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### India: A billion aspirations

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Last month, authorities in a southern Indian state fined people caught urinating in public view for a few days.

This week, officials in a remote town started offering people money for using public urinals.

Quite amused reading these news items, I wonder whether we are witnessing the winds of change finally in India or are we just watching another piece of local image-building exercise before elections ?

In India, a drive to ensure cleanliness in streets for a week or so is a common exercise, but people often forget such drives in a hurry and the street corners are suddenly smelling again and people using handkerchiefs and sometimes masks to cover their nose.

But the novel idea of asking people to earn money by using a public urinal was certainly worth noticing I thought.

Dozens of people are queuing up to use toilets in Musiri, a remote town in Tamil Nadu state, where authorities are succeeding in keeping street corners clean with the new scheme.

The urine was also being collected and tested for its efficacy as a crop fertiliser, an official of Tamil Nadu's agricultural university said.

The poor of Musiri, are earning upto a dollar a month and very happy to keep the street corners clean.

Will initiatives like fining people or offering money work in a country like India, where basic sanitation eludes millions and people flout rules without bothering about the law ?

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