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LEDeG organises workshop for newly elected MUNICIPAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS



Members from Urban Local Bodies of Leh and Kargil districts took part in the two-day orientation workshop

Ladakh Ecological Development Group (LEDeG) in collaboration with Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC) Leh organised

a two-day orientation workshop on Municipal Committee- its roles and functions, under the Liveable Leh project, which is supported by the European Union and co-funded by

BMZ, at the Hotel Singge Palace in Leigh on November 29 and 30. The newly elected members of Municipal Committee Leh and Kargil attended the workshop.



Jamyang Tsering Namgyal, Chief Executive Councillor of LAHDC Leh was the chief guest for the occasion

Chief Executive Councillor of Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC) Leh Jamyang Tsering Namgyal and Deputy Commissioner Leh Avny Lavasa were the guests for the occasion.

The objective of the workshop was to inform the newly elected Municipal Committee members about the urban body, its functions, responsibilities, and delivery of public services. The Municipal members were also informed about the role of committee in improving infrastructure in a town, legal and institutional framework of the Municipal Committee, the need to create a vision document for their towns; and integrating the said functions with the New Urban Agenda.

The prominent speakers who spoke on relevant topics were Professor Mukesh Mathur, urban finance expert and former Professor at National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA); Dr VK Dhar, former Professor from National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA) & HUDCO chair, Fyaz Ahmed, Chief Town Planner of Jammu and Kashmir; Tikender Panwar, former deputy mayor of Shimla; Sonam Wangchuk, Ramon Magsaysay Award winner and founder

of Students' Educational and Cultural Movement of Ladakh (SECMOL); Anirudh Singh and Evita Das from Indo Global Social Service Society (IGSSS); Manas Rath, senior advisor at BORDA, and Anuj Malhotra, Director of Centre for Green Mobility.

Jamyang Tsering Namgyal, Chief Executive Councillor (CEC), LAHDC Leh, welcomed the newly elected members from Leh and Kargil and also the speakers. He shared that the Municipal Committee is a perfect platform to serve the people of Ladakh irrespective of their caste, religion and political party. He said the priority of the members of Municipal Committee should be to serve the people of Ladakh.

Moses Kunzang, Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Leh, thanked LEDeG for offering the members of Municipal Committee Leh and Kargil an opportunity to meet each other, and also to understand their roles and responsibilities. He added that the experts would show them the way and also bring clarity to their roles and responsibilities.

Dr VK Dhar gave the introductory speech in which



Moses Kunzang, Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Leh, interacts with the participants

he talked about urban areas and the main functions of a municipal committee. He shared that there is a 50 % reservation for women and gave the examples of women elected to the posts of members of Municipal Committee in Uttar Pradesh and Haryana. Dr Dhar said that the women were in veil when they first assumed the charge of a member of Municipal Committee. However, the veil was gone and the women were more confident to share their thoughts by the end of the fourth year of their term. They were aware of their responsibilities and were more vocal. Dr Dhar shared with the participants that the orientation course would help them in understanding their roles.

He then threw light on what constitutes an urban area and the information needed by the Municipal councillors. Dr Dhar said that Municipal councillors also need their own platform just as mayors. According to Dr Dhar, it is hard for the councillors to know the development activities being carried out in neighbouring cities such as Jammu, Srinagar or Lucknow. He said that the councillors need exposure and they also need to interact with each other and gain knowledge in the relevant field. He added that the

councillors need to form a group and share their works with each other.

He further defined the role of ward councillors, urban local government, the purpose of Municipal governance, the structure of a Nagar Palika, responsibility of Municipal Committee, roles and functions of the elected councillors and source of revenue for the elected body.

Post-tea, Dr Mukesh Mathur informed the participants about the 74th Constitutional Amendment. The 74th Amendment gives complete autonomy to urban bodies like corporations and municipalities. It states that they should be able to manage on their own, and shouldn't be a subsidiary of the state government. He said that Dharavi in Mumbai is a perfect example of urbanism in India and termed it as a self-contained urban area. Dr Mukesh shared that Rajiv Gandhi, who is credited with laying the foundation of Panchayati Raj institutions in order to take democracy to the grassroots level and also gave impetus to the 74th Constitution Amendment, sanctioned a grant of Rs 100 crore to Bombay, of which a substantial amount was allocated to Dharavi to redevelop some of its parts.



