



National Green Assembly on Waste Legislation and Waste Pickers



At the outset we would like to state clearly that the Draft MSW Rules, 2013 threaten to retract the nation from the gains made by progressive states such as Maharashtra and Karnataka through progressive waste management policies such as the Maharashtra (Non-Biodegradable) Garbage Control Act, 2006 and the Karnataka Municipal Corporation (Amendment) Act, 2013, which promote decentralized waste management, segregated management and handling of organic and inorganic waste and inclusion of waste pickers.

The rules are also completely in disharmony with existing progressive laws such as the Plastic Waste (Management and Handling) Rules, 2011, which are solidly founded on the principles of 'polluter pays', 'extended producer responsibility', inclusion of informal waste workers, and promotion of Reduction, Reuse and Recycling.



Rag Pickers are the backbone of a neat and beautiful metropolis. The green workers manage entire trash of urban locates around the globe. However, their contribution to the city's waste management remains unrecognized. Vulnerability is exacerbated by the municipal solid waste management rules 2013. Tough the new rules claim inclusion of rag pickers, they do not offer any safeguards, and rather endanger livelihoods of over 3.2 Million ragpickers. In this context a national green assembly on waste management and waste pickers was organised at the Deputy Speaker's Hall, Constitution Club on October 23, 2013. The meeting was organised by All India Kabari Mazdoor Mahasangh. Organisation including National Alliance of Labour Rights (NALR), Centre for Informal Sector and Labour Studies (CIS&LS-JNU), Centre for Workers Education(CWE), PATH, Forum of Informal Urban Poor Worker, Centre for Education and Communication(CEC), Environic Trust, Participatory Research in Asia(PRIA), 350.org, Labour Resource Centre(LRC), Janpahal, Sathi All for Partnership(SAFP), Asangathit Shramik Mahila Sangathan, Kachra Bechak Kashtakari Sabha, Safai Mazdoor Ekta Manch, Bal Vikas Dhara and All India Platform For Labour Rights. Waste pickers and their organizations from Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Harayana and Delhi were present.

Addressing the gathering, **Shashi B. Pandit**, General Secretary of All India Kabari Mazdoor Mahasangh, appealed to all those present to prepare for a struggle against mal intention of capitalists in Green Legislation on Garbage Management and Impact of Garbage Management Legislation of 2013 on Waste Pickers.



Some facts, which encouraged us to come forward for this assembly

The Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India, has recently come out with the Draft of "Municipal Solid Waste (Management and Handling) Rules, 2013 (MSW Rules)". These rules would replace previous MSW Rule of 2000 and have huge insinuation on the way waste is managed in cities across India. It is important to draw attention to the fact that these rules completely lack focus on the lives and livelihoods of millions of workers, both formal and informal, who have been involved in waste management for decades. It also unclear whether they will be able to address the problems of pollution control.

Millions of workers are informally involved in collecting, sorting, recycling and selling waste material that someone else has thrown away by declaring it as garbage. Vital actors in the economy, these workers work hard to reduce carbon emission and save energy spent in handling the waste. They also contribute towards saving public money and provide widespread discernible and indiscernible benefit to our society, municipalities and the environment.

Ironically however, they face harsh working conditions, often low social status, deplorable living conditions and no support from the government. Despite the fact that waste collectors recycle about 20 percent of the city's waste saving the municipalities millions of rupees every year, they are not given any recognition in legislation, criminalized by the administration and ignored by society. They work without any direct payment, are not part of the public solid waste management systems, are socially invisible and seldom reported in official statistics.

The 3R (reduce, reuse and recycle) is the most accepted universal recommendation to save the environment. These are the only workers who help our society be on track to follow these recommendations.

Waste picking is responsive to the market for recyclables and is often a family enterprise. While it appears to be chaotic work, it is actually highly organized. In some cities, most waste pickers are migrants and rejected by the global economic processes. This puts them in a more vulnerable condition with no legal entitlements despite the fact that they are "The real, Invisible Environmentalists".

