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Poojapura central prison shows the way in water conservation

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Thiruvananthapuram: The central prison, Poojapura, which has launched many initiatives for prisoners, has now set an example by saving water bill of Rs 7.5 lakh per month through water conservation.

The central prison has minimized the water supply by Kerala water authority (KWA) to the prison and district jail and special sub-jail since January that have cut short its water bill from an average of Rs 8 lakh per month to just Rs 50,000. For this achievement, the prison authorities had to just clean up the three ponds and four wells, in addition to creating 350 rainwater harvesting pits in the jail compound. With the water conservation and rainwater harvesting methods, the jail which has 3,000 members, including the inmates and prison staff, have enough of water for use from its own resources.

"We have limited the use of KWA-supplied water to drinking and other minimum essential purposes. The water being used for all other purposes, in-



Rakesh Nair

SETTING AN EXAMPLE: Rainwater harvesting arrangements on the premises of Poojapura jail in Thiruvananthapuram

cluding agriculture and other activities, is from our own resources," DGP (prisons and correctional services) TP Senkumar said.

The jail authorities have been engaged in renovating the ponds and the wells that were in dilapidated condition in the last one year. "Along with cleaning these, we have also built the side walls, and have laid protective nets on them so that no waste falls into the ponds or the wells," he said.

All the jail had to invest was the jail manpower plus Rs

40 lakh for construction of side walls for the ponds, which was done by Steel Industries Kerala Ltd, a PSU.

The central prison had arrears of Rs 2 crore to be paid to the KWA, out of which the jail paid Rs 56 lakh last month. "With the drastic reduction in the monthly bills, the arrears will be cleared soon," he said.

The water from the jail sources are sent to public health laboratory every two months for checking the pH value and for checking for Escherichia Coli bacterial pres-

ence. It was certified that the water is safe, and the jail authorities have now begun adding lime and bleaching powder to ensure that the water does not get contaminated.

The Poojappua model has been emulated in other jails too. In Viyyur central prison, the jail authorities have stopped the KWA water supply completely, which has led to saving a water bill of Rs 6 lakh per month. The water for central prison, special sub-jail, women's jail and the sub-jail is drawn from its own internal resources. In Kannur central prison where there is usually dearth of water leading to getting the tanks filled through tanker supplies, is managing this year without any external feeds.

The only location where the prison authorities are facing difficulty in water conservation is the open jail in Cheemeni, a location where the water quickly drains away due to the nature of the soil. "For addressing this issue, we are creating rain water harvesting pits by spreading a fibre material in the base that will help in retaining water," Senkumar said.