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Ombudsman visits garbage plant



Making an assessment: Ombudsman for Local Self-government Institutions M.R. Hariharan Nair inspecting the Vilappilsala garbage treatment plant in Thiruvananthapuram on Tuesday. —

Staff Reporter

Seeks report from Pollution Control Board, Corporation

Thiruvananthapuram: Ombudsman for Local Self-government Institutions M.R. Hariharan Nair has directed the Kerala State Pollution Control Board (KSPCB) and the Thiruvananthapuram Corporation to submit reports on the functioning of the garbage-treatment plant at Vilappilsala.

The Ombudsman, who visited the project site on Tuesday, also asked the corporation officials to present a detailed report on the local body's plans to modernise the processing plant.

The visit was based on a petition from the Vilappil grama panchayat about the pollution of water bodies in the locality due to the leakage of waste water from the accumulated garbage on the premises of the plant.

Vilappil panchayat member B. Radhakrishnan had alleged in the petition that the waste-water discharge from the plant was polluting the nearby Meenambally canal, a tributary of Karamana River.

"Most people in this locality depend on Karamana River and this canal for drinking water. Even otherwise the people in this locality are suffering from various health ailments due to the unscientific operation of the garbage plant here," Mr. Radhakrishnan said.

He added that the plant was functioning without a licence from panchayat since 2004.

Corporation officials explained that they were planning to cap the accumulated waste with an impermeable layer of High-Density Polyethylene (HDP) and clay.

Interim measures

Mr. Hariharan Nair then asked the officials to adopt interim measures to prevent leakage of waste water into the canal till the capping process was completed.

Corporation Secretary Johnson K. George said the project was to be implemented under the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM). The Ombudsman asked the corporation officials to ensure the segregation of waste at source. "There are many recycling units in the State where you can send the plastic wastes," he said.

The running of the Vilappilsala garbage-treatment plant was taken over by the Centre for Environment and Development (CED) since the first operators, Poabs Envirotech, pulled out of the venture early this year.

The Corporation is planning to establish a sanitary landfill and leachate treatment plant to streamline its operation.

CED executive director Babu Ambat told The Hindu that CED was planning to reduce the intake of garbage at the plant. "We are planning to install a biomethanation plant here on a pilot basis with the support of the National Institute of Interdisciplinary Sciences and Technology (NIIST) (formerly CSIR).

"This will reduce garbage accumulation. A sanitary landfill will be established soon after receiving technical

approval," he said.

He said the Rs.7-crore sanitary landfill has been designed for a six-year span. He added that works on the plant for manufacturing Refused Derived Fuels from the waste would also begin soon.

Officials of the Pollution Control Board, who were present at the site, said the main issue of the Vilappilsala plant was that there was no facility to dispose of the treated garbage. They also said the plant was currently handling garbage above its capacity.