Professor VK Dhar; Dr Mukesh Mathur (right) share information about Municipal Committee urban areas and urban finance with the participants

Dr Mukesh also added that the recommendations of the 14th Finance Commission are still prevalent in parts of India. He informed the participants about the overlapping of functions between the District Planning Committee (DPC) and Metropolitan Planning Committee (MPC). He said the role of development authorities and parastatal bodies in the new set-up is not defined.

He rued the lack of a management information system (MIS) and said the majority is not in favour of implementing the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act. He said the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) has listed down 23 mandatory reforms, but the majority are yet to achieve those goals.

He made certain recommendations: the recruitment rules should be charged and the process should be streamlined and work as a business. He also stressed the need for the local body institutions to understand recruitment policy and also to form pressure groups to achieve their objectives. He highlighted that the objective of the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act was to form a decentralised government with the aim to provide quality service.

He also urged that the state government should hold local bodies' elections regularly, especially in Jammu and Kashmir and North Eastern states.

Post-lunch, Fyaz Ahmed, chief town planner of Jammu and Kashmir, spoke about the role of Municipal Committee members, the role of the executive, and salient features of Jammu & Kashmir Municipal Act 2000. He said that only five towns from Jammu and Kashmir qualified for AMRUT schemes, including Leh and Kargil. He shared that there

should be a representative-possibly from the Municipal Committee of Leh and Kargil, to build upon the central government-funded scheme.

He also requested the organisers of the event to simplify the J&K Municipal Act 2000. He said that despite being termed as one of the most beautiful places on earth, Srinagar stands at 100th rank in the most desirable places to visit. He said that it showed the flaws in the city. He said it is the responsibility of the members of Municipal Committee to meet the expectations of the people and provide better services.

He also stressed the need to have a Master Plan for the city. He said that although Kargil has already prepared a Master Plan, it could still be improved. Fyaz said that tax collection and generation of revenue should be the priority of the Municipal Committee members. He also encouraged the Municipal members to collect taxes from the tourists visiting Leh and asked them to use that money for the development of the town. He further added that the Town Planning Organising department of the state has invited tender for the Leh Master Plan.

Thereafter, ADC Leh Moses Kunzang shared the development works carried out by the district administration and LAHDC. He said the majority of the programmes under UIDSSMT are almost complete. He said the tender for Sewage Treatment Plant (STOPP) has already been processed and the work will begin next year. He said that Rs 42 crore under AMRUT scheme would be used to construct a multi-tier parking area in the heart of Leh town. He added that the work on Changspa Street will finish next year. Moses shared that the government will adopt animal



The elected members of Municipal Committee Leh during a group discussion

birth control (ABC) programme to check the menace of street dogs. He said that a new route from SNM Hospital to Cheetah Chowk and from Chandu Market to Polo Ground will be used to ease the flow of traffic on these roads. He further added that 100 Kanal of land was provided for the taxi stand to decongest the traffic.

He also shared information on earmarking a separate place for butchers, promoting Old Leh Town as heritage town, inaugurating toilets at Zangsti and Bus Stand, construction of a park near the main branch of J&K Bank, installation of 'black hole' at Bomb Garh to clear the solid waste, and construction of a slaughter house.

Sonam Chosjor, the Additional Commissioner Revenue (ACR) who also holds the additional post of administrator Kargil Municipal Committee, shared the Kargil story with the participants. He said that the people of Kargil town have lots of expectation from the newly elected members of the Municipal Committee. He informed that Rs 90 lakh is generated in Kargil town through entry fee charged from taxi drivers. He also highlighted issues concerning the Kargil Municipal Committee, including traffic congestion, sewage system, solid waste management, unplanned construction and water supply.

The participants were then divided into four groups to perform a group activity. Each group was asked to list down the projects/activities needed in their respective towns.

