

KEEP DAL LAKE CLEAN



The Dal Lake figures among the 93 sick lakes of the world. The pollution control board's report of 2003-2004 says that the Dal is dying slowly as pollutants are six to eight times more than the permissible limit (as prescribed by the central pollution control board). The report says factors like human settlements (60,000 people), hotels, houseboats, floating gardens, and even dhobi ghats are contributing to the lake's slow death. The lake has shrunk from 75 sq km to just 11.56 sq km.

The government has initiated a massive drive against the houseboat owners and hoteliers around Kashmir's famous Dal Lake, who are allegedly polluting the lake by its discharge of liquid and human waste.

The LAWDA is acting according to a February 26, 2009 high court order banning business of houseboats/hotels and commercial units responsible for polluting the lake. For thousands of houseboat owners and people of the Valley, the measures, however, mean throwing away a piece of history. With the houseboat owners not exactly cooperating, a court order has made them inoperable till they find proper ways of sewage treatment.

Raw sewage, land encroachment and years of neglect have been threatening the survival of the lake.

This icon of Kashmir tourism may vanish from travel itineraries as the Lakes and Waterways Development Authority (LAWDA), the nodal agency responsible for controlling pollution in the Dal Lake, has directed all houseboat owners to stop operation or face closure.

There are 1,200 houseboats registered, only 550 are operable.

The houseboat owners, however, have to take the onus of polluting the already polluted Dal Lake as they have refused for years to comply with the Pollution Control Board recommendations for proper waste disposal.

While the authorities are still experimenting with the treatment plans for the sewage, houseboat owners are reluctant to install even the plastic tanks for sewage collection. Their association claims many houseboat owners are poor and they can't afford the tanks.

HOW YHAI (Youth Hostels Association of India) CAN PLAY A POSITIVE ROLE?:

Mr. Mohd. Shafi Pandit, National President, YHAI in consultation with Dr. Harish K. Saxena, National Chairman, YHAI has recently filed an application to the court on behalf of Youth Hostels that there are modern technologies available for treatment of human waste with or without the use of water and without the use of chemicals, through a process of composting. YHAI can work as a catalyst in identifying such solutions. The honorable court has directed LAWWDA (Lake & Waterways Development Authority, Srinagar) to work with us on identification of such technology and implement the solution.

Accordingly, YHAI organized a meeting in Delhi with Sulabh International, Delhi which was attended by Dr. Bindeshwar Pathak, Founder, Sulabh International, Mr. MS Pandit, President, YHAI, Dr. Harish Saxena, National Chairman, YHAI, Mr. Arun Talwar, CEO, Mr. Kaul, Sup. Engineer, LAWWDA and other senior officials of Sulabh group. The problem and possible solutions were considered and it was agreed by Sulabh to send a 2-member team on 28th and 29th March 2009 to Srinagar to evaluate the problem. Next, 4-member team will be sent for one month to study and try different solutions in consultation with YHAI and LAWWDA in the houseboats.

YHAI has further decided to send volunteers who will sensitize the stakeholders about the problem and work as a catalyst for implementing possible solutions.

		
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