

Ghazipur landfill tragedy

What is the issue?

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- A recent landfill collapse in Ghazipur, UP, has killed two people and caused injuries to many.

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- The incident calls for addressing the problem of over-stressed landfills and adopting proper waste management techniques in cities.

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What led to this tragedy?

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- The Solid-Waste Management Rules, 2016 prescribes certain conditions for landfill sites:

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1. a landfill site must not exceed 20 meters in height.

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2. it must not be older than 22-25 years.

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3. it must have a clay-lining at the bottom to save the land and ground water.

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- As against these specifications, the Ghazipur dump-yard is 50 metres high and almost 33 years old.

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- The other two un-engineered" dumping grounds in Delhi include Okhla and Bhalaswa sites.

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- Experts say that Ghazipur, Okhla and Bhalaswa could not be called "landfill

sites" but just "dumping yard", as they do not follow the prescribed norms.

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- A joint-efforts of rains, fire and excessive pressure due to running out of space led to the recent collapse of the site.

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What are the flaws in the approach?

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- Following the tragedy, the National Green Tribunal questioned the Delhi government and the East Delhi Municipal Corporation (EDMC).
- The EDMC told the green court that it had moved a plea seeking allotment of land to develop new landfills.
- NGT has rejected EDMC's alternative landfill site at a new place on the grounds that the site falls in an environmentally-sensitive zone.
- The issue here is that the heaping garbage is increasingly posing environmental and public-safety hazards.
- Finding **new landfills would only mean relocating the problem** and not solving it.
- Also, this is not a problem restricted to Delhi alone but is the case with most Indian cities handling municipal waste.

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What is desired?

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- The tragedy calls for solving the unending waste management problems in Indian cities.
- The 'un-engineered' dumping sites in the name of landfills should be transformed into "**decentralised processing centres**".
- ex: Bio-methanisation plant could be an option.
- These centres should carry on **segregating waste at source** into

recyclables, organic wastes and toxic wastes.

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- Non-profits and educational institutions could be roped in to engage in **public awareness** campaigns.

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- Rather than having a one-size-fits-all approach, the waste problems of urban India should have a **region centric approach** based on the needs, demands and resources.

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Source: Indian Express, Business Standard

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