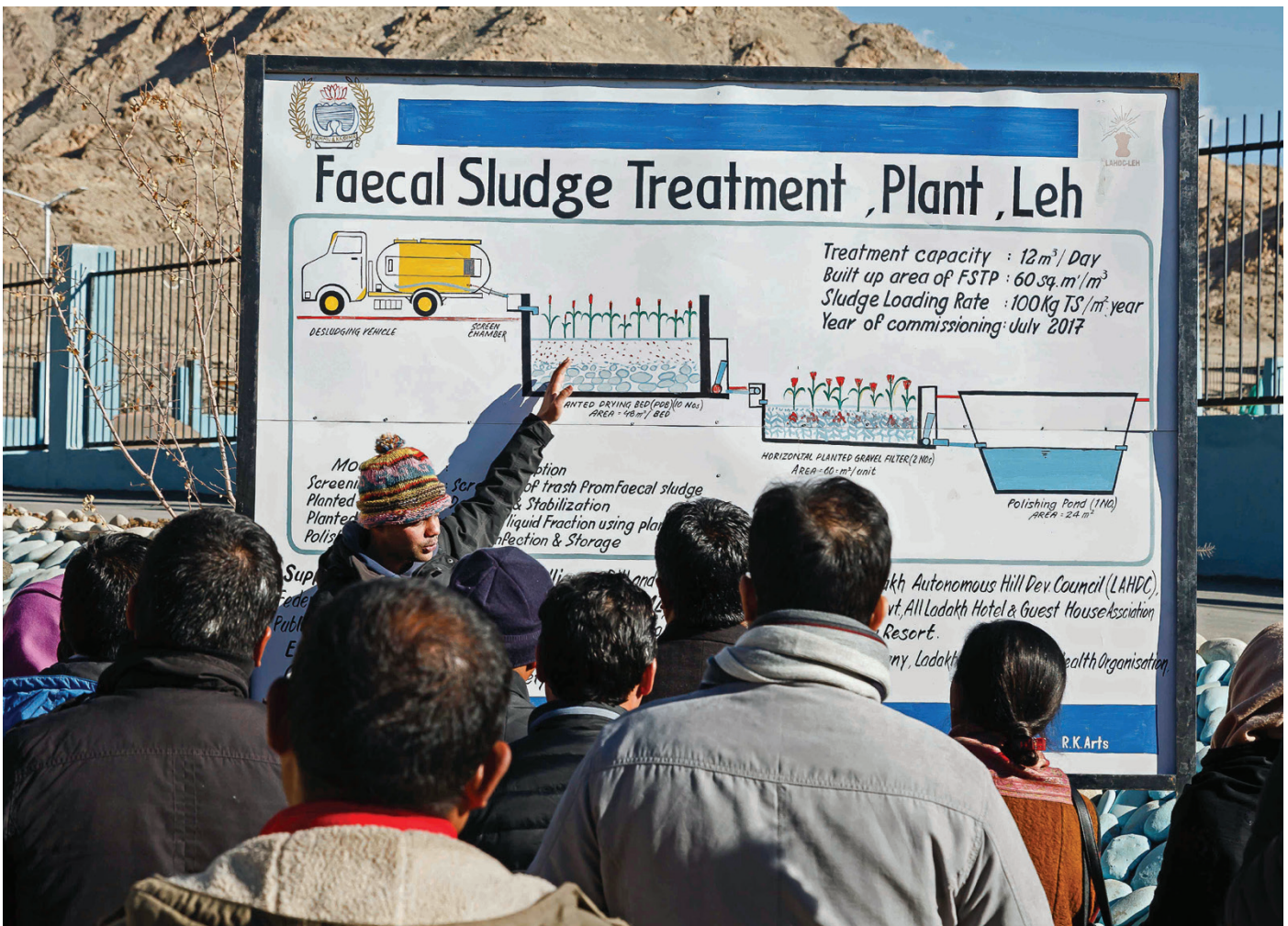
Post-tea, Tikender Panwar talked about the role of elected representatives in the development of a town. He asked the Municipal Committee members to intervene and work for the betterment of the city. He asked the Municipal

Committee Leh members to participate actively in the preparation of a Master Plan for Leh town. He also said that the Municipal Committee staff should be empowered and the chairman should write the executive's ACR.

He said the people of Leh town should not be too reliant on water lifted from Indus River and instead look to utilise gravity-flow water. He also advised the people of Leh not to abandon traditional systems of harvesting water. He added that the main objective of the Municipal members should be generating income for the department. Tikender also asked the MC members to promote pedestrianisation in the town.

The penultimate session was taken by Professor Mukesh Mathur as he talked about understanding municipal finance for small municipalities. He shared with the participants the major sources of income for ULBs, including taxes and non-taxes, grants, etc. He said that the municipal committee has to consider the selection of value capture financing (VCF) tools and also take care of the budget. He also talked about different types of budgets.

The first day ended with a session on happy cities by Sonam Wangchuk. He screened a video on happy cities and then asked the participants to list down the things which they like and dislike about Leh and Kargil towns. He said that Leh is an example to other Himalayan cities and the only solution to overcome the problem of rampant urbanisation was to create a twin city. He also made certain recommendations to make Leh an attractive city: maintain and preserve the USP of Ladakh, houses should be powered by solar energy and windows should have double wall to trap the solar heat.



