

# The Water Bill

Shahbaz Shaik, Vivek Pamnani, Mahathi Vempati

## The Beginning

Three to four weeks before the registration of the Monsoon 2018 semester, NBH students noticed that their water bills on 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 NBH students 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 re-

fused 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.

### **Average Consumption**

According to an article by the India Environment Portal, the average water consumption in the life of a citizen living in Hyderabad would be 96.2 Litres per day. However, this figure includes water for cooking, as well as water to wash utensils. In IIIT, the water bill section of the fees includes only the water consumed at the hostels. So, theoretically, a IIIT student would use roughly about 75 litres of water per day (generously assuming they bathe everyday). This translates to around 2250 Litres being used by a student per month. Under commercial slab, GHMC charges 100 INR / KL + 35% sewerage cess.

Amount paid by students in each hostel  
An OBH student pays around 500 INR a month, a Parijaat student pays around 700 INR per month towards the water bill, and an NBH student pays an amount of around 1000 INR a month, not including the absurdly high recovery fee that was a discrepancy. Apart from this students also used to pay 100 INR per month as water surcharge.

### **IIIT Water Policy**

IIIT can procure water in one of two ways. Either it buys water from the HMWSSB, the part of the GHMC that deals with water supply and treatment, 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.

as it is a matter also of principle. We are working towards reducing the water requirements by recycling the grey water, having a treatment plant, etc. The wise thing will be to use the difference in today's perceived costs to building such infrastructure. The plans are very much in progress."

### **Various Costs claimed**

On 19th July, the engineering department handed out a sheet as justification for the charges. However several students pointed out that this sheet had errors, some very blatant like  $97 \times 10 = 582$ . It was also claimed at one point that the high charge was due to the maintenance team.

### **Water Surcharge**

IIIT charges students a certain fixed amount which is to be collected and used for future projects. These are called surcharges. Students



