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Brahmapuram Dumping Site: Kerala

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Why in News

Recently, the **National Green Tribunal (NGT)** has issued an order **pertaining to the case of legacy waste (old municipal solid waste) piling up at the Kochi Corporation's Brahmapuram dumpsite.**

Key Points

- **The NGT Judgement:**
 - The Chairman and Member Secretary of the **Kerala State Pollution Control Board (KSPCB)** will be held liable if they fail to initiate prosecution and recover compensation from those responsible for the **unscientific handling of waste** at Brahmapuram.
 - The **progress (remediation of waste)** appears to be very slow and is **disregardful of the statutory and constitutional obligation** of providing a clean environment.
 - Further, the tribunal asked **why there should be a bar on a single tender** considering the critical situation.
 - The government decided to float fresh tenders as only one agency had met the minimum eligibility criteria when an **e-tender for biomining of legacy waste at Brahmapuram** was floated on 20th March, 2020.
 - The Bench suggested that **other available options (besides biomining) be considered for compliance with Solid Waste Management Rules, 2016.**
 - The tribunal expressed doubts on whether the **leachate (dark liquid that gets generated within the solid waste) generated** at the dumping yard **could be treated in an ordinary septage treatment plant** as it contained heavy metals.

- **Brahmapuram Dumpsite:**

- **Only 1% of the recyclable plastic waste is recovered** while the remaining **99% ends up as heaps** in the dumping yard.
- The leachate from the waste treatment plant at Brahmapuram is a major source of **pollution of the river Kadambrayar**.
- Legacy waste was found to be a reason for the **fire outbreaks**.
- In 2020, the **government took over the task of scientific management of legacy waste** accumulated at Brahmapuram waste dumping yard from the Kochi corporation by invoking the provision under **Section 24(e) of the Disaster Management Act, 2005**.

Municipal Solid Waste Management

- Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) Management is one of the most **serious challenges to environment protection** and although Solid Waste Management Rules have been framed in 2016, their implementation remains a problem.

The local authorities are responsible for the development of infrastructure for collection, storage, segregation, transportation, processing and disposal of MSW.
- There are **two major challenges** of solid waste management:
 - **Managing the continuous flow** of solid waste on a **daily basis**.
 - Dealing with **the legacy of neglect** which has resulted in garbage heaps having built at dumpsites that were meant for waste processing and landfills.
- In July 2019, the **NGT directed that each local body would have to pay a compensation** of Rs. 10 lakh per month (for population of above 10 lakh); Rs. 5 lakh a month (for population between 5 lakh and 10 lakh), and Rs. 1 lakh per month for other local bodies for non-compliance with the Solid Waste Management Rules, 2016 from 1st April, 2020 till compliance.
 - This compensation is **equally applicable to local bodies found erring on the issue of remediation of legacy waste** (to be completed by 7th April, 2021 statutorily).
 - If local bodies are unable to bear financial burden, the **liability will be of state governments to take remedial action against the erring bodies**.
 - An **environment monitoring cell** may be set up in the office of chief secretaries of all states/UTs for compliance.
 - Remediation process is expected to be **done as per the guidelines issued by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB)**.

Way Forward

- Kochi **needs to learn from success stories of urban local bodies like Thiruvananthapuram corporation**, which is bigger in terms of population but is effectively managing waste with hundreds of Thumboormuzhy bins, material recovery centres and a mobile application.
- Remediation of waste **will help in unlocking the land** occupied by waste sites which then can be used for setting up of biodiversity parks/buffer zones. Some parts can even be monetized.
- Further, **protecting the environment is a constitutional mandate.**

Source: TH