On one hand, waste pickers or the informal 'waste managers' remain invisible to policy makers. On the other hand, the problem of waste management continues to grow. In its 2009-10, Annual Report the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) estimated that approximately 55 million tons of MSW are generated in urban areas of India annually. It is estimated that the amount of waste generated in India will increase at a rate of approximately 1 - 1.33% annually. The problem will thus sustain and grow if adequate measures are not taken.

While India claims of rapid economic development, the disparity between rich and poor is widening across the country- from large urban areas to small rural ones. According to ILO, despite playing such an important role for the society and environment, waste Pickers also fall under the 77% of the population who earn less than Rs. 20 every day because they are not authorized to collect the waste material from the source i.e.; homes, factories, offices etc. Due to lack of recognition and authorization, waste pickers suffer from atrocities by Resident Welfare Associations, Policemen, Residents, Municipal Authority etc. With little scope of earning, they are entangled in the web of bribery.

In spite of their significant role in protecting our environment and saving resources for the economy, the government has never noticed them as an important economic sector but merely mentioned their name (Waste Picker) in legislations and reports.



In response of Draft for Municipal Solid Waste (Management and Handling) Rules 2013, published by the Ministry of Environment and Forests dated 2nd July 2013, 'All India Kabari Mazdoor Mahasangh' has collected following inputs of waste picker community over and above scientists and volunteer organizations, which are working with the community of waste picker to be submitted with following comments and suggestions:

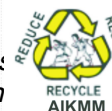
Our overall comments are summarized as follows.

Background of Informal Waste Workers

1. There are around 3.26 million informal waste workers in India who are involved in the process of collecting, sorting, sale and recycle of scrap items such as paper, plastic, glass, metals etc.
 2. We recycle nearly 6.7 million tones of scrap every year.
 3. We save Municipalities nearly 452 Million Rupees from reducing their cost of transporting garbage every year.
 4. The reform of the waste management system, instead of supporting us in our efforts, has been displacing us from our occupation, and putting in place systems where the waste is collected and dumped or burnt outside city limits.
 5. The Draft MSW Rules, 2013, do not mention the contribution of informal waste workers or suggest how they can be integrated into the process of a better, decentralized waste management system
- We therefore request you to stop wasting public money on incineration of precious resources - instead, support us in our century old effort to recycle waste near its point of generation. This will allow our policies and practices to be aligned with the Environment Protection Act, 1986, and the National Environmental Policy, 2006, which demand adherence to the policy of resource conservation and protection through practicing the principles of **Reduction, Reuse and Recycling**.

In order to help this, The MSW Rules, 2013 must make the following amendments:

- 1) Make it mandatory for Municipalities to Involve organizations working with IWWs for over 3 years in the process of **Surveying, Identifying, and Registering IWWs**
- 2) Where such organizations do not exist, the Municipalities must do the identification themselves or take the help of organizations in other cities
- 3) Provision of Identity Cards by the local government stating that they are IWWs and recognized by the local government
- 4) **These IWWs must be engaged by the municipality in Door To Door Collection of waste**
- 5) **Informal Waste Workers must be registered and given the First Rights over engaging in door to door collection, sorting and sale or dry scrap**
- 6) IWWs must be given **LEGALLY ENFORCEABLE RIGHTS** to collect, sort and sell scrap
- 7) Provide **Resource Recovery spaces** in every locality for waste pickers to sit and sort scrap and remove recyclables and securely store the sorted recyclables
- 8) Registration and recognition of recycling enterprises such as scrap shops, wholesalers, dismantlers, recycling industries etc.
- 9) Strictly enforce the principles of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) such that manufacturers, suppliers and companies using plastics and electrical and electronic equipment must be required to take responsibility for its recycling by investing in infrastructure or purchasing the waste plastics and ~ waste at reasonable prices
- 10) The local government should authorize waste pickers to collect user fee from beneficiaries of the services.



