

## Tenders to revive 200 water bodies next month

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The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government's flagship initiative to turn the national capital into the 'city of lakes' might have sounded farfetched back in 2018, when chief minister Arvind Kejriwal announced the project. The city, however, now is on its way to reviving 600 out of the total 1,000 water bodies that had either become local dumping grounds or lay severely polluted.



Officials of Delhi Jal Board (DJB), the city's water utility agency, said that the 'city of lakes' project now had 600 water bodies that will be revived in the coming years. Officials said that the tender for 150-200 among these will be floated in the next one month.

When the project was launched in 2018, the agency had enlisted just around 200 water bodies. Later, on the recommendation of local citizens, legislators and land-owning agencies, the DJB started adding more such local ponds, lakes and water reservoirs that will receive a facelift in the coming months.

" we will float tenders for the revival of 150-200 water bodies in a month. What we have done is that we have standardised the designs for the water bodies, which will ensure faster and more efficient work. Site specific tweaking of design will continue, when and where required," said Ankit Srivastava, technical advisor to DJB.

Srivastava added, "We are getting a lot of requests from local citizens and legislators to revive local ponds or lakes in their areas, but in many cases we have faced challenges like the said water body either not existing in government records or other residents in the area not wanting the water body to be revived there. Delhi has around 1,100 water bodies, out of which around 600 can be revived and we are working towards it."

A report prepared by Delhi Parks and Gardens Society in 2014, said that at least 200 out of 1,000 water bodies in Delhi were either encroached upon or lost because of excessive waste dumping or instances of land grabbing. It was noted in the report that water bodies were illegally turned into cremation grounds, government buildings, schools, and even private houses.

DJB officials said that the revival of water bodies in Delhi will perform the primary function of turning these into recharge points, which will help increase ground water levels in a radius of at least 4-5 kms around the revived water body.

A working example for this can be seen at the Dwarka sub-city, where a seven-acre barren land in Sector-16 was converted into a lake in seven months by the DJB. Treated water, to the tune of nearly 50 lakh litres, is currently being fed to the lake every day as the soil is absorbing large amounts of it. This according to experts is indicative of ground water getting recharged with this water, and is also a sign of large depletion of ground water in this region over years, which is now being regained.

Himanshu Thakkar, coordinator of South Asia Network on Dams, Rivers and People, said that this project will go a long way in increasing the city's depleting ground water levels.

"Historically Delhi was never barren, it had over 600 water bodies within the city itself, but these were wiped out due to intense urbanisation or waste dumping. Our aim should be to increase input into the ground and reduce extraction," Thakkar said.

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