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## Prisons in state migrate to solar power, bring in significant savings

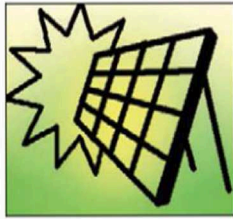
### Solar Units With A Total Capacity of 1,078 kW Installed In 53 Jails

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**Thrissur:** In a refreshing initiative, the jail department has adopted energy conservation measures by installing solar power units in a big way in the 53-odd jails in the state. The department has been able to save Rs 4.5 lakhs to Rs 5 lakhs per month in its electricity bill and another Rs 3 lakhs per month in LPG cost by silently migrating to solar power.

The department has installed solar power units with a total capacity of 1,078 kW and some of the units are large ones with capacities going up to 35 kW while some are with smaller capacity 1 kW each.

"The bigger units are installed in the jails at Thiruvananthapuram, Vayyur (Thrissur) and Kannur, while the remaining jails have smaller capacity units," said special officer of high security jails (central zone), K



**The jail department has been able to save Rs 5 lakh per month in its power bill and another Rs 3 lakh per month in LPG cost by installing solar power plants in jails**

Anilkumar

The jails in Kerala now generate about 900 kW or nearly 1 MW of energy. In other words the jail department is freeing 65,000 units to 70,000 units of power per month for public consumption and without the solar plants the department would have had to rely on the KSEB and the LPG providers for this.

It was the 13th finance commission's award of Rs 28 crore that enabled the department to migrate to solar power in such massive scale. However, in the initial days after the

installation of the solar power plants, the results were not very encouraging. In fact the power bill of the jail department went up after that.

The department then conducted an energy audit across jails and found that the unscientific usage pattern was leading to such hike in power bill. Then the KSEB lines were switched off during day time, to rely totally on solar power in the major jails.

Much of cooking and water heating in major jails, as well as the entire commercial chapathi making in

Poorjappura central jail, are now being done using solar energy.

"Our initiative has demonstrated the possibility of relying on the use of alternative energy. The power bill of a family can be reduced from Rs 1,500 per month to Rs 300 by installing a 3 kW solar unit and by using methods like using energy efficient bulbs and devices. If 100 families in each panchayat adopts such methods, we will be able to save two crore unit of power every month. This is significant saving considering that Kerala's total power consumption is 6 to 6.5 crore units of power per day," said Anilkumar.

"The government need not make any additional investment, but should only ensure loans to the house owners and bring in appropriate legislations to insist that new houses with a particular floor area should have roof-top solar units," he argued.