Rules Related to Organic Waste Management at Source

- 11) Every Institution (Hospital/University/Government Office/Commercial Complex/Market body etc.) must make provisions for SEPARATE Door-to-Door collection OF WET/ORGANIC WASTE and its Recycling (Composting/Biogas/ Bioculture etc.) within the institution
- 12) Strictly enforce source segregation of waste into WET and DRY Components from all residential/ commercial areas by giving waste pickers the power to impose fines on non-complying individuals
- 13) The Municipality must not be responsible for collection, transporting and disposing organic waste from Institutional Complexes
- 14) Every ward must take responsibility for recycling the organic waste generated within the ward Municipalities must not collect and send the city's waste and dump it upon villagers



Financial Reforms to be included into the new MSW Rules

- 15) No financial support should be provided to Municipalities which DUMP/INCINERATE their waste
- 16) Provide grants/incentives/subsidies/rebates for individuals, communities, institutions, societies and wards which manage their own waste entirely in an environmentally friendly manner.
- 17) Provide seed financial support to waste pickers organizations which support municipalities in decentralized zero waste solutions
- 18) Make JNNURM FUNDING for Municipalities conditional on fulfilling the above conditions
- 19) Put a complete ban or heavy tax on manufacture, sale and use of non-recyclable items such as multi-layered plastics. The revenue incurred through taxation should be sufficient to pay for their collection and setting up of recycling units for such items. Alternatively the industries engaged in manufacture, sale and use of such items must themselves invest in infrastructure and systems for their collection and recycling.
- 20) *Provide spaces to Recycle Organic Waste in every locality and subsidize organic waste recycling units to be set up by IWW organizations*



Sessions at a glance

The assembly began with welcome address by **Mr. Rajesh Upadhyay**, Chair Person of National Alliance for Labor Rights. After welcome address, he produced a comprehensive picture of mission and vision of this alliance and gathering as well in perspective of Garbage Management Legislation of 2013.

Inaugural Address was delivered by **Prof. Jan Breman**, Professor Emeritus, University of Amsterdam. Prof Breman stressed that informal sector work force are being pulled out of the cities. He quoted the example of Street Vendors has been pulled out of main Ahmadabad city and pointed that this displacement can keep us away from achieving target of clean cities. He shared that the living conditions around the Ganeshnagar Garbage Dump - the largest dump in the state were deplorable. With no shelter and no livelihoods left to them, the poor were left with no option but to pick waste and sell it to earn their bread. These workers, he said, were actually in a worst situation than the garbage they picked for 'for even the garbage can get recycled, but those poor informal workers had no hope of their lives getting 'recycled' or made better'. This, he said, was the 'Gujarat Model of Development', widely touted about as the model to be followed by the rest of the nation.

From his experience in the slums in Mumbai, **Dr. Pradeep Shinde**, Assistant Professor at JNU, Delhi, spoke about how contractualisation led to poor incomes and poor municipal services such as waste management as contractors tried to cut costs through unfair means.

However, this led to exploitation of workers, who would have to turn to sale of valuable waste items to supplement their incomes, thereby coming into conflict with the interests of waste pickers. If the situation of informal workers and the provision of municipal services had to be improved, the phenomenon of contractualisation had to be tackled head on, he said.

Mr. Onkar Sharma, Regional Labour Commissioner, added that the problem of protecting the rights of informal waste workers could be protected by forming a board for the purpose at the central and state level which would ensure that not only were their economic and political rights protected, but they were also recognised and provided access to social security. **Ms. Pallavi Mansingh** of the Centre for Education and Communication placed the issues of rag pickers in the larger context of informalisation and stressed on their right to social security.

Speaking on the occasion **Dr. Shreedhar Ramamurthy** pointed that there had been a general decline in values in governance which needed to be tackled. The new mantra of governance, including governance of waste, was that of doing only those things through which money could be made.

