

Contest to crown the cleanest toilet Publication: The Times Of India - Chennai, Date: July 18th 2009 V Mayilvaganan TNN

Nagapattinam: There's going to be a beauty contest in a village on the coast here — but the participants aren't macho men or perfectly groomed women. There will be no ramp, laser lights or foot-tapping music either. But it is a show about sparkle and design, for it's a beauty contest for toilets.

Friends-In-Need

(FIN), an NGO based in Rheims, France, has joined hands with Society for Community Organisation and People's Education (SCOPE) to organise a 'beauty contest' for toilets in Kameswaram village in coastal Nagapattinam. The idea is to spread awareness on sanitation and inculcate the habit of toilet usage in the rural community. "It is necessary to explore innovative ideas to motivate men and women to use toilets," says Shyama V Ramani, director, FIN. The contest is scheduled for Saturday at the village where more than 250 toilets have been constructed. This is the second contest held in Kameswaram, which was hit by the 2004 tsunami. The first contest was held in 2007, which encouraged more fishermen to use toilets.

Aesthetics is not the only criteria for selecting the most 'beautiful' toilet. Innovation in design, decoration and cleanliness, proper usage and judicious use of water are also among the criteria for zeroing in on the winning entry.

The organisers have mandated that a kitchen garden

should be raised with the waste water and urine from the toilet. "When there are beauty contests for animals, why not for toilets — the most important facility that protects the dignity of millions of women who are forced to defecate in the open," asks Ramani. There will be three prizes of Rs 5,000 each for proper usage and maintenance of the toilets; the best use of urine and compost for raising a kitchen garden; and for innovative additions inside and outside to make toilets really beautiful and attractive. Besides these, second and third prizes of Rs 2,000 and Rs 1,000 will be awarded in each category.

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