

Chapter 8

Sewage and Faecal Sludge Management

Issues

One of the major sources of high level of pollution in the drains is the absence of sewer network in unauthorized colonies and slums. Delhi has 1797 unauthorized colonies which have a population of 40 lakhs which is growing. There is no regulated system of emptying the septic tanks and the faecal sludge, containing very high levels of Faecal Coliform, gets deposited in drains and water bodies which ultimately pollutes the river. By not confronting what is happening it is putting the entire population at risk and cannot be ignored on grounds of public health.

Sludge generated by the STPs, CETPs and the legacy sludge at the bottom of the major drains and river Yamuna, if not removed periodically and managed/disposed of in a scientific manner, including the usage of sludge as a manure or fuel, can result in environmental harm. A safe and scientific method has also to be found for disposal of sludge generated by the STPs of DJB and CETPs.

The NGT in its orders dated 08-05-2015 had directed that:

DJB should provide by itself or through an appropriate agency de-sludging vehicles which will collect faecal sludge from septic tanks in the colonies and take it to the nearest STP and that such vehicles should be provided with GPS to ensure proper collection and transportation to the designated location.

The sludge generated by the STPs and CETPs, including the hazardous waste, generated by the CETPs should be disposed of in accordance with SWM rules 2016 and the Hazardous waste management rules.

Present Status:

The directions of the NGT have remained unimplemented so far and the faecal sludge from septic tanks in unauthorized colonies continues to be dumped in an unregulated manner. In fact the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) in its survey has reported on the absence of sewerage network in 90% of the 1797 unauthorized colonies in Delhi and the use of privately hired services for periodic pumping out of septage from house owned pits into drains and water bodies. The CSE

Report has shown how the privately contracted “emptiers” collect the septage from household pits against payment and empty the contents into drains, water bodies and pits so causing unacceptable health hazards and polluting the major drains meeting the river. This cannot be tolerated anywhere but least of all in the capital when several cities and even large states had notified the Faecal Sludge Management regulations. These were reported by CSE and are being implemented properly even in neighboring Ghaziabad which had put a system in place. Apparently, DJB had prepared draft regulations in 2015, which were revised in 2018, but were not pursued and were reported to be awaiting Government approval for over 6 months. One positive outcome is that the Principal Secretary (UD) has, after intervention by the MC, since informed that he has moved the file for Cabinet approval for the Regulations.

DJB, the Municipal Commissioners and the Deputy Commissioners all have the authority singly and jointly to prevent such sewage/septage discharge by using provisions of the EP Act 1986 and the DMC Act even without waiting for the formal notification of the regulations. In several meetings with DJB, the three Municipal Commissioners and the Principal Secretary Urban Development of GNCT, it was apparent that the agencies are not alive to the problem. DJB’s a vision and goals only relate to sewerage the colonies entirely but without reference to any budget provision or commitment on user charges for household connections. Only some 14% of the 1797 colonies have been provided sewage pipe lines but even there the off take is extremely poor as the residents are reported to be unwilling to pay the charges. DJB now says the Government will be paying for the connections but there is no such policy on paper or funding or time lines. This is a public health hazard.

As regards the sludge generated by the STPs of DJB or the CETPs, there is no management plan with either the DJB or the CETPs for disposal of the sludge.

Action Plan

The MC has reviewed this situation with all authorities and issued comprehensive directions at [Annexure VII](#). These seek the intervention of the Chief Secretary as neither are the Regulations being notified and nor is anything being done to stop sewage being discharged in the drains and water bodies. The Chief Secretary has been told about the importance of co-ordinating this activity which has little ownership presently.

- The Commissioners of DMCs have a primary duty for sanitation in the whole of the Municipal area. Therefore each DMC Commissioner has been directed to submit an Action Plan for

prevention of such pollution and to oversee proper sanitary disposal of faecal sludge and other waste under the powers vested in the DMC Act. This has been directed to be taken up first to cover all drains nearest to the 3 major drains out of the 22 drains which empty into the river irrespective of whether they come under I& FC Department or PWD as enforcement powers are not with those Departments. Periodic reviews will be carried out with three Municipal Commissioners to monitor, compliance of the directions.

- The DJB has concurrent but also direct responsibility under the Delhi Water Board Act 1998 and Section 31 of the Act specifies that all drains which were municipal drains under the erstwhile DWS & SD Undertakings shall vest in the Board. Under Section 79 (subsection 1) DJB has power to impose a fine up to Rs 5000 for discharging filth and garbage into the drains.
- The District Magistrates (DM) possess powers under Section 133 of the CrPC to take action to remove a public nuisance. The Deputy Commissioner (Revenue) is designated as the District Environmental Protection Officer under Section 4(1) of Environment Protection Act, 1986. These powers have to be used by the officers within their jurisdiction in coordination with DJB which has overall responsibility for sewage management. Reviews will also be taken with DJB and Revenue Deputy Commissioners/DMs for action under the powers vested in them under respective statutes.
- The MC will pursue this with DJB, the Revenue Deputy Commissioners and Municipal Corporations to oversee that discharge of the “emptier’s” dumping of septage into drains is stopped and designated pumping stations are used without waiting for the Regulations to be notified and enforced.

The magnitude of the problem and the seriousness of the situation have already been brought to the notice of all key officers namely the Chief Secretary, the CEO DJB, the Secretary UD in NCT of Delhi and the 3 DMC Commissioners. MC will monitor the issue of regulations, their implementation and enforcement action undertaken by the three DMCs, DJB and DMs month to month and report progress by 31st December