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## **BWSSB scalds water users with steep tariff hike**

Bengaluru: Announcing a hike in water tariff for the first time in nine years, the Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) on Sunday dealt a costly blow to all categories of consumers with an increase in the range of 17% to 73%. To make matters worse, the meter service charge has been linked to the water usage and the sanitary charges too have been hiked.

The revised rates are effective from Sunday and will be incorporated in the bills to be issued from December 1.

The minimum water bill (including meter and sanitation charges) will now be Rs 100, up from Rs 83 — increase of 20.48%. For domestic users, sanitation charges have increased by 66% and meter charges by up to 1400%. For those using more than 8,000 liters, the sanitation charge will be 25% of their water supply bill.

As a result, a domestic user who used to get a bill of Rs 475, would now have to cough up Rs 769 for the same usage. An increase of 62%.

For commercial users, the tariff (per 1,000 litres) for those using up to 10,000 litres (base category) has been hike to Rs 50 from Rs 36 — increase of 38%.

The BWSSB said the increase is not too high and was necessary for the board to bridge the gap between its revenue and expenditure. "In the last nine years, the expenditure has increased to Rs 1,222 crore (216%) from Rs 386.75 crore, while the revenue has only grown to Rs 759 crore from Rs 385 crore, necessitating the hike," it said.

Saijan Raj Mehta, a consumer and trade activist, said: "Bengalureans will certainly accept increase in rates if BWSSB provides a complaint-less service. Is BWSSB doing that? No. Moreover no hike of over 15% is acceptable. To say they've not increased it in the last nine years is no justification."