Snehit Prakash, coordinator, FSM, informs participants about the working of FSTP during the field visit to Bomb Garh

Day 2 began with a session on the 74th Constitutional Amendment by Anirudh Singh and Evita Das from Indo Global Social Service Society. They talked about the Nagar Raj Bill Act, Mohalla Sabha, the constituency of Mohalla Sabha, Mohalla Committee- its functions, duties and powers, and ward committee. Manas Rath from BORDA took a session on the importance of water supply and the role of a committee member in which he also talked about the current water scenario in Leh.

Post-tea, he and Tikender Panwar took a session on urban amenities. Both of them talked about financial resources, tariff, key performance indicator (KPI), objectives, delegated management model, lifting water from the Indus River, water freeze in winters in Ladakh, and storage capacity of the tanks.

Rigzin Spalgon, the administrator of Municipal Committee Leh, shared the Leh story with the participants. He talked about the functioning of toilets in peak tourist seasons and winters, construction of public parks- lessons learnt from mistakes, and the number of cars plying on the roads in Leh.

Post-lunch, the participants went for a field visit to FSTP at Bomb Garh, Changspa Street and the public convenience at Zangsti.

Anuj Malhotra took the last session as he talked about mobility and administration. He shared the details and designs on Changspa Street. He added that pedestrians should be given priority ahead of cars and the need to connect the intersections to connect the loop around Leh town. He said the center of Leh town should be completely pedestrianised, but also conceded the challenges to achieve the objective. He also advised the Municipal members to work on a comprehensive mobility plan of Leh town.

Avny Lavasa, Deputy Commissioner Leh, also joined the workshop and shared that the Municipal members should make the most of the workshop and she exuded confidence that the new Municipal team will perform well. She said the benefit of local people would be decided by Municipal Committee and also stressed the need to prepare a vision document.

ONE-DAY WORKSHOP ON O&M OF DUCTILE PIPES

LEDeG organises the event for PHE workers



The workers and officials of Public Health Engineering (PHE) Department Leh pose for a group photo

Ladakh Ecological Development Group in collaboration with Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC) Leh and Bremen Overseas Research and Development Association (BORDA) organised a one-day workshop for operations and maintenance of ductile iron pipes and household service connection under the Liveable Leh project which is supported by European Union and co-funded by BMZ, at Sheynam Community Hall on November 26.

The prominent officers present during the workshop were NN Raina, Executive Engineer, PHE; Tashi Dorje, AEE, PHE, and Iftikar Ahmad, AE, PHE.

The meeting was attended by more than 50 linemen and workers of the Public Health Engineering (PHE) Department, Leh. The objective of the workshop was to make the PHE workers and linemen familiar with the working of ductile iron pipes as all the existing pipes in Leh town are being replaced with more durable ductile iron pipes for more than 1,000 public stand posts (PSP) and 4,500 house connections.

Under the Urban Infrastructure Development Scheme for Small and Medium Towns (UIDSSMT) which was launched in 2014, the following schemes were included in Leh town: building an intake well for groundwater at two points in the Indus flood plains to increase the current supply, constructing five new water reservoirs, replacing all existing pipes with more durable ductile iron pile pipes for 1,000 public stand posts and 4,500 home connections and lastly, laying a piped sewerage.

Ductile iron pipe is a pipe made of ductile cast iron commonly used for potable water transmission and distribution. This type of pipe is a direct development of earlier cast iron pipe, which it has superseded.

Assistant Executive Engineer S Kariyappa from Karnataka Urban Water Supply and Drainage Board, Hubli, gave a presentation on maintenance of ductile iron (DI) pipes. Kariyappa cited three reasons for leakages in DI pipes: failure of joints, corrosion of pipes, and third-party damages.

He explained the reasons for the failure of joints to the



(From right) Tenzin Motup, event manager, LEDeG; Kantilal Patil and Kiran Sarode from Kimplas Piping; S Kariyappa, AEE Karnataka Urban Water Supply and Drainage Board, Hubli; and officials from PHE Department Leh during the one-day workshop

workers and linemen of PHE Department Leh. He said the reasons were the failure of rubber gasket, improper insertion of pipe in the socket, improper alignment of the joint, and settlement of soil. He shared that corrosion could happen to pipes that were laid in waterlogged areas and those pipes that were in contact with sewage water.