The Draft MSW Rules, 2013 reflected this philosophy as it only seemed to promote the interests of private companies and rent seeking government employees who would contract out services to them, rather than serving the environment or people. **Mr. Ravi Agarwal**, Founder Director of Toxics Link, was also of the view that it was foolish to think that policy making was being done for public interest any more. Instead, the Environment Protection Act, 1986, was used only to create policies which would help governments earn rent. Again, the Draft MSW Rules, 2013, were a perfect example of this trend as the rules seemed to be tailor made for Central, State and Municipal governments which would earn large amounts of money by contracting out waste management to large corporations. The rules only promoted waste to energy technologies as the solution for waste management whereas there was absolutely no basis to believe that the technology was most apt for waste processing in India. On the contrary, the technology requires an excellent pre-existing system of regulation to ensure compliance with environmental and health standards. He argued that the technology is not suitable for India where most of the waste is organic waste which cannot be used to produce energy. He stated that National Green Tribunal in a case found companies in the sector uses mechanism, which creates 200 % more pollution than the permitted limit.



Mr. Anjor Bhaskar showed in his presentation that the organic waste actually required an input of nearly 4500 kwh/ton of energy to burn whereas it released negligible amounts of energy. Similarly he showed that one actually saved a lot of energy by recycling of waste - savings which were much higher than the energy produced from its incineration. He further showed that waste to energy plants in India were bound to fail as they required source segregated waste. The rules which promoted waste to energy plants, however, made no mention of how to achieve segregation, making it certain that all investments into waste to energy would go down the drain.

If plants did operate however, by incinerating unsegregated waste they would lead to massive amounts of poisonous emissions, as was the case with the Timarpur Okhla Waste to Energy Plant. The plant was recently nearly shut down by the NGT for the massive amounts of emissions from it. He showed that the best way to manage waste was to ensure organic waste was collected separately and recycled within the same premises whereas dry or inorganic waste should be separately collected by waste pickers directly from their households. Having learnt from their experiences, several state governments such as Karnataka, Maharashtra and Kerala had prepared policies keeping this in mind. However, the central Rules reflected none of these learnings and continue to promote hugely expensive and unsustainable practices.

The benefits from such decentralised waste management are enumerated below. They show that a decentralised model of waste management, where organic waste is recycled by the household/institution/ward itself, while the dry waste is handed over to waste pickers, would lead to additional annual earnings of nearly 4900 crores,



additional employment for nearly 4.9 lakh workers who earn Rs. 10,000 per month from a clean and decent livelihood, and lead to savings of nearly 271.1 crores for Municipalities from reduced transport requirements (as waste would no longer be required to be transported to far off landfills or waste to energy plants).

Mr. Anil Verma, Secretary AICCTU and **Dr Laxman Mane**, Kachara Bechak Kashtkari sabha, Maharashtra pronounced that the condition of waste pickers and other laborers of informal sector compels us to prepare ourselves for a fight against corruption and mal intention of Capitalists and highlighted the issues like informalization, flexibilization and discrimination.



Social Security of workforce has emerged as a unanimous demand of every speaker. **Shashi B. Pandit** placed three key demands before that all the waste pickers should get their right over waste they collect, all private projects energy based on waste recycling should be stopped including waste to energy and that composting should be decentralized at the community level and should be managed and controlled by the rag pickers.



Through the Eyes of Media

GOVERNANCE

LET'S MAKE IT WORK

More than mere gloves and caps

The new MSW rules should focus on providing more than just safety gear for rag-pickers

[NEW DELHI] | OCTOBER 23 | 2013

A welfare board, better working conditions and fixed working hours were some of the suggestions made by Onkar Sharma, regional labour commissioner in the ministry of labour, to safeguard the rights of the workers in the waste management industry. Sharma said, "Merely calling the waste management industry as hazardous is not going to be enough."

