

Drinking water from sewage, a first for the Capital

FROM TOILET TO TAP

Water utility to follow the example of Singapore and US cities, which have been treating sewage and making it fit for drinking

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NEW DELHI: In a bid to tap all possible water sources, the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) and not-for-profit organisations are looking at the most unlikely of places — your toilet.

When it inaugurates its first toilet-to-tap sewage treatment plant at Keshopur on Thursday, the utility will be following in the footsteps of Singapore and the American cities of Dallas, Orange County (California) and Wichita Falls, which have been treating sewage water to convert it to drinking water.

According to Sanchaita Gajapati Raju, whose organisation Social Awareness Newer Alternatives (SANA) is behind the project, reusing and recycling sewer water is the only meaningful way to ensure water security.

“For a city like Delhi, reusing waste water is crucial. We are using absolutely untreated waste and converting it into drinking water. All laboratory reports — from DJB’s labs as well as from third party labs — are available. The water is of drinking quality,” said Raju.

The pilot project runs on solar power and can function 24 hours a day.

According to senior DJB officials, the one big roadblock they are anticipating is what experts across the world call the ‘yuck factor’. The idea of drinking water

filtered from sewage will be unpalatable to many.

“It is a concern for sure but this mindset has to change. Without any more water sources, we will have to think out of box and many countries are already doing it,” said a senior official.

The mindset, Raju also feels, will be a problem.

“For a lot of people I come across, the idea creates a mental block but if the water is clean, that is all that should matter. This needs to change through awareness campaigns,” she said.

DJB officials have assured that the water will meet all criteria set for drinking water. The Bureau of Indian Standards sets guidelines regarding the quality of water. This includes intensive testing for organic compounds, heavy metals and features such as taste, odour and turbidity.

However, even in countries where the system is already in place, treated water has not gained complete acceptability.

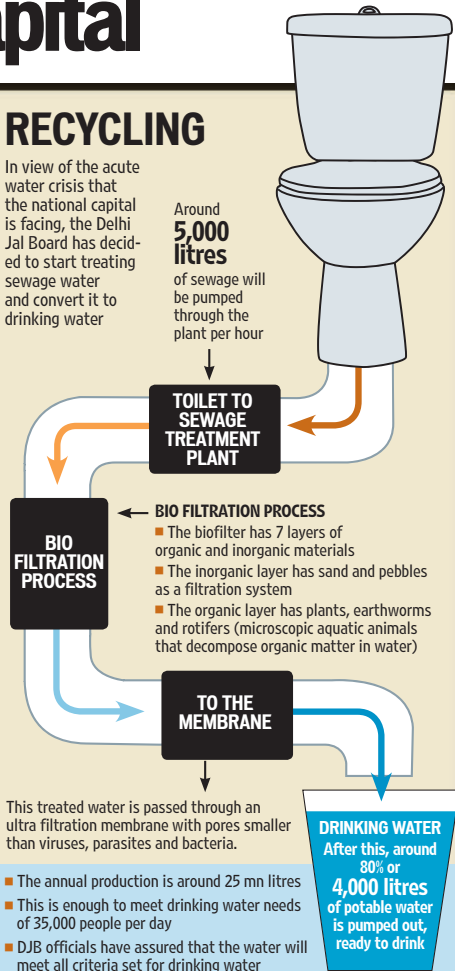
The plant will be inaugurated by Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal. Water minister Kapil Mishra will be present along with area MLA and DJB officials. For all those who attend the inauguration on Thursday, taking a sip of the treated water is also on the cards.

The plant has the capability to produce 4,000 litres per hour. The annual production is about 25 million litres. This is enough to meet drinking water needs of 35,000 people per day.

RECYCLING

In view of the acute water crisis that the national capital is facing, the Delhi Jal Board has decided to start treating sewage water and convert it to drinking water

Around 5,000 litres of sewage will be pumped through the plant per hour



Treating sewer water for drinking purpose globally

Singapore — NEWater

The parched country has managed what very few have so far — it has managed to complete its water loop. Reusing every drop of water it can. The country treats sewage water for drinking purposes.



Orange County, California

Dealing with a drought today, the city has had in place a toilet-to-tap project for over a year now. The treatment plant produces around 350 million litres of water per day and can cater to about a third of the area's population.

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SANCHAITA GAJAPATI RAJU, managing trustee SANA