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Trichy municipality backs off from move to hike water tariff

TRICHY: The move of the Trichy municipal corporation to increase water charges and install meters for calculating the individual water consumption met with stiff opposition as the opposition councillors termed it unfair as a long-pending Rs 221.42 crore water project is yet to come to fruition to comfort the people. As the ruling AIADMK councillors too were not ready to support the move, the corporation cancelled the agenda.

The Trichy corporation tabled the resolution in the municipal council meeting on Wednesday, seeking nod to increase the monthly charges and deposit for domestic and industrial water supply for drinking water for residences non-drinking water purpose and for factories from April 1, 2013. The proposal set tariffs of for the year 2013-14 Rs 200/pm and Rs 5,000 as usage charges and deposit respectively for domestic use. It was also proposed to charge Rs 600/pm and Rs 10,000 as deposit for non-drinking water projects and Rs 1,000/pm user fees and Rs 10,000 deposit for factories.

As the civic body's move entailed steep increase for consumers, both the ruling party councillors and the opposition found it hard to support the proposal. For instance, the current

charges are Rs 100 and Rs 3,000 for domestic users. were hiked to Rs 200 and Rs 5000 respectively.

In fact, it was independent councillor M Venkatraj who raised the first voice against the new water tariff, saying a hike would ignite public anger when the water quality is poor and water scarcity remains a persistent problem in the city. At this juncture, the increase of water charges would provoke the public into agitation. So, the corporation should cancel the proposal.

Soon, the DMK councillors led by its floor leader M Anbazhagan seconded the argument and criticised the corporation for not implementing the much-needed Rs 221.42 crore water project that was launched in 2007 during the DMK regime. to meet the growing demand of the water in the corporation wards.

The project envisaged drawing water from three wells in Kollidam river and dovetailing it with the existing water scheme to augment supply to Trichy city. Had the project materialised the city residents would have received 135 litres per capita against the current availability of 90 litres per head. Moreover, the scheme included the construction of 37 overhead water tanks. With the new scheme, the corporation assured that they could supply 135 litres per capita water against the present water supply of 90 litres per capita.

As the ambitious project is yet to be implemented, many parts of the Trichy corporation regularly face water scarcity. "The

corporation assured to implement the scheme in September last year and it was later postponed to December. Now, the corporation says it will be completed in March this year. While the corporation fails to put the project into operation on time, it is unfair to increase the water charges tariff," said Anbazhagan.

The corporation commissioner V P Thandapani replied that the project was stalled as the corporation was running short of funds. The proposed water tariff hike was aimed at boosting the reserves of the civic body, said Thandapani.

the project commenced with Rs 66.43 crore subsidies from Japan Bank International Cooperation (JPIC), Rs 111.25 crore loans from Tamil Nadu Urban Development Fund Corporation (TNUDFC) and Rs 43.74 crore contribution from Trichy Corporation. But for their contribution and to repay the loans to TNUDFC. So, the corporation decided to boost the funds positions by increasing the water tariff.

The civic body proposal seeking approval to install meters to assess water consumption was also shot down by the irate councillors.

But the DMK councillor stood firm on their stand to cancel the two agendas until the corporation [implements](#) the water project in Trichy Corporation. And, the AIADMK councillors also did not support the two agendas. Hence, the corporation administration abandoned both the move to increase water tariff and install water consumption calculating meters.

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