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1am woes: BBMP may increase garbage cess



Not all glitzy Bengaluru: Hours before the first drink was downed on Sunday night after the extended 1am deadline for all days kicked in, BBMP was already smelling an opportunity to make money, citing increased garbage burden.

The civic body plans to increase solid waste management cess (garbage cess) on bars and restaurants and other commercial establishments by bringing in changes to trade licence rules.

Mayor BN Manjunath Reddy told TOI the increase in garbage will call for more waste management staff and additional financial expenses. "We will hold a meeting with standing committees of health, finance and taxation, on revising garbage cess on commercial establishments, and decide on the percentage of increase," he added.

Nightlife extension could also mean rearranging the schedule of garbage collection in commercial hubs. "We will be telling bars and restaurants and other establishments to segregate and package garbage to be disposed of in two shifts per day," he said.

A higher cess will come as a blow to commercial establishments, which are yet to recover from the massive hike in annual fee on trade licences introduced early this year.

Starting February 1, the BBMP's Taxation and Finance Committee raised the fee, citing Section 443(2)(a) of the Karnataka Municipal Corporation Act. For seven-star hotels, the fee ranges from Rs 1 lakh to Rs 4 lakh, for five-star hotels Rs 1 lakh to Rs 3 lakh, three-star hotels Rs 1 lakh to Rs 2 lakh, and for bakeries using more than 10 HP power, the rate is Rs 5,000 to Rs 10,000.

The manager of a barcum-restaurant on Church Street said the civic body should consult all stakeholders before arriving at any conclusion on garbage cess. "Garbage disposal is not being done scientifically by the civic body. There is a lot of bribery involved even to pick up waste from commercial hubs," he added.

Indiranagar resident Prakash K Raj's worry is that eateries will pass on the additional burden to customers. "Already, eating or drinking out is a costly affair. If it becomes more expensive, extending nightlife will mean little," said Raj.