Ion's recycling mantra to fix water worries in cities

Sharma's water management co vows to make each drop count

By **Amit Shanbaug** in Mumbai

IN MOST Indian metros, there's a huge gap between the demand and supply of water — to the order of 30 to 40 per cent. However, according to experts, this gap can be bridged if the waste water is successfully treated.

Rajesh Sharma, vice chairman and managing director of Ion Exchange India limited, the country's premier water treatment and environment management company, explained that nearly 80 per cent of fresh water supplied to residents in metros such as Mumbai and Delhi finds its way into the drains. "With technologies available to recycle and recover nearly 99 per cent of that water, this would sort out the problems of the future," he said.

According to Sharma, the demand for water in Delhi currently stands at 4,300 million litres per day (MLD) while the supply is only about 3,000 million litres. "Currently, the gap between supply and

Initial investment on building a plant is recovered within 2 years

demand for water is nearly 1,300 million litres. Mumbai faces a similar problem. It has around 34 per cent water shortage. While the current demand for water is 4,500 MLD, the supply it gets is around 3,450 MLD," Sharma added.

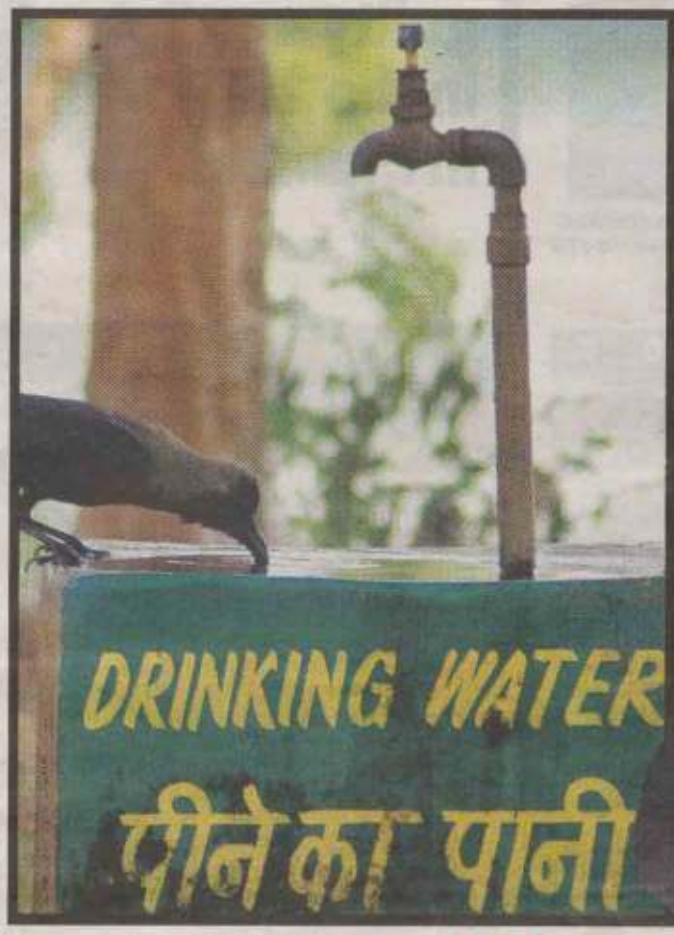
Demand for water in Hyderabad is of the order of 780 million litres per day but it receives only 549 million litres. The situation in Kolkata is however, different. The Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC) pegs demand at 1,098 million litres per day, and claims it supplies about 1,135 million litres on an average.

According to estimates, worldwide demand for water will grow from the current 4,500 billion cubic meters (BCM) to 6,900 BCM in 2030. This would 40 per cent more than the current estimated supply. In India, demand for water is estimated to grow annually by 2.8 per cent to 1,500 BCM in 2030, while supply is projected at only 744 BCM. Worse, at present about 20 per cent of the water, that is 680 MLD, is lost on account of theft and leaks in the country.

Sharma said that with many state governments making it mandatory for property developers to set up water treatment units in societies with more than 50 flats, the situation would change dramatically in future.

"A water recycling plant becomes more cost effective in the long run. With an estimate of 800 litres being the requirement per flat, the total requirement of the society would be around 40 cubic meters of water per day. If they don't have a recycling plant, they would have to spend around Rs 7,500 per day for getting water from outside sources like a tanker. The expense would add to nearly Rs 25-27 lakh per year. By going in for a recycling plant, each society would also save around 55,000 cubic meters of water per year. The operating cost for the recycling plant comes to around Rs 11 per cubic meter of water. Also, the initial investment on building the plant is recovered within two years," he said.

Ion Exchange has tied up with several government organisations, including the Delhi Jal Board (DJB), to help conserve water. It is in talks with the Brihanmumbai Mahanagar Palika in Mumbai for a similar deal.



SKEWED RATIO: Sharma says demand for water in Delhi is 4,300 mn litres per day (MLD) & supply is only about 3K MLD.

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