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## Call for water budgeting, restoring waterbodies

The city's households spend a minimum of 3% of their monthly income towards water, particularly during drought conditions, to cope with the shortfall in piped water supply.

With the growing gap between demand and water availability, it is essential to have a water budget and develop a sustainable drainage system during urban planning, experts stressed here recently.

At a media workshop on 'Floods, cyclone and drought: The puzzle of Chennai's water and climate', organised by Care Earth Trust, K.S. Kavi Kumar of Madras School of Economics said many households with piped water connection spend Rs. 553 per month towards water needs. Those without piped water supply spend Rs. 658 per month on the same.

People without municipal water supply spend nearly 6.2% of their monthly income towards sourcing water from the private

sector. Citing various studies, he said besides implementing water metering system, the government sector must change the pricing strategy.

At present, the cost of water supply is nearly Rs. 13-15 per kilo litre. Economic incentives may be provided to encourage reduction in water use.

The need to increase the reservoirs' capacity and boost groundwater recharge was also underlined during the workshop. Pointing out that the water demand of the expanding city is projected to increase to 2003 million litres by 2021, Balaji Narasimhan, Associate Professor, Department of Civil Engineering, IIT Madras, said it is imperative to restore waterbodies and demarcate their boundaries to store flood water. During land-use planning, it is essential to identify land to store excess runoff along with allocation of OSR land, he added.

Speakers also highlighted the recent extreme weather events due to climate change and emphasised the importance of restoration of wetlands as part of disaster management. While Uma Ramachandran of IFMR-LEAD spoke on how innovative methods were used in various sectors to help residents during

December 2015 floods, Avantika Bhaskar of Care Earth Trust, spoke on the role of wetlands in storing floodwater and ensuring better groundwater quality.

***Workshop on city's water supply situation underlines the need to increase the reservoir capacity***