

## LAKE REVIVAL IS ALL ABOUT COMMUNITY EFFORT, LOCAL SOLUTIONS

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A fickle-minded approach by the agencies taking care of the city's lakes has not gone down well with citizens. On one hand, the authorities claim that there is a dearth of funds and on the other hand, tall promises are made and huge sums of money promised for rejuvenation. Experts, however, believe that community participation is the way forward.



**TV Ramchandra from the Centre for Ecological Sciences of IISc, distributed `25k among schools for setting up water testing labs to make kids aware of quality of water**

Community participation, awareness about water quality and conservation by local communities is the only way forward to protect Bengaluru's lakes from getting extinct. Namma Bengaluru Foundation (NBF) along with residents around Arekere Lake have already taken a step in this direction on February 19 during the Kere Habba (Lake Festival) that depicts the cultural connection between locals and lakes.

In a first, TV Ramchandra from the Centre for Ecological Sciences of the Indian Institute of Science, distributed Rs 25,000 among six private schools for setting up water testing labs to make kids aware of the quality of water they consume. He said foreign help will never solve local problems, but and local participation is needed instead.

"The money that I have distributed among the schools is from the amount that I received as prize money. The idea behind setting up of water testing labs at schools is to educate the future generation on the quality of water they consume and also ignite the zeal of water conservation among the youth," he said on the sidelines of an event held at Adanya Chetna Foundation.

Talking on the proposal to import technology from the United Kingdom and Israel, the Professor heavily came down on the state government and said the experts who inspected the lake were not sure about what caused the frothing. We, however, have already found solutions for it. Despite repeated warnings, the state government has failed to plug the flow of effluents into the lakes.

"We should stick to the recommendation of the expert committee on lake conservation and also take a lesson from Jakkur Lake, which has been revived solely based on local expertise," he added.

There was also resentment among experts about the lackadaisical attitude of the state government agencies that have failed to implement the 18-member expert committee report on the field situation in a time-bound manner. As per the recommendation, the primary steps should have been implemented in the first six months after the report was submitted, and by now, some concrete action should have been in place.

Sridhar Pabbisetty, CEO, NBF, said, "Most citizens have turned into consumers and we need to spread awareness among them and make them participatory citizens, the first step required for sustainable living. Hence, we have picked up Arekere lake and want to revive it through participation of the local community."

The rejuvenation work at Arekere Lake was prompted by the citizens back in 2012, but the whole process ran into trouble due to red tape and bureaucratic hassles in 2013. As a result, the work of rejuvenation was left midway. However, during Kere Habba this year, the citizens again joined hands to revive the

lake and since then, regular meetings are being held on the issue.

HN Ananth Kumar, Member of Parliament from South Bengaluru, who is also participating in the lake rejuvenation work along with the citizens, said, “The general perception is that water wars will be witnessed by the next generation, but according to me, we have already reached a state where such wars are being fought.”

The MP also added that community participation is the best way forward and it is high time that citizens come forward and claim their lakes.