

Apartments fall prey to unauthorised instant compost-making machines

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An Automatic Organic Waste Composting machine.

They claim to be environment friendly, but consume more electricity and produce ‘pre-compost’

Instant compost-making machines are proving to be a bane for citizens, the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) and the Karnataka State Pollution Control Board (KSPCB) alike. Apartment complexes are required to have solid waste management solutions in place, such as composting in-house or tying up with an empanelled vendor to pick up waste.

However, many apartments are falling prey to unauthorised companies who sell them “instant compost-making machines,” which can break down garbage within 24 hours but are not eco-friendly. A few months after installation, the citizens realise that they have been duped.

It’s only after they bought the products that residents realised these machines not only consume a lot of electricity but also churn out ‘pre-compost’ in the end, which is dried garbage. These machines cost ₹8.5 lakh and above.

Both BBMP and KSPCB officials said they had not issued permits to any company selling automated machines for compost generation. However, companies are making a lot of money by falsely promising quick compost generation without the hassle of dealing with odour, flies or leachate.

At an apartment complex in Electronics City, the management had installed an automatic compost machine two years ago at a cost of ₹10 lakh. Initially it worked well and the company even bought the ‘compost’ generated as promised. But soon, things started to change.

Malfunctioning machines

According to Sudhakar S., a resident of the apartment complex, smoke billowed out from the machine, which also began to consume a lot of electricity. The exhaust had to be finally turned towards a vacant plot adjacent to the building to avoid the smoke.

“The electricity bill went up to ₹30,000 a month. The compost generation was also not efficient. When we reached out to the company, they began dodging our calls and later blocked our numbers,” he said. Today, the machine is gathering dust.

In another instance in Padmanabhanagar, residents procured a compost-making machine, which assured ‘pre-compost’ by drying the wet waste fed into it. Within days, the machine broke down, said B.R. Moudgal (name changed on request), a resident of the apartment.

“Some of the key elements broke down and the machine kept burning stuff in it. Luckily, we had taken it only on a trial basis and we gave it back,” the resident added.

Companies unauthorised: BBMP

BBMP’s Joint Commissioner (Solid Waste Management) Sarfaraz Khan said several such instances had been reported to them. “These companies are functioning without any authorisation from the government. We have been conducting awareness meets among residents to highlight this issue,” he claimed.

KSPCB Chairman Lakshman said the board was giving permission only for organic waste converters and not for any automated machines.

Solid Waste Management Round Table (SWMRT) member and waste management expert N.S. Ramakanth urged KSPCB officials to form a committee to look into this problem. “We have placed several requests in this regard. However, the KSPCB has not taken any initiative till date,” he said, adding that SWMRT would soon write to the board.