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Tamil Nadu - Chennai

Ecosan model offers an alternative

Deepa H Ramakrishnan

Though costly, it requires less water and can be sustained for a long time

— Photo: Deepa H Ramakrishnan



MODEL: An Ecosan toilet in Kovalam.

CHENNAI: Perhaps fed up with regular toilets getting filled with rainwater, many residents of Kovalam on ECR are now shifting to the Ecosan model of toilets.

In fact, many seem to be opting for Ecosan toilets now, though they are costly.

Residents are finding the model, which envisages collection of solid and liquid faecal matter separately, very comfortable. The toilet pans have been designed in such a way that liquid flows into a small container placed outside the toilet and the solid matter drops directly into a pit below the pan. A separate pan is provided in the Ecosan toilet for cleaning purposes. The toilets are constructed above the ground level with steps leading into the unit.

R.Narayanan of Coastal and Rural Development Trust of Kovalam, who has been using an Ecosan for the past one and half years now, said that though initially a couple of residents did not know to use it, they have been taught

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proper usage and are comfortable with it.

"More people in our village are asking for toilets to be constructed. Members of self help groups from Pungeri and Kalipattur villages have approached us for details for the construction of more Ecosan," he added.

C. Mahalingam of Kovalam who has been using an Ecosan toilet for the past 7-8 months said it was better than a regular toilet. The Ecosan model helped cut down water usage. It is always dry, he said.

Sekhar Raghavan, Trustee, Akash Ganga Trust, who has funded the construction of Ecosan toilets in Kovalam, explained Ecosan was the best model for coastal areas, because pit latrines filled up very fast and become dysfunctional. "The option of septic tank is not good because municipalities do not do a proper job of recycling waste water. Though Ecosan toilet is not very cheap it can be sustained for a long time."

Economist and founder-director of Friend in Need Trust, Shyama Ramani, who has funded the construction of around 350 ecosan toilets in Kameshwaram in Tamil Nadu said: "Like in the U.S. and Europe, we need to have a set of quality standards. We also need a programme to fund Ecosan because it's a costly model. The Government's Total Sanitation Programme gives only Rs.2000 while the toilet costs around Rs.12,000-Rs.15,000."

She said that there was a need to monitor the usage of Ecosan toilets, as, according to estimates, around 40 per cent of toilets made in India in the last 10 years were not being used.

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