He opined that rag picking as an industry has three 'Ds' attached to it, viz: dirty, difficult and dangerous which itself should compel the government to make substantive rules for the people involved in the industry. "The safety and health consideration should be more detailed, merely stating that the workers will be provided gloves, shoes, masks is not enough," he said.

Sharma was addressing the consultative meet on the formation of new municipal solid waste management (MSW) rules, 2013, which would supersede the earlier MSW rules formed in the year 2000. The meet was organised by centre for informal sector and labour studies (CIS & LS), Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) and all India kabadi mazdoor mahasangh (AIKMM).

Sharma said that International Labour Organisation's 'decent workplace' programme has also been incorporated in the 12th five year plan to ensure a healthy and safe workplace for all the workers in the country.

The discussions in the meet hovered around the need to look into the conditions of contractual workers in the waste management sector and for safeguarding their rights. According to K K Niyogi, president of all India platform for labour rights, with around 3.5 lakh informal rag pickers in Delhi and over a crore in India, it is imperative that their health and working conditions become an important part of the government's agenda.

Niyogi said that the government should be the employer for waste management workers and rag pickers and the rules drafted for waste management should be pro-workers and not pro-contractors.

The MSW draft rules 2013 give power to the municipal organisations to outsource the waste collection work to agencies. However, these agencies are not under any obligation for safeguarding worker's rights. A major contention to the rules raised in the consultation meet was that they give more powers to the contractors while taking the freedom of work away from the individual waste collectors.

"The contractors hardly provide salaries for 18-20 days of work to the workers and provide no other form of support," said Pradeep Shinde, professor at CIS & LS, JNU.

The conference was attended by many dignitaries, including Jan Breman, professor Emeritus, university of Amsterdam. Breman spoke about the dismal conditions of workers uprooted from the city's slum and made to live in the outskirts in Ahmedabad, in a beautification drive of the city. He said, "We need these workers, but we do not want them around us, they have been dumped in a temporary relocation site in Ganeshpuri near Ahmedabad very close to a landfill where their only livelihood is rag picking. Only people who moved to the city before 1976 are given permanent accommodation," he said.

"The accommodations are good, but where is the work?" Breman asked.

<http://www.governancenow.com/news/regular-story/more-mere-gloves-and-caps>

THE TIMES OF INDIA

CITY

THE TIMES OF INDIA, NEW DELHI
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 24, 2013

Ragpickers want recognition

Their Role In Waste Management Doesn't Get Proper Mention

Jayashree Nandi / TNS

THEY DO A THANKLESS JOB

New Delhi: Kabadiwalas and ragpickers in the capital have found themselves sidelined by the draft municipal solid waste rules 2013 which does not recognise their contribution to the city's waste management.

Despite playing a major role in collection and recycling of waste in cities, their work is mentioned only once in the draft rules which say the municipal body can engage agencies and groups, including ragpickers, in collection of waste from homes, leaving it to the sweet will of the corporations to decide whether or not they will avail their services.

The community is also disturbed by the portrayal of waste-to-energy plants in the draft as one of the main methods of managing waste.

Apart from serious air pollution concerns, members are concerned that this would lead to "privatization" of waste management. The All India Kabadi Mazdoor Mahasangh organized a meeting on Wednesday, also attended by waste management experts, which thrashed out a set of demands.

Instead of leaving all aspects of waste management to municipal bodies, which end up in it being transported to landfills, the meeting focused on "decentralizing" the process and dealing with the waste at the ward level.

However, experts say it will take time to be implemented.

At the core of this process is waste segregation at source which is currently not being practised in Delhi. While dry waste can be handled over di-



No. of ragpickers/kabadiwalas in Delhi

Members of All India Kabadi Mazdoor Mahasangh

DEMANDS OF RAGPICKERS

All organic waste to be collected separately and recycled within the premises where it is generated

All dry waste to be collected from homes by ragpickers who must be given equipment and space

Ragpickers will collect, sort and sell this waste

Completely end all government support to waste-to-energy plants

Mandatory inclusion of ragpickers/kabadiwalas into waste management

Type of waste	No.	Quantity
Municipal solid waste	100	68.8
Organic waste	51	35.1
Recyclables	175	12.1
Non-recyclables (inert waste)	31.5	21.7

*Million tonnes per annum. Source: TNS scholar. Apr. 2009. City's assessment from various publications.

