

Progress in Ramnadi restoration work

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PUNE: On June 4 this year, on the eve of World Environment Day, then Mayor Mukta Tilak inaugurated the restoration of Khaptewadi lake near Bhukum as part of the Ramnadi Restoration Mission (RRM).

While several NGOs and groups in the city had already begun the work of cleaning and restoring parts of Ramnadi river, in March this year, 12 organisations came together to carry out the work on a large scale.

Despite flowing through a long stretch from Khaptewadi through Varpewadi, Bhukum, Bhugaoon, Bavdhan, Sutarwadi, Pashan, Someshwarwadi, Baner and Aundh, before the confluence with Mula, many people in Pune do not know about Ramnadi river. Littered and encroached upon, the river has been left in a pathetic condition.

The river gives three beautiful lakes of Khaptewadi, Pa-

shan and Manas to the city and around 3 lakh people are located at its banks.

Progress of RRM

"In the first three months, the organisations studied the river and divided it into nine stretches for surveying. After gathering detailed information about the challenges ahead, the partner

organisations adopted each of the stretches and the work began. Before that, we implemented direct

action plans at two locations - Khaptewadi and Ramnadi-Mula confluence," said Kirloskar Vasundhara Mission Ramnadi Restoration Coordinator Virendra Chitraw.

Khaptewadi lake, that was built in the year 1972, had never been cleaned since. "We cleaned the lake before monsoon and noticed that its capacity increased by 25 per cent after rainfall. The groundwater levels of the surrounding villages also saw a rise," he added.



CLEAN IT UP! A file photo of Ramnadi near DSK Ranwara in Bavdhan area of the city.

Ramnadi Parikrama

As most of the restoration work could not be carried out during monsoon, the organisations organised training programmes at colleges in the city from August onward.

"Around 6,000 students from different colleges participated in Ramnadi Parikrama during the period, where they saw the condition of the river throughout its length. The students from 15 colleges will now be presenting papers about the problems and solutions during the Kirloskar Vasundhara International Film Festival (KVIFF)," Chitraw said.

KVIFF, that will be held

from January 3 to 7, has announced '7 Steps for Ramnadi Restoration', where seven events have been organised to create awareness about the movement. On January 6, Pune citizens will be able to participate in Ramnadi Parikrama.

Impact of flood

As Ramnadi flooded this time, after several years, a panel of experts from RRM has conducted a study on the impact of this flood.

"The flood was one of the biggest challenges in front of RRM this year as it brought back a lot of garbage to the river. Also, a lot of the river-

bank was washed away due to the floods, taking away the trees that we had planted alongside. Now, we also have to clear those trees from the river," said Madhukar Dalvi of RRM.

Awareness necessary for restoration

"We began the restoration work in 2006, however, the work paced up in 2016. We focus on the 500-metre stretch in Someshwarwadi behind the Someshwar temple," Dalvi said.

While Dalvi and his volunteers have been creating awareness among locals about keeping the river clean, it is the outsiders, he said, that is the major challenge. "Since last two years, we have been educating the locals to give their garbage to the vehicles sent by the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC), instead of throwing it in the river. Now, around 70 to 80 per cent of the villagers support us. However, we have noticed that the people who come to visit the temple litter the most. Our volunteers take a lot of efforts to clean the river and

when they find more garbage in it again the next time, it is disheartening for them," he said.

Restoration of Ramnadi-Mula confluence

Ramnadi-Mula confluence was one of the earliest stretches restored under RRM. Every Sunday morning, volunteers from NGO Jeevitnadi gather at the confluence of rivers Ramnadi and Mula in Baner and clean the garbage there.

"We have been doing this for several months now and the impact has been very significant. With cleaning and tree plantation, the place has become serene. This year, we saw several migratory birds on the location. Since the cleaning work began, the local residents also began showing up in the area for their morning workout, dog walks, etc. I don't think anyone knew about this spot earlier. It's wonderful how a healthy river can create a beautiful ecosystem," said Shailaja Deshpande of Jeevitnadi.

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