevented by bio-mining the quarry – pits ➤ This has also been ordered by the NGT(OA 179 of 2017) the waste needs to be excavated in descending layers like any open cast mining and 	<p><i>municipal councils, villages in Panchayat.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ So far personal appearance of Chief Secretaries/ Administrators/ Advisories of 7 Union Territories and 26 States have been made altogether ✓ Hon'ble NGT directed that every city/town should adhere to clause (J) of Schedule I of SWM rule 2016. ✓ Hon'ble NGT also directed CPCB to propose Standard Operating Processing (SOP) for implementation of bio-mining and bio-remediation of legacy solid waste. ✓ In compliance to the NGT order CPCB prepared a draft guideline for disposal of legacy waste (old municipal solid waste). ✓ Kerala PCB/Local Municipal authorities to monitor to monitor the site of major fire broke out at the yard of the Bharampura Solid Waste Treatment Plant situated at the outskirts of Kochi city and take action in accordance with law. <p>TOI on May 16, 2019 reported news "Rs 500-Crore NTPC plant to generate power from trash".</p> <p>1. Soon, India's largest power generation utility NTPC will help turn national capital's trash into bio- CNG, electricity and construction material with a state-of-the art waste</p>
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	<p>unloaded on the surface in wind rose or conical heaps which can be turned weekly for five to six weeks before screening.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Use of bio-cultures is most important here, to control odour and the leachate which will run out while placing excavated material. Adding bio-cultures into the pit without excavation will not give the waste and the digesting microbes, the air needed for stabilising the waste. ➤ Bio/screening may have to be interrupted during monsoon, both above grounds and below grounds. <p>Engineered Landfill and Capping in developed countries, is the preferred means of closer of scientifically engineered landfills with bottom and side liners.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Landfill gas captured through pipes, is generally flared as generating power from its combustion is always loss making. ➤ Capping unlined dumps is in fact dangerous as it makes the waste even more airless, generating more leachates and also more methane and landfill gas, which leaks out below the edges of the capping. This created a disaster at the Mind space, IT complex, constructed next to a capped landfill at Malad in Mumbai. ➤ Capping should only be considered for the maximum ten percent residual rejects after bio mining (screening) of stabilised waste. ➤ The SWM rules 2016 in rule 15 (z) permit it only where bio-mining and bio-remediation is not possible. Perhaps, the only place where this is not possible is in steep inaccessible ravines and narrow valley in mountainous regions. ➤ The SWM rules 2016 clearly mandate clearing of sites as a first option, bio- mining and bio- remediation. <p>Operational expenditure of the project would depend on</p>	<p>management complex that will also prevent fouling up of the air or water.</p> <p>II. NTPC and EDMC are close to setting up a joint venture for building the complex with a capacity to process 2,000 tonnes per day (TPD), or 6 lakh tonne a year of municipal waste, it is estimated to cost Rs.500 crore.</p> <p>III. "The complex will be known as NTPC-EDMC Circular Economy Village to stress its focus on providing an integrated waste management solution rather than being a run-of the – mill, waste –to-energy plants that face protests from residents living in the vicinity due to foul smell".</p> <p>IV. The complex will house units for segregating waste and produce bio- CNG in addition to 12 MW of electricity.</p> <p>V. There is also a plan to explore the possibilities of utilising the heat generated by the plant to meet heating and cooling demand in surrounding area.</p> <p>VI. The plant will use a combination of techniques to treat distinct fractions of municipal solid waste stream- such as bio-degradable and combustible solid waste etc- individually for sustainable and optimum processing.</p> <p>VII. Under this principle, segregated waste would go to the appropriate facility in the plant.</p> <p>VIII. "But since segregation at source is not mature right now in our country, the plant will be designed to accept mixed waste and incorporate a segregation unit.</p> <p>IX. As a result, there will be no odour, filth or toxic effluent discharge from the plant; such plants are operating in densely populated areas of Europe and Japan.</p> <p>X. "There is no erosion in land value due to those plants.</p> <p>XI. The plant will have a segregation unit for segregating and processing waste into the three categories,</p> <p>a. bio-methanisation unit</p>
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		<p>the size of dumpsites. The onsite bio-remediation cum bio-mining cost ranges between rupees 400 to 700 per cubic meter, irrespective of capital cost. The case by case cost of moving screened fractions offsite will be extra and variable, depending on distance to farmers, cement plants etc.</p>	<p>for producing bio-CNG</p> <p>b. C&D recycling plant for processing solid and concrete waste into recycled construction material</p> <p>c. Power plant for energy recovery.</p> <p>XII. The segregation plant shall separate and process the waste in three categories namely:</p> <p>A. Bio-degradable fraction</p> <p>B. homogenised and resized combustible dry fraction</p> <p>C. Concrete and demolition waste.</p> <p>✓ These will be sent to appropriate units for processing.</p>
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Pratima
16.5.2019

