



WasteWatch

A Newsletter by Chintan-Bharti Waste Resource Centre

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The Landfill and the Kabari-wala Tales from the Draft Masterplan 2020 for Delhi

As you read this, the Masterplan of Delhi 2020 (MPD, 2020), prepared by the Delhi Development Authority, the DDA, will be under finalization. The Masterplan will determine our cityline in the next 20 years. It will determine the lives and work of thousands of people and the fate of the land, the river and the forests we have left. And of course, it will determine the how waste is handled and by whom.

Till now, we have seen only the Draft MPD 2020. It tells us that from the current 7500 tons of waste that Delhi generates daily, we'll be putting out 15750 tons each day in the next decade and a half. This means we're swamped by waste. As it so happens, the MPD is also telling us about the contrasting stories of land for waste. More precisely, of small land and large land, locally and centrally. Read on.

The most terrifying thing it tells is that there is really no space for waste dumping in Delhi. Any landfills will have to come at a considerable human and social cost. Land is like gold now.

The MPD proposes 7 new landfills of 228 hectares in all. All of them are very close to dense human settlements. In fact, with the exception of Jaitpur, the rest are being proposed in the same locations where slums are being relocated or have already been relocated. This points to forcing a double burden on the residents, who are known to be both very poor and vulnerable. The first burden is the shift out of their homes, far away from their work to inhospitable and underdeveloped areas. Secondly, the burden is one of contamination and pollution from landfills. As is widely accepted, landfills

severely contaminate the ground water, which is also an important, often the only source of water in these resettlement areas. Moreover, they also cause air pollution and severe odours, which can impact health.

But it is also noteworthy that by applying the draft MPD's own calculations, it is easy to see that only 38% of the total waste, ie, 5985 MT will comprise silt and will require to be landfilled. The remaining can be composted or recycled. Hence, the large spaces allocated for landfills may be in excess.



The second thing the MPD tell us is that the ubiquitous kabaris wala is an important entity. For the first time, we find the name kabaris mentioned in the Masterplan. Unfortunately, we do not find the n, mentioned in the Masterplan. Unfortunately, we do not find the exact requirements and facilities listed out. No kabaris will ever find himself able to work without land. But unlike a landfill, a kabariwala requires only a small amount of land, where he works as part of the recycling chain. Even a twisted safety-pin is put to good use here. But kabaris require small, decentralized bits of land. In fact, given the fact that they



are already working, they have clearly found the land they need. And then, recycling at this stage is a relatively non-polluting activity that enhances the value of waste. Six kabaris can recycle the waste of one lakh population using only 3000 sq feet space each, even with a loft. In commercial area, thiawlas, the small paper-only dealers that prevent the bins from overflowing, too, require only 20 sq. metre space per 150 shops. And this land can be reused over and over again, unlike a landfill. So already, over 20% of the waste is handled at this point alone.

In other words, the kabaris-wala, in terms of land use for waste handling, offers the converse of a landfill approach. Strange? Maybe, but it's true.

We don't know how the Masterplan will finally appear. We don't even know if any of these issues will be addressed, despite their being one of the biggest urban problems today. But we are aware that Indian cities have some solutions of land for waste within themselves. If only they'd look.