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KMC rakes in Rs 70 lakh from sewage management tax

Kolhapur: Despite the uproar made by corporators of the Kolhapur Municipal Corporation in the standing committee meeting last week, the civic body has raked in Rs 70 lakh from the sewage management tax after a fortnight of the tax being issued, with water tax bills added to it.

Angry residents from the B ward of the city, who received hefty water tax bills due to the addition of sewage management tax, met municipal commissioner Vijayalakshami Bidari on Thursday and demanded repeal of the tax.

Bidari said, "We have to start the sewage treatment plant (STP) by March 31 next year as per the directions of the HC. Our failure to do so may attract criminal charges on the municipal corporation. The city is polluting the Panchganga for the last 50 years and the condition of the river will deteriorate if sewage continues to enter it."

"The sewage management tax has been levied so that we can maintain and operate the STP for the next ten years. The KMC will provide 30% of the funds for the construction of the STP and the operator has to invest the remaining amount. The cash-strapped civic body cannot spend huge amounts of money even on important projects such as STPs," added Bidari.

The KMC needs Rs 7 crore annually to manage the expenses for the maintenance and operation of the STP and so is charging 10% to 25% sewage management tax depending on the water usage through every connection. Convener of the citizens' group Kisan Kalyankar said, "On the one hand the KMC does not provide clean and regular water to the citizens and on the other hand charges heavily by introducing new taxes. We want the tax to be repealed or else we will resort to agitations."

Bidari added, "The issue of adding water tax bills of the last six months to the sewage management tax should not worry residents as the bills would be less in the next few months. Most of our customers use less than 20,000 litres of water in two months and have to pay just 10% of water tax as sewage surcharge. The taxation is progressive as the more the water used the higher will be the tax.