

# Thousands rally against STP rule

**BENGALURU:** About 8,000 citizens on Saturday took out a silent rally against the rule mandating compulsory installation of sewage treatment plants in older apartment complexes.

The Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board has set a December 31 deadline: complexes with more than 50 apartments, built before February 2016, have less than a month to go to set up such plants.

The penalty for not complying is 25% of the water bill for the first three months and 50% after that.

The protest, organised by Bangalore Apartment Federation (BAF), saw the participation of 173 apartment associations.

Long human chains were formed, with protesters of all ages holding placards and banners, at some 40 locations.

“This rule poses a threat to buildings and flats already connected to the internal sewage system. All that BWSSB has to do is to maintain them properly,” said Srikanth Narasimhan, general secretary, BAF.



**Apartment dwellers stage a protest against the STP rule in Jayanagar on Saturday. DH PHOTO**

## What's the rule?

It is now mandatory for apartment complexes with 50 units, built prior to February 2016, to have sewage treatment plants. Complexes with 20 units, built after February 2016, must also have their own sewage treatment plants.

Vikram Rai, treasurer, BAF, said, “It is neither possible to instal STPs in older apartments nor treat 100% of the sewage water. BWSSB is harassing us.”

S Kemparamaiah, BWSSB engineer-in-chief, said the rule

would be enforced.

“If apartment complexes can treat sewage water, they can use it for cleaning and gardening,” said Satish N, chief engineer, waste water management, BWSSB.

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A face-off is imminent, with citizens saying they will not instal treatment plants even after the deadline.

A R Shivakumar, rainwater harvesting expert, Indian Institute of Science (IISc), said, "It is a positive move and citizens should understand their social responsibility. They needn't depend on expensive water delivered in tankers."

He expects sewage treatment plants to bring down water bills in apartments by about 30%.

But the idea is not without sceptics. "The zero-discharge policy is flawed in behavioural, economical, technical and monitoring aspects. Hence individual STPs in apartments are bound to fail," said V Ramprasad, solid waste management expert.

Nagesh Aras, environmental activist who has worked closely with the Karnataka State Pollution Control Board (KSPCB) and framed guidelines for treatment plants, also has reservations.

"Even if they instal STPs, they can't treat nitrate and phosphorus, which are harmful. How can smaller apartment complexes, with no space even for parking, instal STPs?"

He says treatment plants can't be set up in enclosed spaces as they emit gases that can be dangerous.