

After HC rap, state to remove landfill in Uran mangroves, notify area as forest

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MUMBAI: After being reprimanded by the Bombay high court (HC) last week, the state government on December 9 convened a meeting of officials led by the cabinet minister for environment and drew up a plan to remove a 15-year-old unsanitary landfill from amid the mangrove swamps at Bori Pakhadi – about two km from the heart of Uran city in Raigad district.

The development comes just five days after the HC sought the direct intervention of Aaditya Thackeray in this ‘long standing issue’. Dumping of municipal waste in the area has now been stopped from December 10, and the area will be cleaned up and notified as a ‘reserve forest’ in line with an HC order from a separate matter related to mangrove conservation.

Last week, the HC pulled up both the Raigad district collector and Uran municipal corporation (UMC) for non-compliance with its own order from three years ago, prohibiting the dumping of municipal waste from Uran city in the mangroves on a 4 hectare plot at Bori Pakhadi. “We want the environment minister to intervene in this and sort it out,” the court subsequently added.

The UMC has been dumping nearly two metric tonne of city waste in the area for at least 15 years, leading to the creation of a four hectare large garbage dump in the middle of the mangrove swamps, according to a December 2018 petition filed by the Uran-based Shri Hanuman Koliwada Macchimar Vikas Sanstha (a fisheries co-operative).

In response to this petition, the HC had on December 19, 2018, passed an order directing the UMC to divert its waste to an alternative site. The December 19, 2018 HC order stated, “The learned counsel appearing for the UMC submits that they have identified a plot where solid waste will be dumped. The learned counsel submits that the municipal council will not dump the solid waste in the restricted area till the alternate arrangement is made.”

In an affidavit submitted to the HC subsequently on February 19, 2019, the district collector had stated that the alternative land for dumping solid waste is yet to be identified and allotted. This plan, however, has now been scrapped entirely.

As per the minutes of the high-level meeting chaired by the environment minister on December 9 (that were submitted to the HC on Monday), the UMC will no longer require any allocation of land to stop dumping its waste at Bori Pakhadi.

Instead, “the UMC will segregate wet waste from dry waste. Segregated organic waste will be processed at its existing bio-methanation plant at Sarvodayawadi, Tal, Uran,” as per the minutes. Dry waste, on the other hand, will be segregated at a nearby material recovery facility which is also operated by the UMC, while dry waste that cannot be recycled will be dumped at the City Industrial Development Corporation’s (CIDCO’s) solid waste facility some 40km away in Chal village, Panvel taluka. “UMC will pay the processing charges to CIDCO,” on similar lines as they have already been doing with the Panvel municipal corporation, according to the minutes.

CIDCO has already started accepting the segregated waste since December 10. "In view of this, the UMC affirmed that the land for processing and disposal of solid waste is not required," as per the minutes of the December 9 meeting. The UMC has also been directed by the environment minister to draw up an eco-restoration plan for the affected area at Bori Pakhadi in consultation with the forest department, according to the minutes.

Source:<https://www.hindustantimes.com/cities/mumbai-news/after-hc-rap-state-to-remove-landfill-in-uran-mangroves-notify-area-as-forest-101639416849690.html>