

NEWS FLASH

KUWASIP: Towards 24/7 water supply

If water as an asset can be managed efficiently, then not only can water be saved, but also a 24/7 water supply can be provided for all. And this is precisely what the recently launched Karnataka Urban Water Supply and Sanitation Project (KUWASIP) aims to do.

Did you know that 40 to 50 per cent of water is lost in transmission and distribution? There's an exceptionally high loss of water for numerous reasons including low pressure in the system, irregular supply, lack of knowledge, and poor state of the distribution network. In addition, one also finds improper billing procedures, inadequate data on connections, and an inefficient response system. In this scenario, by focusing on improving and managing the existing systems more efficiently, not only can water be saved and effectively distributed to all, continuous water supply can also be achieved. The Karnataka Urban Infrastructure Development and Finance Corporation or KUIDFC is the implementing agency for various urban infrastructure development projects, including the recently launched KUWASIP.

The World Bank-assisted KUWASIP, recently launched in the State for reforms in the water and sanitation sector, is a first of its kind in the country and though it's initially restricted to some zones in Belgaum, Gulbarga and Hubli-Dharwad in the first phase, it will be scaled up to the rest of the areas in the three cities and subsequently, to more cities. "For the first time in the country, we have put in place a contract for providing continuous water supply

through private sector participation on a demonstration scale. We are also launching initiatives for putting the State Urban Drinking Water and Sanitation Policy pronouncements into action. With this, Karnataka is bound to take the lead in water sector reforms in the country," states Sri Jawaid Akhtar (IAS), MD, KUIDFC.

PROJECT KUWASIP: KUWASIP focuses on the efficient utilisation of the existing infrastructure with minimum rehabilitation to conserve water and scarce financial resources. This project has two main components - technical assistance for water and sanitation reforms at the State and ULB levels, and investments in selected ULBs for improving water service delivery through initial private sector participation. Elucidating on the project, Raghavendra Purohit, Assistant General Manager (Urban Water Supply), KUIDFC, says, "Traditionally, there was no focus on managing assets and checking if the systems in place were running efficiently. The approach now is that if a town's water supply facility suffers certain inadequacies, then we have look at optimum utilisation and subsequently enhance the facilities. As of now, there is no clear indication of how much water is lost at the source, transmission, and customer end. There's a need to adopt modern technology to manage distribution and transmission, and to manage and build the system."

DEMONSTRATION ZONES: The project is being implemented in partnership with a private sector company in selected areas referred to as Demonstration Zones in the cities of Gulbarga, Belgaum and Hubli-Dharwad. Explains Purohit, "A zone, comprising 4000 connections, has been chosen in each town and there are five such zones - 2 in Belgaum, 1 each in Hubli-Dharwad, and 1 in Gulbarga. Each zone will be assessed to

get a hand on the investment required for rehabilitation. Any infrastructure service is sustainable only if costs are recovered from users, hence there's a commercial orientation also in this project, as people will have to start paying for water usage. Of course, awareness about good service will be created among consumers and continuous water supply achieved before they are charged for water consumption."

The project envisages that a short-term private management contractor or operator will manage the system for a period of two years before the results are replicated for the entire town. The operator provides management expertise and a gamut of services including upgradation of the connection, leakage/loss management, monitoring and maintenance of water pressure, development and monitoring of billing and collection system, and customer complaint redressal. "In a period of twelve months, we hope to bring the loss of non-revenue water down to 30 per cent," adds Purohit.

CPWD wins excellence award

The air-conditioned exhibition complex for the India Trade Promotion Council, built in Bangalore by the Central Public Works Department (CPWD), has won the Indian Building Congress Awards for Excellence in Built Environment 2004, given to S. Chinnaswamy, Chief Engineer, CPWD Bangalore, by Union Minister for Parliamentary Affairs and Urban Development, Ghulam Nabi Azad, at the 11th annual convention of the IBC award at Vigyan Bhavan, New Delhi recently.

According to the CPWD, the complex is the biggest air-conditioned one in India and second biggest in Asia. The 8,374 sq.m. building was built at a cost of Rs. 17 crore. It was inaugurated by Chief Minister N. Dharam Singh.