

# NCL to supply free water purifiers, oxygen machines for tribals in Palghar, Thane

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NEARLY 40,000 tribals from Thane and Palghar districts in the state are set to have access to clean drinking water, along with affordable healthcare, at local hospitals. The city-based CSIR-National Chemical Laboratory (NCL) will be distributing water purifying machines and oxygen enriching units in tribal schools and government hospitals free of cost.

The first batch of these equipments, which are ready for dispatch, is being developed as part of the CSIR 800 programme, where each of the 38 Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) labs in the country are mandated to set up Gramin Vigyan Kutir (CSIR tech village) and develop these backward areas using technological interventions.

First proposed in 2011, the plans to set up tech villages in the state had to be scrapped due to problems in procuring land. Later, under a new plan designed about two years ago, the lab was asked to transport necessary equipments or technological interventions to help improve the lives of tribals.

"This initiative is being undertaken solely to make a difference in the lives of people who have limited access to even basic amenities. That's why we decided to help them with these elementary facilities, machines that provide pure and clean drinking water and oxygen enriching units to be used at the rural hospitals," said programme in-charge

and senior NCL scientist P K Ingle.

Thane is the 10th largest district in the state, with tribals constituting about 14 per cent of its total population. The tribal communities live in highly inaccessible areas and are deprived of 24-hour power supply, among other basic amenities.

"... At least 20 per cent of patients admitted at government hospitals require oxygen cylinders during treatment," said Dr Kanchan Vanere, a civil surgeon from Palghar. However, availing the refill of oxygen cylinders is a major cause of concern. "Whenever oxygen cylinders run dry, the nearest refill options are available either in Thane or Nashik," said Dr Vanere, who said the district is in the process of procuring 12 such machines from NCL.

This is where the cost-effective machines developed by Genrich Membranes Pvt Ltd come in handy. The company supplies these oxygen enriching machines to NCL.

"The machine is capable of supplying up to 35 per cent concentrated oxygen enriched air, best suited for patients with severe lung disorders, asthma or COPD," explained the company's Chief Operating Officer, Rajendra Kharul.

The lab is also providing water purifying machines to government hospitals and ashram schools in the tribal belt. "...We are planning to procure 300 units of 50-litre capacity, particularly for smaller establishments," said Ingle.

The NCL is also sponsoring the construction of 20 toilets, particularly for girl students, in the ashram schools of Palghar.