Kariyappa said that most of the pipes are damaged due to the third party while laying telephone cables, power cables, gas pipes, widening of roads, constructing surface drains, etc.

He also provided solutions to these problems. He said that that joint leakage could be rectified by cutting pushed out the gasket and putting the gasket back to its original place using caulking tools. Once the gasket is repositioned, Kariyappa said lead wool should be filled around the joint and caulking with the use of tools.

To overcome leakages of pipes due to corrosion, Kariyappa

suggested excavation of trenches at leakage spots to identify the extent of corrosion and then marking the length of the pipe that needs to be replaced. He said the portion of the corroded pipe should be cut and mechanical joints should be inserted on either side of the existing pipe before lowering and aligning the new pipe piece. Thereafter place the mechanical joints in the new pipe and then align and tighten it with nuts and bolts. Once the pipe is rectified, allow the flow of water to check water tightness and refill the pipe once everything is analysed.

In case of damage to pipes from a third party, Kariyappa said that the spot from where leakages are reported should be excavated and then the nature of the damage should be ascertained. The damaged pipe should be marked and cut at both ends. Mechanical joints should be inserted on both the sides of the existing pipe before it is lowered and aligned



Kiran Sarode gives a demonstration of the functioning of the pipes manufactured by Kimpas Piping to the participants during the one-day workshop on the operations and maintenance of ductile iron pipes and household service connection for PHE workers in Leh

with the new pipe. The new pipe itself should be attached to the mechanical joint and then aligned and tightened with nuts and bolts.

Kariyappa informed to the PHE workers and linemen that in cases of extension of the branches, a tee should be provided. He added that the process of excavation should be initiated and the length of the DR pipe from the tee should be marked following which the marked portion should be cut at both ends of the pipe. Mechanical joints should be inserted on either side of the existing pipe and then the DI Tee should be lowered and aligned.

He also showed photographs and played videos of the process involved in these activities so that the PHE workers and linemen could enhance their learnings from the workshop.

Then, Kiran Sarode and Kantilal M Patil from Kimplas Piping, a Nashik-based equipment manufacturer for the micro-irrigation and auto industries, informed about the newest technology available in the market. The company set-up in 1996 is a manufacturer of electrofusion, compression fittings, valves and proprietary equipment for micro-irrigation industry. Post-lunch, they also demonstrated the functioning of the pipes manufactured by the company in which female participants also put Tee extensions on the ductile pipes.

Tashi Dorje, AEE, PHE Department Leh, thanked LEDeG and BORDA for organising the event and also expressed their gratitude to the three experts for providing information and training to the workers from their department. Tenzin Motup, event manager of LEDeG, gave the vote of thanks.

LEDEG SANITATION TEAM WINS AWARD

Bags first prize at AMRUT Technology Challenge



(From left) Snehit Prakash, Tamchos Gurmet and Rigzin Spalgon, Administrator, Municipal Committee Leh, receive award from Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment Ramdas Athawale in New Delhi

The sanitation team of Ladakh Ecological Development Group (LEDeG) along with the Municipal Committee Leh (MCL) won the first position at AMRUT Technology Challenge, which was organized by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs on November 19 at New Delhi. The award was presented by Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment Ramdas Athawale. The award also included

a cash prize of Rs 500,000 and the opportunity to pilot the solution in other urban local bodies (ULB).

The sanitation team works under the Liveable Leh project, which is supported by the European Union and co-funded by BMZ. The faecal sludge management team has been operating a Faecal Sludge Treatment Plant (FSTP) in Leh since August 2017.

THE TECHNOLOGY

The sanitation team spent Rs 2.5 lakh to repair the desludging truck. However, the team could not provide desludging service to 62 percent of the calls received from the customers due to lower head created by the vacuum pump (the truck would only do desludging from a horizontal distance of 20 feet and a vertical height of 5 feet) and also due to the inaccessibility of the truck to narrow streets.

As the narrow streets were not inaccessible, the septic tanks were emptied through manual scavenging, which involves people entering into the septic tanks and cleaning the sludge using buckets and shovels. The private players charged Rs 3,500 per trip as fixed by MCL. The owners of the hotels have to pay more during peak tourist season to empty the overflowing septic tanks.

The sanitation team of LEDeG developed a double boosting pumping station to address the issue of inaccessibility and manual scavenging.

The technology is a simple and low-cost method to empty septic tanks located in narrow streets. It costs less than Vacutug (\$7,000) and Gulper (\$2,000)- technologies that are currently used to access narrow streets and are easy to transport and requires less manpower. The technology eliminates the need for manual scavenging, increases

accessibility to narrow streets, and enables desludging from a distance up to 500 feet and a height of more than 15 feet.