Pratima Akolkar
Research Co-ordinator (NGT)
16.05.2019

LP Regn. No. 2160/19
13/3/19

177 7

JUSTICE A.V. RAMAKRISHNA PILLAI

(Former Judge, High Court Of Kerala)

CHAIRMAN

State Level Monitoring Committee, Kerala

(An authority constituted by the

National Green Tribunal)

'AMPAZHAVELIL'

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O.A. No -

514/2019

DY. NO. 1285/LP/19
28/2/19

Register in O.A.
Memorandum
21/3

Dated : 23/02/2019

Dear Registrar,

I make this letter/report to bring, an incident occurred on 22-02-2019 in Kochi City, to the notice of the Hon'ble National Green Tribunal.

Yesterday evening, I received a telephonic message from the Chief Environmental Engineer, Kerala State Pollution Control Board, Regional Office Ernakulam regarding a major fire that broke out at about 4:00 pm on that day at the yard of the Brahmapuram Solid Waste Treatment Plant which is situated at the outskirts of Kochi City.

I was away at my home village at that particular time and I rushed to Kochi during yesterday night itself. I along with the Senior Engineers of the KSPCB made a local inspection of the site at 11:00am today. The District Collector who was at the site expressed the hope that the fire could be put out by today evening. Fire engines are being deployed and this could control the fire from spreading though it could not be put out. The operations are not easy because of the non accessibility to the interior part of the dumping yard. The atmosphere around the yard gives a cloudy look due to the emanating smoke, which is likely to spread to the nearby parts of the city. It is alarming from health point of view because of the poisonous nature of the smoke.

1212/DAR/19
22/2/19

/

Ld. Registrar
22/2/19
LPS.

172/8

The source of fire could not be ascertained yet. Apparently it is only because of the negligent way of dumping solid waste including non-degradable plastic waste. The dumping yard covers a large stretch of land and the heaps are keep mounting day by day.

Only a systematic and scientific method of treatment will reduce the gravity of the situation.

I am convening a meeting of SLMC along with the heads of local and revenue administration, as well as the peoples' representative to the various bodies during the coming week so that some creative suggestions could be evolved. A further report in that regard will be filed thereafter.

I am attaching a report regarding the incident from the Senior Environment Engineer, KSPCB, as well as certain photographs and a cutting from the local edition of a National Daily, pertaining to the incident.

Kindly place the aforesaid facts before the Hon'ble Chairman for appropriate action.

Yours sincerely,

Justice A.V. Ramakrishna Pillai

To,

The Registrar
National Green Tribunal
Principal Bench, Faridkot House
Copernicus Marg, New Delhi-110001.

Enclosures :- As above.

