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Gorai dumping ground closure begins on Monday

DNA Correspondent

MUMBAI: The first of Mumbai Solid Waste Management projects, the closure of Gorai dumping ground, begins on Monday, 19th March, the Gudi Padwa day.

The project is a part of the overall waste management strategy that envisages converting about 80 hectares of land including the entire dumping ground at Gorai and portions of Mulund and Deonar dumping grounds into green landscaped spaces for the Mumbai citizens.

The Gorai site, which spans over 19 hectares, also has residential areas in close proximity.

The existing practice of open dumping that has been followed since 1972 has caused significant environmental damage in neighborhoods adjoining the disposal site.

As a part of the closure strategy, MCGM would incorporate environmental mitigation measures including an impermeable surface cover, landfill gas collection and leachate collection and treatment systems, development of a green belt on landscaping.

The Gorai closure project, the first of its kind in India, envisages landfill gas recovery systems at the sites in order to reduce Methane emissions.

This will contribute significantly to reducing uncontrolled green house gas emissions into the atmosphere.

The Waste Management strategy for treatment and disposal of Mumbai's 6000 Tons per day of municipal solid waste which focuses on environment friendly technologies including Composting and Biomethanation has been developed by IL&FS.

amounts of methane — the BMC would use the 'capping technology', wherein layers of ground, gravel and solid material are used to seal the dump.

Chetan Zaveri, who is the Project Director and Head, Environment Compliance and Risk Management, IL&FS, points out that methane is 21 times more potent than carbon. "Pipes will be laid to collect methane at the dumping ground while the black watery leachate (pollutant) would be collected separately," he said. Instead of being emitted into the atmosphere, the methane will be used to generate electricity.

"The capture and combustion of methane will result in a substantial reduction of greenhouse emissions and thus has the potential to earn carbon credits," Zaveri said. He claims the capping technology is being used for the first time in the country. The BMC plans to later convert the Gorai dump into a green space.

While the closure of the Gorai dump is already in process through Indian firm United Phosphorus Ltd and Dutch firm Van Der Weil, the site operations will continue till December 2007. The closing of dumping grounds through the Public Private Partnership route is also the first of its kind sanctioned under the Centre's Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission.

The Rs 476 crore for the project — of which Rs 254 crore will be invested by private companies — will also be used to partially shut the Mulund and Deonar dumps and construct a new landfill site at Kanjurmarg. At the 141-hectare site, waste will be processed and disposed of scientifically, and the BMC expects it to meet the city's needs for at least two years. The Centre approved the first tranche of Rs 62.57 crore in November end.

The head of the National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (NEERI), Rakesh Kumar, agrees that the plan is a smart move by the BMC. "Earning carbon credits is currently the 'in-thing' globally. India has a large number of projects which are sanctioned for carbon credits. Although the civic body's project will not make much difference, it will surely help create awareness and reduce the emission of greenhouse gases locally," he said.

Additional Municipal Commissioner Rajeev says their goal is the same. "More than the monetary part, we want to bring awareness about reducing greenhouse gas emissions and a psychological, environmental, physical change towards dumping grounds," he says. Shweta Desai