Why are ragpickers rejecting the draft municipal solid waste rules 2013?

Doesn't include ragpickers in dry waste collecting or segregation

Section 6 of draft rules calls for maintaining air quality around waste-to-energy plants which is an indirect endorsement of their existence

Waste-to-energy plants in India

45 proposals by INNRUM, 13 by municipal bodies

In Delhi, one waste-to-energy plant is operating in Timarpur, three more have been proposed

rectly to the ragpicker in residences, wet waste may be recycled to compost. This will not just protect the waste-handling community but also reduce investments in pollution causing waste-to-energy plants. All residents need to do is not mix dry and wet waste since that makes extraction of usable waste nearly impossible. "It's also very undignified for us to sort out usable things with our hands from the filth," said Meena, a ragpicker.

"Collection and segregation of waste can obviously be done by ragpickers. There seems to be class bias in the way the rules don't acknowl-

edge the existing waste management players. Why only private companies? It's the primary right of the informalized sector to continue work as ragpickers," said Ravi Agarwal, founder director of Toxics Link, an environmental NGO.

Okhla landfill used to have 300 to 400 people working to recover usable waste but now only about 60 ragpickers go there since the work of managing waste has gone to private companies. "People who make these rules focus only on the emission standards and the environmental aspects but not at the social cost. Waste can be managed safely by the informal sector," Agarwal said.

"The Central Pollution Control Board's technical evaluation has already shown that these plants release dioxins and furans which are extremely toxic," he added.

"We are demanding that ragpickers be given the responsibility of collecting and segregating waste. We have already found that 30% of waste is usable and 70% is recyclable. Then why should waste be sent to the plants? The process should be decentralized and composting should be encouraged," Shashi Bhushan of the Kabadi Mazdoor Mahasangh said.



Times of India and Governance
now



PROKERALA News

Worsening living condition of rag pickers in India

New Delhi, Oct 23

The lives of more than 700,000 rag pickers in India are becoming worse due to the lack of coordination between various agencies, an official said Wednesday. Addressing a press meet here, Onkar Sharma, regional level commissioner, Ministry of Labour and Employment, said despite the enforcement of the Solid Wastes (Management and Handling) Rules, 2000, which promises their welfare, the harassment of and discrimination against the rag pickers have not dwindled. "The rule earlier assured the rag pickers of their safety, but it has made them more vulnerable to the dangers they face in their work," Sharma said. Speaking on the occasion, Alakh Sharma, director, Institute of Human Development, said: "If the state governments and the municipal corporations in the country are not able to pay heed to the plight of the rag pickers, then it is necessary that the central government gives the nod for the establishment of a separate committee that will look after the welfare of the rag pickers," he added.

New Delhi, Human
Interest/Society,
Wed, 23 Oct 2013
IANS



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FIRST POST.

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by **F wire**

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Source: IANS



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[SHIVANGLNARAYAN](#) | NEW DELHI | OCTOBER 23 2013

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The conference was attended by many dignitaries, including Jan Bremen, professor Emeritus, university of Amsterdam. Bremen spoke about the dismal conditions of workers uprooted from the city's slum and made to live in the outskirts in Ahmedabad, in a beautification drive of the city. He said, "We need these workers but we do not want them around us; they have been dumped in a temporary relocation site in Ganeshganj near Ahmedabad very close to a landfill where their only livelihood is rag picking. Only people who moved to the city before 1976 are given permanent accommodation," he said.

