

# COVID-19 made us more wasteful?

44pc of the total waste produced in the Kingdom during the eight months from January to September are household wastes

● Experts say staying at home measures has swiftly increased people's waste generation capacity

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**H**as COVID-19 and lockdowns made us more wasteful?

Like it or not, statistics and reports say so.

The latest news supporting this hypothesis is out here from Bahrain.

According to the Works, Municipalities Affairs, and Urban Planning, Bahrain is now facing two challenges, not because of COVID, but because of increased waste production, especially the household kind.

"Forty-four per cent of the total waste produced in the Kingdom during the eight months from January to September is household waste," said Essam Khalaf, the Ministry of Works, citing new data.

The situation also brings into play another challenge - the management and operation of Askar landfill, which is bulging in size every given day.

The phenomenon, however, is not specific to Bahrain but seen all over the world.

Experts say staying at home measures have swiftly increased people's waste generation capacity, which also thwarts all efforts to reduce pollution.

The blame is on the panic buying of single-use products, its production and consumption.

The challenge now is dealing with the mounting household waste and recycling it.

**Things, however, are not bleak as it looks.**

Bahrain, the Minister said, has made great strides in implementing many practical initiatives to control this menace.



A waste processing facility at Askar (file)

**44pc**

of the total waste, 444,755 thousand tons, received at Askar was household waste

**27pc**

of the total waste, 275,480 tons, received at Askar was commercial and industrial waste

**24pc**

of the total waste, 239,254 thousand tons, received at Askar was construction waste

**5pc**

of the total waste, 55,947 tons, received at Askar was agriculture waste

"The ministry seeks to expand projects for managing the household waste of all kinds through initiatives and strategies that enable the disposal of these wastes and make use of them in the best way," said the Works Minister

One amongst it is to manage household waste at the origin.

**So, how big is the issue?**

In Bahrain, it's size between the period from January to September is 1,021.759 million tons.

This pile includes wastes from the household, construction, industrial and agricultural sector.

The majority of them, however, as said, are from households, which comes to around 444,755 thousand tons.

Second, in line is Commercial and industrial sector. The sector

contributed 275,480 thousand tons of waste or 27pc of the total waste.

Closely following are construction sector with 239,254 thousand tons, or 24pc and agricultural sector with 55,947 tonnes, or 5pc of the total waste.

Khalaf said efforts are also progressing to extend the life of the landfill as well as digitising its management.

The Ministry, he said, is working to recycle demolition and construction waste by crushing and separating them, establish a new landfill utilising modern technology, recycle waste and convert it into energy. Efforts are also progressing on a facility for recycling green waste and converting it into fertilisers and recycling tires.

"These initiatives together will contribute effectively in facing the challenge of increasing waste," the Minister said.

**700 thousand tons per year**

Highlighting the laws in force for transporting the waste, the Minister said the Kingdom is issuing licenses for transporting waste in a bid to protect the public from illegal disposal of waste. The installation of a digital payment system at the landfill is yet

another move.

"These strategic initiatives have contributed to recycling 45pc of the total waste received at Askar landfill, which amounts to nearly one million and 700 thousand tonnes per year," the Minister pointed out.

Bahrain's "integrated waste management" processes, the Minister said, is in line with international health, environmental and technical standards and best practices, which include



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ESSAM KHALAF

THE MINISTRY OF WORKS

collection, sorting, management, awareness and other initiatives.

"We are managing waste as per the best environmental and municipal practices followed globally," the Minister said adding the move aims at reducing the waste received at the landfill by sorting, recycling and re-using them at the source.

"This help to achieve a material return for the state and reduce operating expenses."

The strategy also aims at enhancing the contribution of the private sector to achieve the highest rates of environmental sustainability, the Minister said.



Askar, the only existing landfill/dumpsite in Bahrain, caters to municipal wastes, agricultural wastes and non-hazardous industrial wastes. Spread over an area of more than 700 acres, the landfill is expected to reach its capacity within the next few years

## Priority for students safety, says Al Gharib of Education Ministry

Education ministry guidelines for school reopening ensure top-notch safety for students

● Social distancing ensured in classes

● Students will be in small fixed groups

● Each groups will not allowed to mix

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**T**he education ministry has issued guidelines to facilitate the smooth functioning of schools amid the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

The guidelines enabled administrative, educational and technical staff to return to work as the Education Ministry moves on with the preparation for returning students to schools, said Khaled Al Gharib, Ministry's Financial Resources and Services Assistant Undersecretary.

The guidelines, he said, deal

with all scenarios including emergencies as well as the formation of health teams, implementation of health procedures, setting controls for receiving staff and students including checking their temperatures, ensuring social distancing, and continuous disinfection and sterilisation of facilities.

The guidelines are to ensure a safe learning environment and to help respond quickly in the event of any suspected case of virus infection.

In the event of a student contracting virus, procedures will allow staff to notify the competent authorities, isolate infected students and communicate with their parents.

Beside, classrooms are in a way that the distance between each student is not less than a meter-and-a-half.

Ministry guidelines explain the requirement for operating the transportation services provided by the education ministry,



All classrooms, facilities and toilets, with a focus on places where the possibility of contact increases, such as door handles, chairs and tables will be subjected to disinfection by the end of the school day

KHALED AL GHARIB

including that for social distancing and bus disinfection.

Gharib explained that the Ministry had set procedures to sanitise buildings and facilities in schools and educational institutions using products approved by the competent authorities in the Kingdom.

"All classrooms, educational facilities and toilets, with a focus on places where the possibility of contact increases, such as door handles, chairs and tables will be subjected to disinfection by the end of the school day."

The Ministry, he said, has also filmed awareness-raising films on precautionary measures and remote workshops to train staff on dealing with the spread of the coronavirus, methods of transmission, and means of prevention.

Necessary measures are in place to prevent students from grouping together as they return for in-person classes.

The Ministry, Khaled Gharib



Picture courtesy of AlAyam

said, will make sure that students are in small and fixed groups within the school as they return for in-person classes.

"This is one of the most important ways to prevent Coronavirus transmission, as in the event of discovering an infection inside the school this would ensure effective tracking and establishing quick control."

Students in a particular group will not be allowed to mix with other groups, with the Ministry also allowing separate toilets for each group of students.

The same strategy will be followed for other staffs and cleaning workers, while also not allowing them to mix with students. Each school will determine paths for students to allow them to go directly to their classrooms without mixing with others as they enter the school.

Students will also be allowed to exit the school in successive batches with specific intervals determined by the school administration based on the number of students in a particular school.