

Civic body join hands with private agencies to revive 12 city ponds

HTIMPACT

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GURGAON: The municipal corporation will soon launch a project to rejuvenate shrinking waterbodies in rapidly urbanising Gurgaon over the next two years. The Municipal Corporation of Gurgaon (MCG) will revive 12 ponds, starting with the Basai pond on Sunday.

The move aims to revive dying ponds and to restore the diminishing water table in the city. The groundwater table has been depleting at an alarming 14.16 metres per year since 2005.

Last September, HT had highlighted the plight of the numerous water bodies in its series titled 'When Ponds Die'. Five ponds — in Basai, Jahajgarh, Ghata Jheel, Sukhrali and Jharsa — have almost disappeared due to encroachment in the catchment area and poor flow.

The MCG will start the rejuvenation project with the Basai pond on Sunday. This project has been designed by Future Institute, a non-profit open source applied urban research organisation, based in New Delhi. Beverage giant Coca-Cola will be one of the sponsors of the project.

"We will be reviving as many ponds as we can. Currently, we have a plan to restore 12 water bodies in a year and very soon we will carry out a similar plan for other ponds as well. The plan is to clear encroachments from the catchment area and clean these waterbodies," TL Satyaprakash, acting commissioner of the MCG, said.

Speaking about the techniques to be used to revive these water bodies, core mentor of Future Institute Sanjay Prakash said, "We are planning to implement certain techniques like floating islands to revive the dying water bodies. We will use species of plants that will purify water. Plants such as typha, arrow arum and canna can float on ponds on bamboo-like structures. We will use bio-chemical methods to revive water bodies that are

WHEN PONDS DIE



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extremely polluted."

"Some ponds such as Basai are reasonably healthy and need to be beautified to ensure that it becomes a community asset. Some other ponds are filthy. At least one such pond will be picked up next so that the water can be treated and returned to its natural state. We will also landscape the area and develop it into a public space," Prakash said.

This project is crucial as the Central Groundwater Board (CGWB) had categorised Gurgaon as 'over exploited', following

which the Punjab and Haryana high court banned groundwater extraction in the district. In 2013, the board reported that about 886 tubewells were sealed. It had also asked the Gurgaon deputy commissioner to check illegal boring in the region.

Despite all this, groundwater level continues to deteriorate, pointing to the ineffective execution of the HC ban. According to experts, the groundwater level depleted at an unexpected rate because natural water bodies were neglected.