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“Solid waste handling at Perungudi not scientific”

Special Correspondent

Expert committee submits report to Madras High Court

CHENNAI: The existing methods of handling municipal solid waste at Perungudi, on the city's outskirts, were not scientific and violate several provisions of municipal rules, an expert committee has said in its report to the Madras High Court.

While passing orders in the matter relating to prevention of burning of garbage at Pallikaranai marsh during the last hearing, the court had posted it for Wednesday and said the expert committee should file its report by then.

The six-member committee said the “indiscriminate dumping of waste results in degradation of environmental quality not only in the vicinity of the dump site but also in the neighbourhood areas.”

The fire in the dumpsite, close to the sewage treatment plant, continued despite the court's specific orders. The smoke contained many toxic gases known as ‘products of incomplete combustion’ (PIC) that were carcinogenic. The dumping area was progressively increasing. No source segregation was being adopted. The riverfront development (RFD) of the Corporation had been proved non-viable, both technically and economically. If power generation from RFD was considered at this site, air emission would undoubtedly affect humans.

The committee said it strongly advocated the discontinuance of any activity in any form at Perungudi considering the marshland and the inhabitants.

It recommended that the Chennai Corporation and all local bodies in the proximity of Pallikaranai marsh should implement decentralised zero waste management within the next four years in accordance with Municipal Solid Waste (Management and Handling) Rules and the emerging practice across the world.

The other recommendations included progressive elimination of use of disposable plastic packaging and non-recyclable material by encouraging durable material so as to avoid overloading on the municipal waste stream within four years; the government may consider enacting the Tamil Nadu Throwaway Plastic Articles (Prohibition of Sale, Storage, Distribution and Transport) Bill 2003 which had been considered by a select committee and as an interim measure the Chennai Corporation should earmark a limited area outside the marsh for sanitary land fill/managing MSW for the next four years, but no unsegregated waste should be dumped in such site. The Corporation should ensure that no outsiders were allowed inside for recovery of metal scrap from the dump. This would eliminate fires.

The matter has been adjourned to July 29.