

The Water Bill

Shahbaz Shaik, Vivek Pamnani, Mahathi Vempati

Discrepancies in the water bill and issues with regards to the water pricing instigated protest and several meetings with the SAC (Student Affairs Committee) and faculty in the Monsoon 2018 Semester till it's final resolution.

The Beginning

Three to four weeks before the registration of the Monsoon 2018 semester, NBH students noticed that their water bills on the institute's IMS seemed much higher than expected. The college first charges a certain amount as the water bill fees and later bills students for the water that was used in excess of the paid fee called the 'recovery' amount.

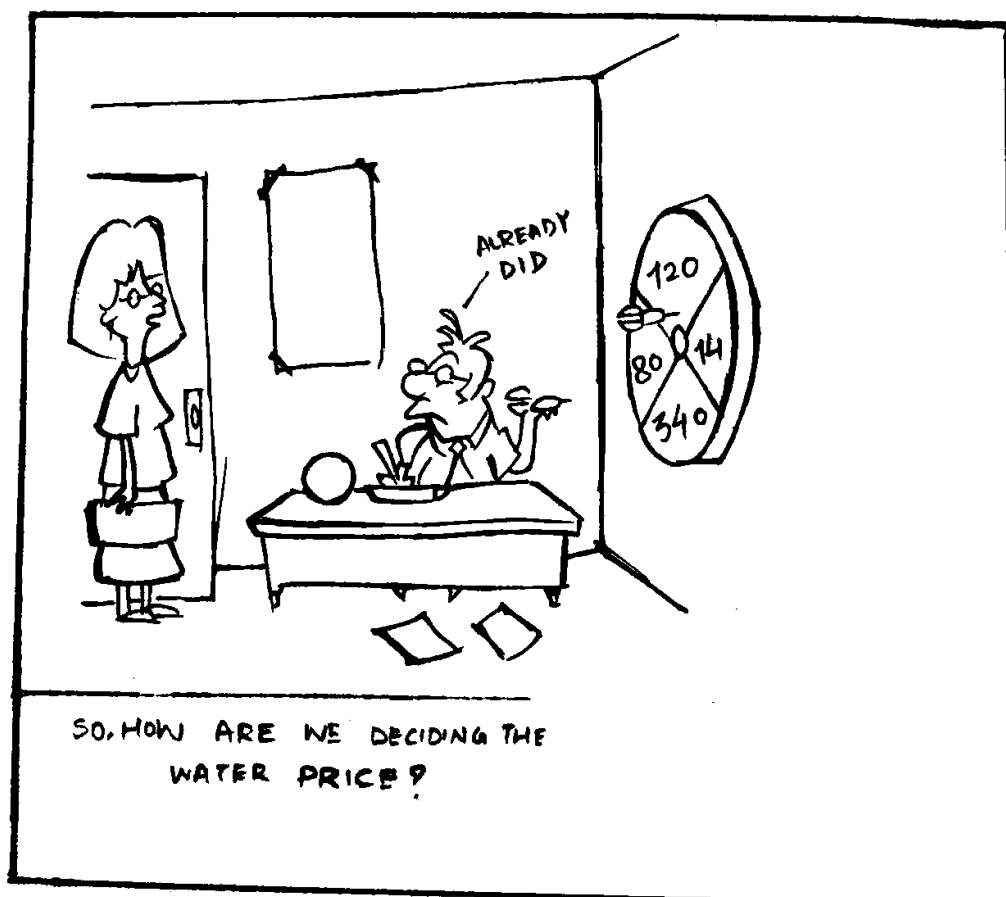
The students residing in NBH found that their recovery amount was quite high. The students thought it could have been an error and mailed support enquiring about this. In reply they got an Excel sheet as a justification. They then started to enquire, and then realised that the water fee in NBH was significantly higher than that of OBH. Upon further enquiry, they were told nothing could be done about it, since the meter readings for both the hostels were different.

According to Minesh Mathew, one of the first few students who was involved in the enquiries, on looking for possible reasons for the increase in the water bill, an enquiry was made into the number of guests living in NBH. Although there were supposed to be only six, upon going around and checking, they realised that there were around forty unregistered guests, which could have been a factor that contributed to the high fees. However the actual reasons were not clear. The SAC as well as the Director were not responding to mails on the matter, which instigated the students to protest. They refused to pay the recovery amount till the issue was resolved and in the meanwhile tried to look deeper into the water bill issues and the water bill policy as a whole.

IIIT Water Policy

IIIT can procure water in one of two ways. Either it buys water from the HMWSSB, the faction of the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC), that deals with water supply and treatment,





Credits: Priyank Modi

or obtains it from the IIIT in-house borewells. Students are charged the same amount irrespective of how the water is procured. GHMC water undergoes proper treatment which ensures it is potable, and transports it too. Borewell water is not purified.

The ratio in which we get ground water and borewell water is not known. However, according to SAC, some of the academic buildings' drinking water areas directly get GHMC water. The rest of the GHMC water is mixed with the borewell water in an underground reservoir and sent to all the buildings. Some buildings have water treatment plants before the water is pumped up. All the drinking water points have RO purifiers, so it doesn't matter which water is pumped there.

Students paid Rs. 120 per kilo liter, based on the consumption in the meter reading of their respective hostels. This was not the case in the past, where there was a flat pricing for every student per month. The students

questioned why the water was priced close to the GHMC water price when we did not completely receive GHMC water.

According to an email sent to the Parliament as a response to students' questions, the Director stated that the 120 INR / KL that was being charged was defined irrespective of any available calculations, and that the difference will be used to plan for the future.¹

On being asked why the charge for borewell water was nearly as much as that for GHMC, the reasoning given was to preserve water, to conserve it and to plan for future. In the Director's words:

"The decision to charge bore water at the same rate as the Manjeera water was take a couple of years ago in a conscious manner. The objective —as explained then — was to promote responsible use of water. Ground water is not forever at all and it should not be seen as

¹The email containing the minutes of the meeting: <https://tinyurl.com/ping-water-bill>

