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Chennai Coast, April 24: India may soon be able solve the drinking water crisis in many of the coastal areas of the country, with the indigenous development of a cost-effective desalination plant by its scientists.

Sagar Shakti, the offshore desalination plant, has been developed by the National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT) that promises to address country's drinking water woes considerably. According to S.

Kathiropoli, the Director of National Institute of Ocean Technology, the cost factor has invariably been a major concern in the country, especially along the south-west coast where drinking water is scarce.

"It comes to around six paise a litre. Next, we are planning, maybe with private partnership, 25 million litres everyday. In that scenario, we expect the cost to come down to three paise per litre," said Kathiropoli.

The process is a controlled recreation of water cycle that brings about rain. It involves flash evaporation of warm surface seawater and condensation of the vapours with cold deep-sea water.

The method is environment-friendly, and simple enough not requiring too much skilled manpower.

"There is no brine or anything formed. Secondly, we bring deep sea cold water, which is rich in nutrients. So wherever the plant is, at least 10- 20 kilometres around, you will see that Mari culture will grow quite a lot," Kathiropoli said.

NIOT claims the drinking water thus obtained grades above current standards in India. The total dissolvable solid proportion in the water is 10 particles per million as against the national standard of 2000 particles per million.

The only bottleneck, such plants could face would be transportation of desalinated water to the mainland, as such plants are ideally located 30 to 40 kilometers off-shore.

Currently a pilot desalination project provides potable water to Kavarratti, Lakshadweep, though on a much lesser scale.

According to officials, Puducherry (earlier Pondicherry) is all set to set up eight such plants to crack its drinking water crunch.

NIOT now plans to set up a plant with a capacity of over 10 million liters

a day, with private sector partnership and in about a-year-and-a-half.

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