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## Ecosan toilets gaining in popularity

Staff Reporter

**KANCHEEPURAM:** The Directorate of Town Panchayats is all set to play a crucial role in popularising Eco sanitation (Ecosan), a cost-effective, safe and sustainable method for disposal of faecal matter in rural and semi-urban areas.

Hitherto, human excreta and urine were being either collected in septic tanks or let into percolation pits in the habitations, where either underground sewer disposal system was not available, or such a system could not be installed in view of meagre population.

Enquiries reveal that while the normal method of disposing human excreta and urine collected in septic tanks -- filling them in specially designed tankers fitted on lorries and releasing them into water bodies or into the water course -- had drawn sharp criticism from environmental activists, the percolation pit method failed to attract the attention of people, especially rural masses, who feared that percolation of pathogenic and other bacterial substances might affect the ground water quality.

### Separate collector

The Ecosan method envisages collection of solid and liquid faecal matter separately.

The toilet pans have been designed in such a way that liquid flows into a small container placed outside the toilet and the solid matter drops directly into a pit below the pan. A separate pan will be provided in the Ecosan toilet for cleaning purposes.

The urine collected in the small container is recycled as liquid fertilizer after dilution with water or with wastewater generated from the second pan, and used to irrigate plants and small trees in the backyard. Before leaving the Ecosan toilet the user has to drop a handful of ash or fine sand on the solid faecal matter collected in the pit so as to absorb water content from it. This would prevent multiplication of pathogenic and bacterial substances from the solid faecal matter, sources claimed.

To popularise the Ecosan toilet concept, 15 such toilets, 5 each, in Devanery fishermen colony, Venpurusham fishermen colony and Masima Nagar Irula colony near Poonjeri in Mamallapuram Town Panchayat limit have been constructed and put into use by the local people. Apart from this, Ecosan toilet facilities have also been created in Devanery Middle School and at Venpurusham Anganwadi centre, said the Commissioner of Town Panchayats, K.Gopal.