

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF), along with the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) is the nodal agency of the Government of India for planning, promotion, co-ordination and overseeing the implementation of environmental and forestry programmes and one of their principal activities is the control of pollution. Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 also empowers the Ministry to enact laws for the protection of the environment in India, which are also adopted by the states.

The Performance Audit revealed that MoEF/CPCB/states do not have complete and comprehensive data about all the various kinds of waste being generated in India. Further, the risks to health and environment had not been adequately assessed by MoEF/states, which could lead to insufficient recognition, both by policy makers as well as public, to the problems caused by ineffective management of waste. Despite being a signatory to Agenda 21 of the World Commission on Sustainable Development of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, waste management efforts in India were not directed by a clear-cut policy. The '3 Rs' model indicating the waste hierarchy of reducing, recycling and reusing waste has not been replicated. Instead, the focus has been on disposal of waste being generated. MoEF had also not adequately promoted the use of recycled and environmentally friendly products through its environment education, consumer information and environment labeling programmes.

Rules framed for safe disposal of waste did not cover many kinds of waste like construction & demolition waste, electronic waste, agricultural waste etc.,. Despite being empowered by the Environmental (Protection) Act, 1986, instances of the polluter being held responsible for unsafe disposal of waste were very few, and thus, there was no effective deterrence for non-compliance, even with the framed rules.

The Performance Audit also revealed that there appeared to be an absence of a single body taking ownership of waste issues in India. Further, there was no clear identification of bodies for monitoring of waste rules at the Central Government level, which caused a mismatch/gap in responsibility and accountability and led to the rules for management of waste being rendered ineffective.

Study of compliance to municipal solid waste rules revealed that collection of waste by the municipalities was not taking place regularly and effectively and there was negligible segregation of waste after collection. Waste processing facilities and scientific landfills were almost non-existent, as a result, open dumping was the most common option for the disposal of waste. Municipalities did not adequately plan for closing of dumpsites and had not identified areas for landfills for scientific disposal of waste. In the absence of

landfills, open dumping of waste was likely to continue leading to harmful effect on health and environment.

Study of compliance to bio-medical waste rules revealed that hospitals/ private operators were running waste disposal facilities without authorisation and segregation of bio-medical waste according to categories was not being done. The waste treatment/disposal infrastructure created in the states was also inadequate. Study of compliance to plastic waste rules revealed ineffective enforcement of the rules by District Commissioners/District Magistrates and Pollution Control Boards in the states.

The problem of non compliance to rules for the management and handling of municipal solid waste, bio-medical waste and plastic waste was further compounded by lax and ineffective monitoring. In the absence of effective monitoring, violation of these rules escaped detection. Shortages of staff in municipalities/PCBs hampered the monitoring and implementation of the waste rules.

MoEF needs to take leadership in advancing the cause of environmentally responsible management of waste in India, which should necessarily incorporate the use of the '3 Rs' strategy in reducing the waste meant for final disposal. Keeping in view the gravity of the various findings in this report, it is recommended that MoEF set up a Committee to study the need for a separate waste management policy and suggest ways and means for its effective implementation and monitoring. This could go a long way in effective management of waste and reduce the threats posed to the environment and public health.

**Keeping in view the audit recommendations, a committee to draw up a road map for the management of waste in India has been formed by MoEF in September 2008. The Committee consists of senior officials of MoEF, CPCB, representatives from NGOs and eminent persons in the field of waste management. The committee has been mandated to submit its report within three months.**