



Picture for representational purposes only.

**Hyderabad:** A record 4.2 lakh consumers in the city paid their water bills for the month of September giving the Water Board nearly Rs 55 crore in revenue, it was revealed on Thursday.

This is officially the highest number of bill-paying consumers in a single month, in the history of the Water Board. But while officials are elated at this new high, there's, however, a flipside to the story.

This number of bill-paying customers is only 50 per cent of the eight lakh total consumers or water connections in Greater Hyderabad. That means half have still not paid their bills.

Further enquiries revealed several reasons behind why the rest were not paying their bills regularly, including the existence of a strange penalty clause within the rule book of Water Board itself, which is often blamed for irregular payments.

According to the Water Board rule book, officials are forced to wait for three months before they can charge a late-payment penalty on bills. A penalty of 18 per cent interest on the total bill amount including arrears can be levied only if the consumer fails to pay the water bill for three months.

"The penalty can be levied only in the fourth month. This could be the main reason for consumers taking it cool on payment of water bills. For example, only 50 per cent consumers paid their bills for September, another 25 per cent might pay next month and remaining in the following month and yet, no penalty can be

Also, the Board itself is often responsible for a number of free consumers as it is unable to raise water bills for all its consumers. Then there is the issue of illegal connections, that are also eating into revenues. The Un-accounted For Water (UFW) is over 50 per cent and the Board is getting money for only 170 MGD of the total 340 MGD water being supplied to the city every day.

When contacted, Water Board managing director J. Syamala Rao confirmed that September's payment of bills by 4.2 lakh consumers has been the highest so far.

"We have taken up several measures to ensure all consumers pay their bills every month. In September 2012, 3.7 lakh consumers paid their bills and that was highest. From 3.7 lakh to 4.2 lakh in a year, we want to touch a 5-lakh figure in the next six months. A lot of hard work and technology, including the use of GPS-enabled hand-held machines for the meter-reading, has gone into the streamlining of the bill-issuance system," Rao added.

**States:**

[Andhra Pradesh](#)