The technology developed by the LEDeG Sanitation team involves a trash pump (Honda SWT – 30) which is connected to the inlet of a suction truck through valves, fixtures and flexible pipes. The suction truck is parked at the head of the narrow street. The trash pump is then dismantled and taken to the location (sometimes up to 500 feet from the street head) of the desludging in a wheelbarrow. The trash pump is placed at the head of the septic tank which needs to be emptied and is connected to the inlet of the vacuum truck through a flexible pipe.

The fixtures and valves ensure there is no leakage of sludge in the pipe and valve joints. The trash pump is switched on. The sludge is sucked through its inlet and transferred to the vacuum truck through its outlet. Once the septic tank is empty, the trash pump is turned off and remounted on the truck after transporting back on the wheelbarrow. The collected sludge is transported and discharged from the vacuum truck at the FSTP for treatment and reuse.

The pump has a foot valve which prevents entry of large solid waste. Its discharge capacity of 900 litres/min ensures that the sludge can be transferred to the vacuum truck even when placed at a height of 9 feet below the truck.

	FEATURE	ADVANTAGES
Operational effectiveness	Increased desludging capability: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> from 20 feet to 500 feet accessibility to very narrow streets 	Better end-user receptiveness, higher plant utilisation rates, higher end-user outreach
	Easy operation and maintenance, easy to procure and locally repairable.	Low manpower requirement, lower lifecycle costs, lesser downtime due to breakdown and repair.
	Completely mechanised	Eliminates the need for manual entry into the pits
Adaptability	Low cost – Rs 50,000, available in India and easy to use	Affordable and easy to procure by Urban Local Bodies
Flexibility	Can be used in varied terrains and geo-climatic conditions	Enables desludging on slopes and hilly areas

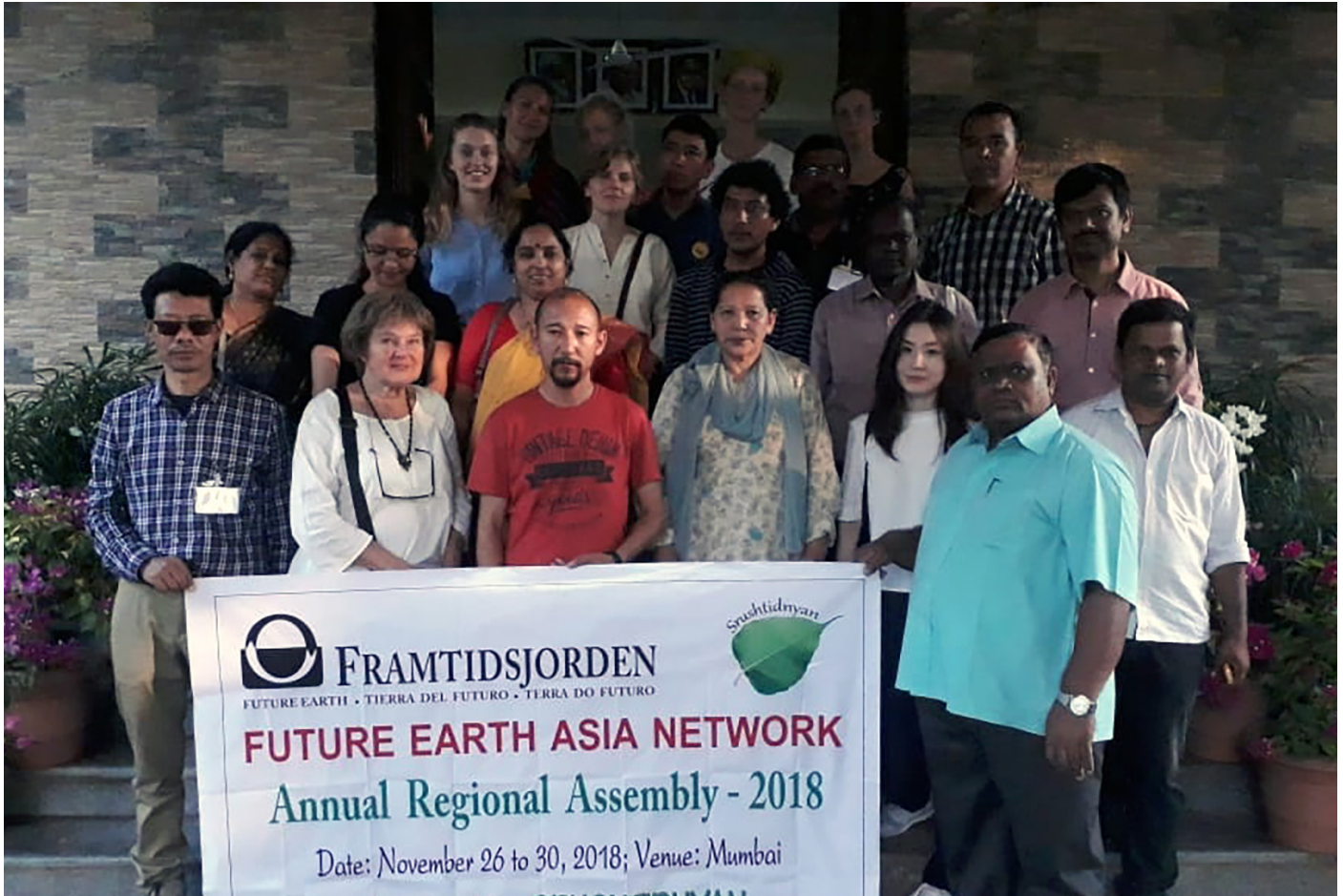
The double boosting system was tested in Leh town in April this year. The initial pilot-run was 172 feet from the road head (distance between locations of vacuum truck which couldn't enter the narrow lane to the mouth of the septic tank)