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By Indo Asian News Service | IANS India
Private Limited – Wed 23 Oct, 2013

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Addressing a press meet here, Onkar Sharma, regional level commissioner, Ministry of Labour and Employment, said despite the enforcement of the Solid Wastes (Management and Handling) Rules, 2000, which promises their welfare, the harassment of and discrimination against the rag pickers have not dwindled.

"The rule earlier assured the rag pickers of their safety, but it has made them more vulnerable to the dangers they face in their work," Sharma said.

Speaking on the occasion, Alakh Sharma, director, Institute of Human Development, said: "If the state governments and the municipal corporations in the country are not able to pay heed to the plight of the rag pickers, then it is necessary that the central government gives the nod for the establishment of a separate committee that will look after the welfare of the rag pickers," he added.



Terra Urban

Urban Forum by Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) and Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centres (SPARC)

October 24, 2013

Rag pickers Want Recognition

Kabadiwalas and ragpickers in the capital have found themselves sidelined by the draft municipal solid waste rules 2013 which does not recognize their contribution to the city's waste management.

Despite playing a major role in collection and recycling of waste in cities, their work is mentioned only once in the draft rules which say the municipal body can engage agencies and groups "including ragpickers" in collection of waste from homes, leaving it to the sweet will of the corporation to decide whether or not they will avail their service at all.

The community is also [disturbed](#) by the portrayal of waste-to-energy plants in the draft as one of the main methods of managing waste.

Apart from serious air pollution concerns, members are concerned that this would lead to "privatization" of waste management. The **All India Kabadi Mazdoor Mahasangh** organized a meeting on Wednesday, also attended by waste management experts, which thrashed out a set of demands.

Instead of leaving all aspects of waste management to municipal bodies, which ends up in it being transported to landfills, the meeting focused on "decentralizing" the process and dealing with the waste at the ward level.

However, experts say it will take time to be implemented. At the core of this process is waste segregation at source which is currently not being practised in Delhi. While dry waste can be handed over directly to the ragpicker by residents, wet waste may be recycled to compost. This will not just protect the waste handling community but also reduce [investments](#) in pollution-causing waste-to-energy plants. All residents need to do is not mix dry and wet waste since that makes extraction of usable waste nearly impossible. "It's also very undignified for us to sort out usable things with our hands from the filth," said Meena, a ragpicker.

"Collection and segregation of waste can obviously be done by ragpickers. There seems to be class bias in the way the rules don't acknowledge the existing waste management players. Why only private companies? It's the primary right of the unorganized sector to continue work as ragpickers," said Ravi Agarwal, founder director of Toxics Link, an environmental NGO.

Okhla landfill used to have 300 to 400 people working to recover usable waste but now only about 80 ragpickers go there since the work of managing waste has gone to private companies. "People who make these rules focus only on the emission standards and the environmental aspects but not at the social cost. Waste can be managed safely by the informal sector," Agarwal said.

"The Central Pollution Control Board's technical evaluation has already shown that these plants release dioxins and furans which are extremely toxic," he added.

"We are demanding that ragpickers be given the responsibility of collecting and segregating waste. We have already found that 80% of waste is usable and 30% is recyclable. Then why should waste be sent to the plants? The process should be decentralized and composting should be encouraged," Shashi Bhushan of the Kabadi Mazdoor Mahasangh said.

Business Standard

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[Worsening living condition of rag pickers in India](#)

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National Green Assembly on Waste Legislation and Waste Pickers

New MSW Rules continues to exclude Waste Pickers

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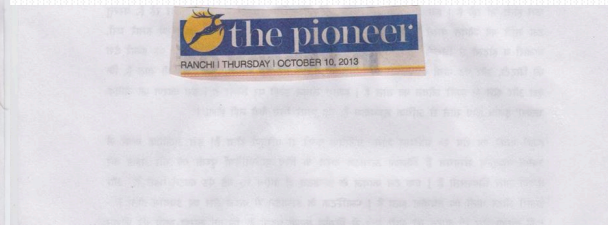


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