Waste Management

What is the issue?

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- The Ghazipur landfill collapse has highlighted the poor status of waste management in Indian cities.
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- It demands a scientific approach to the problem, to keep check on any such tragedies in future and to capitalise through waste management.
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How is waste management approached in India?

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- The reality is that except for few Indian cities, most of the cities only **'dump' waste and not 'manage'** them as such.
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- Solid Waste Management Rules, 2016 are hardly being followed by the cities.
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- National records reveal that out of the collected 80% of the generated waste, only a mere 28% is being processed.
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- Urban local governments leave the task of value extraction to the informal system of garbage collectors and recyclers.
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- These informal systems are inefficient in recovering resources in discarded materials as they are just dumped.
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- Moreover, the Swachh Bharat programme, intended to address all these, focuses too narrowly on individual action rather than a collective systematic approach.
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Why is waste management so important?

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- The volumes of wastes generated are estimated to grow in the coming years.
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- A mere shifting of collected waste from the cities is increasing the **pressure on the suburban areas**.
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- Moreover the **stench** from the landfill is a serious cause of concern for the people living in the colonies adjacent to it.
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- It is also being the cause for many deadly **diseases** like tuberculosis, typhoid, dengue, malaria and encephalitis.
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- Further, the methane gas produced by bio-degradable waste causes **fire,** and people are forced to inhale the poisonous gases from the **smoke** emitted.
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- Additionally the unregulated use of **plastics** is polluting the rivers, lakes and sea, and is being ingested by cattle feeding on dumped refuse.
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- All these firmly increase the need for addressing the issues with waste management.
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What should be done?

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- Tonnes of waste generated should necessarily be treated as a **potential resource.**
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- **Segregating the waste** at the source into dry and wet is a prerequisite for adopting a scientific mode of waste disposal.
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- The wet waste or organic refuse can be used for **composting** or production of **methane** for household use or power generation, and the dry waste can be sent for recycling.
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- Furthermore, the municipal bodies should adopt an **integrated system** for transporting and very importantly scientifically **processing** the waste segregated at source.
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- India should also make some **regulations** on the use of **plastics**.
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- Central Pollution Control Board should undertake periodic assessments of the preparedness of urban local bodies in this regard.
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- Above all, managing waste also requires a behaviour modification among citizens and institutions.
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Source: The Hindu

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