The double-boosting technology has since been used for desludging septic tanks/other containment units at a distance of more than 30 feet from the truck. The

double boosting system is used mainly for desludging households and guesthouses compared to larger commercial establishments like airports and army cantonment areas which have sufficient space for the vacuum truck to enter and turn.

More than 650 desludging has been conducted at the Leh FSTP from April to October out of which 200 have been done using the double boosting system.

LEDeG representatives attend FUTURE EARTH ASIA REGIONAL ASSEMBLY



Two representatives from Ladakh Ecological Development Group- Dr Nordan Otzer, executive director, and Stanzin Chonjor, coordinator of agriculture team, participated in the three-day Future Earth Asia Regional Assembly at The YWCA International Centre in Mumbai from November 26 to 28.

The objective of the regional assembly was to review the ongoing and upcoming projects of various organizations that are working closely with Future Earth. Also, the assembly focused on strengthening the network of various NGOs and also highlight the participation and contribution to the network.

Sangeeta and Kunal from Srushtidnyan inaugurated the opening session and welcomed the participants. It was followed by an introduction round to help the participants become familiar with each other.

Post-lunch, the participants gave a presentation on

the activities carried out by the organisation and also the outcomes of those activities. Once the presentations were over, the participants discussed about a common project activity of each organisation. There was also a question and answer session. The participants then reviewed the decisions made during the previous assembly meeting. There was also a discussion to strengthen the network.

There was a review session on reporting and auditing of the activities carried out by the various organisations in 2017. New instructions for auditing for the current year was incorporated into the meeting and changes were suggested by the participants. The participants also discussed their plans for the upcoming year and also confirmed the continuation of 'Friend Group projects' from 2019 to 2021. Keeping in view the planning for future endeavours, the budget for the future projects were also handed out.

Post-lunch, there was a session on building capacity of

the network and review of capacity building in concerned areas as discussed last year during the Regional Assembly. There was also discussion among the participants to focus safety guidelines issued by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) and also follow up with all the Future Earth members of Participatory Guarantee Systems Organic Council (PGSOC).

The concluding session of the second day was a programme for volunteers. The participants stressed the importance and benefits of volunteers. Later, representatives from organisations gave a presentation to the volunteers

and also shared their experiences with them. Later, the participants discussed about the best methods to develop volunteer programmes and utilising volunteers in the best possible way.

The overall performance of the regional climate group (RCG) was reviewed on the last day of the assembly. The participants also gave their feedback. An election was also held to elect new members. The participants also decided to delegate responsibility and follow the timeline of action plans. The participants also visited the Meteorology Department at Colaba.



A WALK IN THE PARK? NOT SO EASY AS FESTIVALS TAKE OVER GREEN SPACES

Source: The Guardian

Cash-strapped councils are allowing more and more fenced-off events – to the dismay of locals

As summer temperatures threaten to set new records, there are few better places to escape the stifling indoor heat than your local park. Yet growing numbers of people are finding their park has been fenced off for weeks to host a music festival.

