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Watch that waste in your locality

If you thought that only industries and emissions from automobiles contribute to increase in temperature, think again. Solid waste dumps too emit green house gases, adding to global warming. In Bengaluru several land fills on the city's outskirts are full of solid waste generated from industries, households and eateries. Ecologists say that landfill sites that are not properly managed contaminate both the soil and ground water. Some 70 per cent of the waste that is dumped in these sites is organic in nature, which could have been used more constructively to make compost instead of taking up space in the dump yard. Three major pockets where municipal and chemical waste is dumped in and around the city have been identified by the Indian Institute of Science and other agencies. These are the dumping yard off Bannerghatta Road, one near Yelahanka and one in the catchment area of Bellandur Lake. "Floods in northern parts of Karnataka caused by unseasonal rain indicate a change in climate which is due to mismanagement of our resources. It's wrong to think that we are not contributing to global warming. Though it is a global issue, planners in local bodies have the maximum responsibility of handling these issues," says Dr T.V. Ramachandra from the Wetland and Energy Research Group, IISc. Most projects are driven by engineering design, disregarding the ecological impact, he says. "We are trying to find out how much each locality is responsible for the carbon footprint of the city." Citizens blame the government when, in fact, there is a great deal they can do themselves. "With a nine million population, the majority of households end up contributing one million plastic bags in a year just in the form of garbage bags, irrespective of the rules on the use of plastic. We must stop exporting wet waste to dump yards. This will mean a saving of 25 million litres of diesel that the trucks use every year in transporting the waste. It will save a minimum `400 crore for BBMP," explained Chandrashekar Hariharan, CEO, BCIL. "There was a Supreme Court direction in 2006 which clearly stated that all municipal bodies must have scientific waste disposal units. Sadly, none of the bodies in India have a full-fledged facility to dispose waste in a scientific way without harming the local environment," he added.

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