

From trash to cash: The importance of recycling waste

For a smart city to accomplish its goals, it's essential that the citizens are even smarter and they realise the significance of building a sustainable city



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A SMART CITY cannot be confined to one definition. It varies from one country to another. However, some of the core elements like consistent electricity supply, adequate water supply, sanitation facilities, comprehensive solid waste management, robust IT connectivity and digitization, health and education, sustainable environment etc. always remain the same.

For a smart city to accomplish its goals, it's essential that the citizens are even smarter and they realize the significance of building a sustainable city, which doesn't harm the environment in the long run.

From our perspective, a city can't be 'smart' if it's not clean. And, by clean we don't just mean dumping the waste in a landfill and turning a blind eye to the aftermath of your actions. An effective waste management policy is the basis of any smart city and its proper functioning.

There are many efficient ways that can be implemented to manage the different types of waste such as like solid municipal waste, E-waste, hazardous, biomedical, construction waste etc. generated in a city on a daily basis.

A smart city needs to estimate the volume and type of waste that is generated every day, and figure out a way in which it wants to treat the waste. Assessment and cost

implications of setting up 'Waste to Energy' plants versus sending this material to recyclers need to be taken. The option of 'Waste to Energy' plants exists in the developed countries where even recyclable material is fed to a plant that in turn produces energy.

Biodegradable (food & organic) waste needs to be composted instead of ending up at dhallaos or landfills



because lack of treatment of food waste leads to release of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

Today, cities have a lot of smart equipment and IT infrastructures as well. Furthermore, it is also essential to have an integrated E-waste policy in place to ensure that the hazardous waste is handled delicately and carefully without contaminating the surrounding.

Additionally, a smart city also needs to provide adequate infrastructure to its citizens to facilitate segregation. Emphasis should be put on ample segregating bins and spreading awareness among citizens. A strong collection system – formally or informally, also needs to be in place. Directives that only segregated waste be collected from homes/corporates should be given. And, every citizen needs to participate in this activity.

In a smart city, citizens need to think of waste differently, especially the dry recyclable one. What we traditionally think of as 'waste' is actually 'raw materials' for factories across India. Materials like paper, plastic, glass, metal etc. are such that should definitely be recycled. Segregation at source should be made of prime importance in a smart city because the mixing of the wet and the dry waste leads to loss of potentially recyclable material.

Pom Pom is a new recycling initiative that encourages residences, corporates, schools and commercial spaces to start 'segregation at source'. Segregation at source and recycling are essential for the environment and to reduce the burden on landfills.

When we recycle products, we also use much less en-

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ergy than what we do while manufacturing from scratch. In an energy deficit country like India, we need to think of every possible way to conserve energy.

Pom Pom offers a very convenient way to recycle and become green. It is a recyclable pick up service that buys all your segregated recyclable waste such as paper, plastics, glass, metal and others. The aim is simple – to change the way people look at their waste.

When it comes to waste, the main issue in India is lack of awareness and outlook to waste. People are not aware about materials that are recyclable. Pom Pom is laying a lot of stress on education and awareness.

Awareness workshops are conducted in RWAs and corporates. Recycling workshops are also conducted in schools, for children as they really do care about nature. Pom Pom is trying to directly connect with students and explain to them the importance of recycling,

its impact on the environment, and the usage of recycled products etc. Pom Pom even provides training to the housekeeping in various top corporates and embassies so that people at the grass root level understand the importance of treating the raw material carefully.

Even today, there is recyclable material reaching the landfills around Delhi such as Okhla, Ghazipur etc. that brims with waste. Creating mountains of trash that should otherwise be raw material for the future generation is definitely not a good idea. An informal recycling system definitely exists in the country, but until citizens are made aware about segregation, we will continue to lose recyclable material. Let's hope our smart cities can ensure waste is handled the way it should be! ■

