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Civic body set to cash in on treated sewage

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Nagapattinam municipality to sell sewage to power company

Taking a cue from Chennai, the 147-year-old municipality of Nagapattinam is set to use sewage to generate additional income. The urban local body will soon sell treated sewage to a power company.

A few weeks ago, the State government issued an order, allowing the local body to sell 2.5 million litres a day (MLD) of secondary-treated sewage to KVK Nagai Power, which is part of a Hyderabad-based group, implementing power generation projects in different States.

The municipality will get Rs. 11.30 per kilo litre initially which will go up by five per cent annually.

The company will use sewage to meet water requirements of the upcoming power plant, which will be commissioned in one and a half years, says A. Manjunath, Chief Executive Officer of the power company.

Shortly, the local body will enter into an agreement with the power company, says an official in the office of Commissioner of Municipal Administration.

The pact will be renewed once in three years or on mutually-agreed terms.

A couple of companies have approached the authorities for similar arrangement in Cuddalore and Perambalur municipalities.

At present, an underground sewer project is under execution in Nagapattinam and the Tamil Nadu Water Supply and Drainage (TWAD) Board is setting up two sewage treatment plants (STP), one for Nagore and another for other parts of the town. The Nagore plant will have a capacity of 2.96 MLD and the other plant, 9.63 MLD.

The STPs are expected to be ready by the time the power plant is commissioned.

Asked why his company has preferred sewage to water in a district that is not known for water shortage, Dr. Manjunath replies that when he came to know that secondary-treated sewage from the proposed power plant would be let out to the sea, he had approached the authorities with a request for purchase.

The sale of sewage, raw or treated, is nothing new in Tamil Nadu. For the last 15 or 20 years, the Chennai Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board is selling 3 MLD of raw sewage to GMR Vasavi Power Corporation at a rate of 10 paise per KL and 36 MLD of secondary-treated sewage to Chennai Petroleum Corporation, Madras Fertilizer Limited and Manali Petrochemical Limited at a rate of Rs.11.3 per KL.

[Secondary-treated sewage pertains to the second level of treatment wherein the bulk of biological treatment takes place, leading to the reduction of biochemical demand of sewage to the permissible level].