By the end of the summer, public parks will have hosted more than 100 events, many for the first time – a vast increase over the past decade.

About half of Finsbury Park in north London is fenced off between May and October, with nine events listed on efestivals.co.uk. Sefton Park in Liverpool has regular events, which force some of the residents of surrounding tower blocks to leave their homes. Kelvingrove Park in Glasgow, Moseley Park in Birmingham and Brockwell Park in south London all have at least two events taking place this summer.

“It feels like it’s getting worse,” said Kate Ashbrook, general secretary of the Open Spaces Society. “Obviously the public is banned from the park, not just during the event but for significant periods before and after, and the

organisers often leave a terrible mess. Then there’s the noise and the traffic that’s generated. For people who live in flats, this is the only place they can go to get out of the house and enjoy a safe, lovely, natural environment.”

The growth in festivals and other events at public parks is the result of swingeing budget cuts in local government. An inquiry into parks by MPs on the communities and local government committee found that 92% of councils had cut budgets, with Newcastle upon Tyne reducing spending by 97% over five years.

Helen Monger, director of the London Parks and Gardens Trust, said councils were not legally obliged to maintain parks, unlike museums and libraries. Creating a statutory provision would help, she said.

“Local authorities are being incentivised to privatise their parks by the back door to try and cover maintenance costs,” she said. “You’ll end up with local authorities dedicating one or two parks as income generators and they just get festivals



week in week out, and the rest will not be maintained and will gradually become dustbowls, developed on, or encouraging antisocial behaviour.” Some councils, including Newcastle, were considering outsourcing park management to charities, she said, but that simply shifted the problem.

“Either it becomes like the Vauxhall Pleasure Gardens of old and you charge people an entrance fee, or you still have the problem of having to raise money, so you run festivals.”

Over the past few years there have been several legal battles where park campaigners have managed to stop new festivals and events. The London Parks and Gardens Trust and Open Spaces Society challenged plans for an open-air theatre and cinema screen in Victoria Embankment Gardens on the Thames in 2016, and Formula E electric motor racing no longer takes place in Battersea Park, south London, after local opposition.

Not all have been successful. Last week attempts by the Friends of Finsbury Park to cap the number of times councils can fence off a public space were finally defeated

when the supreme court refused a last appeal.

“The largest part of the park has been closed since the beginning of May and it won’t be properly open again until October,” said Simon Hunt, chairman of the group. “Nearly every weekend there is something on. We started to get seriously concerned when it wasn’t an occasional concert once or twice a year.

“It has turned into a commercial venue. It has reached the point now where it’s closed for a good three or four months of the summer. It can no longer be called a park.” The group is considering challenging the licences of event organisers and arguing that the prolonged nature of the events breaches trust law.

Some find a more sympathetic hearing. The Sefton Park Community Association fought Liverpool city council over concerts in the park on noise grounds, but Bob Marais, an association board member, said councillors had listened to the protests and reduced traffic congestion from events such as the Liverpool International Music Festival.

THE POWER OF SUN

Peter, Melissa, Ludivine and Tristan- four filmmakers from Les Films au Clair de Lune, a film association based in France- shot a documentary film, Nyimey Shugs (The Power of Sun), in Leh from October 21 to November 10. Ladakh Ecological Development Group (LEDeG) was their supporting agency in Leh.

Les Films au Clair de Lune, or films clair de lune, is an organisation that has been working since 2012 to provide audio-visual service for associations and share their innovative approaches and inspire everyone. They raise awareness among the public on themes such as health, environment and education.

Nyimey Shugs is about the discovery of power of sunlight, technologies used to capture solar energy and its vast potential. The documentary aims to promote renewable energy in the Himalayan belt, especially Ladakh.

The main protagonists of the documentary are two children from different villages of Ladakh who go missing for a day in the unrelenting and cold weather in winters. Both these kids, who lived in a passive solar home, realised the hard life in winters and also the effort and energy that goes into collecting wood and fuel to keep their rooms warm. They wondered how, despite the rich abundance of solar energy at their disposal, the people of Ladakh were ignorant about this rich energy source.

Later, other children from that villager, including the two lost kids, visit Ladakh Ecological Development Group (LEDeG) Office at Karzoo, an organisation that works in the field of renewable energy, to gather more information and also to seek support on construction of passive solar homes.

In the end, an active solar space heating system is set up in a house in Stakna village to inspire the villagers to construct such more houses.



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