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Hyderabad firm to help revive bio-gas plant

Julie Mariappan, TNN 6 November 2009, 01:44am IST

CHENNAI: The Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority has entered into an agreement with the Hyderabad-based Ramky Enviro Environment Engineers Ltd. for the revival of bio-methanation plant at the wholesale vegetable market in Koyambedu. The project was implemented by the previous AIADMK government in 2005.

The Union ministry of non-conventional energy sources provided 75% of the project cost of Rs 5 crore, while the rest was covered by the CMDA. The plant was set up to reduce greenhouse gases emanating from the heaps of organic waste lying in the yard located closeby, before being taken to the corporation's notified dumping ground in Kodungaiyur.

"The market management committee (MMC) was finding it difficult to run the plant for various reasons, including technological and a lack of funds. Therefore we have identified contractor, who has come with technology, funds and manpower to make it functional," CMDA member secretary Vikram Kapur told TOI. The private firm will have to collect 170 tonnes of waste generated from 3,200 shops in the market for a

period of 12 years.

The terms of references of the agreement inked on Wednesday included generation of at least 2,500 units of power per day, as against the original capacity of 5,000 units per day. "We were never able to achieve even 1,000 units. The complaint was that the nature of waste not volatile enough and also not properly segregated. We hope the contractor will do proper collection and segregation, thus increasing the power generation," Kapur added. CMDA has plans to allocate a piece of land to the contractor for composting.

As per the agreement, CMDA will pay Rs 835 per tonne to the firm and share the profit in the ratio of 70:30 from the power sold to the Tamil Nadu Electricity Board.

Meanwhile, K Padmaja of Ramky Enviro Engineers said the company had done a preliminary investigation and the results indicate that the existing power plant was in a fairly good condition, except a few areas which require minor repairs. "Our plan is to see that all these issues are addressed adequately to improve the bio-methanation plant to get the desired output. In all we are confident that we would be re-commissioning the unit at the earliest," she told TOI.

According to sources, the bio-methanation plant is unable to produce power from solid waste for more than a year now due to a technical snag in the turbine. "In July last, the average amount of waste the plant handled a day was 17.52 tonnes. Not even 900 units of power could be generated with this waste.

This despite the fact that the plant functioned for not less than six hours," sources said. A contractor engaged to run the plant refused to renew his term, due to non-viability of the project.

Nearly 150 tonnes of waste from market is taken directly to the dumping yard in Kodungaiyur, since it was considered of poor quality' to generate power. "The contractor involved in collection and segregation of the vegetable waste till recently was not doing the job properly and plant was not fed with good waste. The CMDA will have to revoke the present contract immediately, if they do not meet the requirements," says V R Soundararajan, a wholesale vegetable merchant.