



## Valley confronted with waste management crisis

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**SRINAGAR, July 29:** Even though the state government claims it is committed to maintain the ecological balance in the state, statistics reveal that Kashmir valley is confronted with a severe waste management crisis. as no attention has been paid to this important sector.

The Valleys most populated District, Srinagar produces 400 metric tons of garbage everyday. This is in addition to 50 metric tons of hospital waste produced besides, consumption of 500 tons of polythene per month.

"There is virtually no system in place to manage the waste produced. The best possible way adopted by the Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC) to do away with the waste is to dump the garbage at various sites and then fill in the land with earth" says, Mubashir Hussain, who is working with Global Green Peace, an NGO working in the field of Ecological conservation.

The assertion proves to be quite right as the SMC has chosen Saidapora area on the outskirts of srinagar city to dump the waste collected by its staff. "We have no other option than to practice land fills because the waste first needs to be segregated and then accordingly it can be utilised to produce compost or make pallets from non-biodegradable waste like polythene and plastic," says Dr.Shafqat Khan,Health Officer,SMC.

The biggest problem SMC is facing is that the waste collected by its staff is wet and in most of the cases it is mixed with other inert materials and plastic, making it impossible to manage the waste. "We can only utilise the waste to produce compost and other by-products when organic waste exceeds by 85% in the waste, but in our case it is a total reverse. We have 15% organic waste and the rest 85% is inorganic or Inert waste",laments Dr.Shafqat.

Even though the PDP-lead State Government had decided to install a compost manufacturing plant near the Saidapora land fill site to manage the waste, but experts believe the plant is not going to see the light of the day as the plant needs a massive investment of more then 200 crores.

Citing the example of similar plant in New Dehli, Yasir Ahmed a student of enviromental science said that unless the garbage waste is segregated properly nothing is going to improve. " The main problem with this proposed plant will be that there will be no solution as to how to utilize the inorganic wastage," he said.

The problem of the increase in inorganic waste gets more complicated especially during the summers when tourist inflow to the state increases besides Kashmiri marriages too are being celebrated in the same months.

This year as Kashmir Valley witnessed a tourist boom, the consumption of polythene and palstic bottles has increased manifold. Even the world famous Dal-lake is littered by such wastes. "We tried our best to educate the tourists not to throw plastic and polythene in the Dal, but few listened to our plea," says, a houseboat owner Kazir Mohammad.

But the environmentalists blame the houseboat owners too for polluting the Dal more than the tourists. " The population living in and around the Dal use the water body as dumping site for the used polythene and plastic bottles, which have proved detrimental for the Dal," says Zahoor Ahmed, another environmental activist.

Worried with the excessive use of plastic especially soft drink bottles in the Srinagar city, the SMC has now planned to issue notices to softdrink manufacturers to install recycling plants in Kashmir valley. " The objective is that plastic bottles which are used for packaging soft-drinks will be recollected and then recycled by these manufacturers", says Dr Shafqat Khan. "This will help ease out the problem", he adds.