Raging inferno

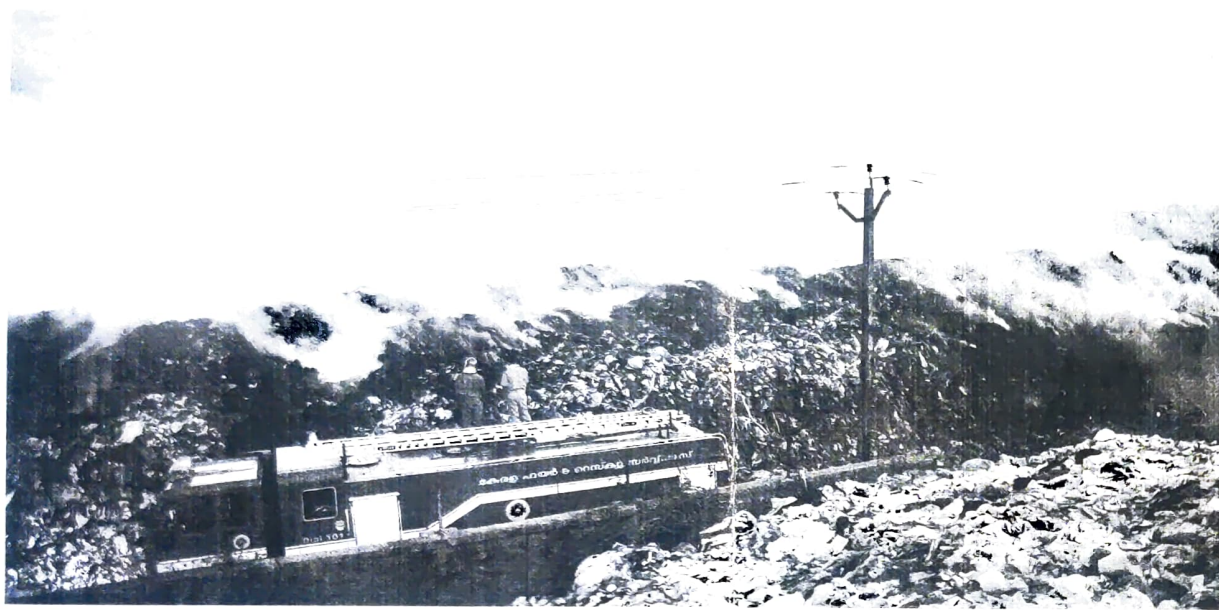
177 9



Heap of ashes: A massive fire that broke out at the Brahmapuram solid waste treatment plant on Friday. It was the fourth major fire incident at the facility. ■ THULASI KAKKAT (REPORTS ON PAGE 2)

Firefighters go all out as flames rip through plastic heaps

Alleged failure in timely deployment of fire tenders coupled with shortage of water fuels inferno at the Brahmapuram solid waste treatment plant



Disaster hits: Fire and Rescue Services personnel trying to douse the fire that broke out at the Brahmapuram solid waste treatment plant on Friday. Black smoke billowing over the plant has caused distress to people living in nearby areas. *THULASINAKKAT

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
KOCHI

In the latest of a series of fire incidents at the Brahmapuram solid waste treatment plant this year, a major fire that broke out around 4 p.m. on Friday continued to rage even after five hours of fire-fighting which was under way at the time of filing this report.

Friday's was the fourth major fire incident at the plant.

Thick plumes of black smoke billowed over the plant and spread across the region, causing distress to people in nearby areas. The first fire tender from Thripunithura, which was to reach the site, broke down on the way. The delay in getting another fire tender led to the flames engulfing the plastic waste spread over 10 acres at the plant which has an area of around 102 acres.

"It is taking a long time to extinguish the fire as the mounds of plastics are huge. The fire seems to have come from within the heap," said P.D. Sheela Devi, Deputy Col-

It is taking a long time to extinguish the fire as the mounds of plastics are huge. The fire seems to have come from within the heap

P.D. SHEELA DEVI
Deputy Collector in charge of disaster management

lector in charge of disaster management.

"We have not been able to assess the cause for the fire yet," she added.

As many as 10 fire tenders arrived at the spot within the first two hours, but there was not enough water to douse the flames, said a Revenue official who was present at the site.

