

The Business Standard, Mumbai, 22 Jan 2008

Use toilets, get rich

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An NGO is paying people to use a public urinal while it uses the output as bio-fertiliser

Preposterous but true. There are enough 'pay and use' toilets, but in Trichy district of Tamil Nadu, all those using the Ecosan Community Compost Toilet in Saliyar Street, Musiri, will get paid. The scheme started from the festive day of Pongal on January 15.

Users will be paid ten paise per visit to ECCT. The payment will be made to all card-holders who will be using the ECCT on a monthly basis, said M.Subburaman, Director, Society for Community Organisation and Peoples Education (SCOPE).

The first Ecosan Community Compost Toilet in the country in Saliyar Street is functioning for the past 18 months. Every fortnight on an average 250 litres of urine is collected, and the same is used for farming purposes. The Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU) is studying the use of urine as liquid fertiliser for the past one year under an MoU signed by SCOPE with the university. WASTE, an agency in Netherlands, has provided Rs 4 lakh for the two-year research project.

"This is the first time anywhere in the world that toilet users are being paid, so they will appreciate the value of human waste — nay, wealth," says Subburaman.

Already, countries like Sweden, Netherlands, China, Germany and France have started using urine as liquid fertiliser for agriculture purposes. In India, Tamil Nadu Agriculture University was conducting research on the suitability of urine for different crops and has found it to be very promising. But



Every fortnight, on an average, 250 litres of urine are collected, which is used for farming purposes

what was stopping progress in this venture has been the non-availability of sizeable quantities of urine due to the tendency of the majority of men to relieve in the open, says the NGO.

Over 65 per cent of the population, not only in rural but also in semi-urban and

urban areas in the country, relieve themselves in the open. Another reason was the non provision of urinals or toilets in almost 35 per cent of Indian households, it says.

TNAU is studying the potential of the bio-fertiliser in a plot of 0.025 acres located near the toilet. The site is divided into 30 plots and crop raised in the area are under different dosages of urine. The crop condition is being monitored closely and developments under various parameters are being recorded. The paddy crop, which is also part of the experiment is almost ready for harvest by early February.