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CSIR-NIIST develops no-stink food digester

DECCAN CHRONICLE.

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Feb 21, 2017, 6:59 am IST*Schools and hospitals approach lab to set up the waste processor.*

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Thiruvananthapuram: Those institutions which are looking for a food waste processor that can also produce biogas have an option now: the food-waste digester developed by CSIR-NIIST. The mini version of the equipment, installed at Government LPS, Thycaud, Thiruvananthapuram, last Wednesday, can process 4-5 kg of waste daily, and produce 150-170 litres of biogas from each kilogram of waste. Since the process does not require water, the volume of slurry coming out of it is low and hence it has no stench. The equipment was developed under the societal research programme (CSIR 800) which aims at improving the living conditions of 80 crore Indians through its science institutions.

Unlike the more commonly available biogas units, the CSIR unit can process egg shell as well as lemon and onion peels. A scientist who was part of the team said that the school had just 80 students, and had requested for a unit with a smaller capacity. There is an incentive for the schools to set up one: it can double up as an educational tool as it has a pictorial representation of the bioprocess, so that students get an idea of how it works. Several schools as well as government hospitals have been placing requests at CSIR-NIIST for a biodigester. CSIR-NIIST plans to respond to these requests, the scientist said.

Under project CSIR 800, CSIR-NIIST installs the biodigester for free, but the market price of the smallest unit is around `30,000. The technology has been transferred to two companies. In December 2016, another unit using the same technology was installed at Government UPS, Poojappura in December 2016. "The institute is committed to societal needs and willing to support more schools and

government agencies having problem with waste disposal," said CSIR-NIIST director A. Ajayaghosh. CSIR-NIIST can fabricate units of a higher scale in their workshop. CSIR-NIIST has also been actively involved in carrying out outreach programmes across the state. "We visit various schools to motivate students to take up science," Dr Ajayaghosh said.

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