Meanwhile, water tankers brought extra water. However, the refilling process was breaking the continuous stream that was perhaps required to douse the flames.

Firemen said they were able to douse the fire at one end to gain access to the riverside where a pumpset was fixed for another hose.

Meanwhile, corporation

councillor V.K. Mini Mol told *The Hindu* that the gravity of the fire had been lessened, but it was not yet under control. The cause for the fire, at this stage, is suspected to be methane gas that gets generated underneath tonnes of waste because of extreme high atmospheric temperature.

15 fire tenders

At least 13 fire tenders from eight fire stations in the district were involved in efforts to douse the flames at the Brahmapuram solid waste treatment plant on Friday. Two fire tenders of BPCL also reached the site to lend support to firefighting.

Fire engines from stations at Gandhi Nagar, Club Road, Thripunithura, Thrikkakara, Aluva, Angamaly, and North Paravur reached the site. Meanwhile, Dileepan P., Regional Fire Officer, told *The Hindu* that the fire was difficult to control owing to its spread.

Besides, it was tough to reach out to areas in the middle of the pile.

Fire dept. gives up hope

STAFF REPORTER
KOCHI

As fire continued to rage late into the night, the Fire and Rescue Services Department gave up hope of dousing it and instead started channelising its efforts towards creating fire lines for facilitating fire to run its course in a controlled manner.

A senior fire force official admitted that there was no question of dousing the fire with access being a major hurdle. He said three fire tenders and adequate men will remain at the site overnight.

M.A. Baiju, Chief Environmental Engineer, PCB, said: "Six personnel of our squad are at Brahmapuram, monitoring the situation there. A report have been given to the National Green Tribunal's State Monitoring Committee on Solid Waste Management."

Charges fly thick and fast as fire engulfs plant

Recurring fire outbreaks point to intentional act, alleges official

M.P. PRAVEEN
KOCHI

"Was the fire set by someone intentionally? There can't be such a raging conflagration otherwise," groaned a fire force officer while taking a breather between fighting the massive fire at the Brahmapuram solid waste treatment plant on Friday night.

While he refused to guess who could have set fire to the massive mounds of plastic at the plant, P.K. Velayudhan, president of Vada-vucode-Puthencruz panchayat, within the limits of which the plant is situated, made no bones about his suspicion as he blamed the Kochi Corporation for its non-chalance towards the oft-repeated blazes at the plant.

"There is no reason why

Fires could trigger flare-ups among asthmatics. The smoke emanating from plastic will lead to upper respiratory infections

K.G. SAJU
ENT surgeon, General Hospital

fire outbreaks should recur at the plant unless it is an intentional act," he alleged.

Mr. Velayudhan said the raging fire was affecting asthmatics in the panchayat with some living close to the plant even mulling over moving out till the fire was doused.

Demanding that the District Collector and the Mayor convene an emergency meeting to discuss the matter, he called for the implementation of deci-

sions taken by the monitoring and expert committees for the Brahmapuram plant such as ensuring access to fire tenders, enabling them to cover the entire area of the plant and laying pipelines across the plant to jet out water at high pressure to put out the flames.

Lack of access

A fire-fighting officer at the site complained that lack of access was the single biggest hurdle in fighting fire. "We have to literally crawl over the waste heaps to make way as there is a water body on one side and waste mountains all over," he said.

Though senior Fire and Safety Department officials claimed that all fire stations were being provided with breathing apparatus to fight

fires, firefighters on ground said the gears were of little use when dealing with raging fires lasting for hours. "They run for 20-30 minutes after which the cylinders have to be replenished, which cannot be done at the site as the compressors are all kept at fire stations," a firefighter said on condition of anonymity.

Besides, people, including firefighters, also turn vulnerable to serious health hazards on being exposed to hazardous smoke emanating from plastic for long duration. "It could trigger flare-ups among asthmatic and allergic patients. The smoke emanating from materials like plastic will lead to upper respiratory infections," said K.G. Saju, ENT surgeon, Ernakulam General Hospital.