

## Haritha Haram: A directionless novel project?

By Valentine Wilson

June 15, 2015, | THE HANS INDIA

The much-anticipated 'rain dance' is all set to herald the monsoons. But the authorities of Haritha Haram are out of step. The thunder and lightning with which Chief Minister K

Chandrasekhar Rao sowed his ambitious plans to regenerate the green cover in the new State is yet to find rhythm. Like the Kakatiya Mission, the Haritha Haram was TRS supremo's novel project.



This was one of the few most innovative and genuinely welcomed ideas. The music has begun but where is the orchestra? The city's green cover has been denuded by more than half, thanks to haphazard town planning. Here, the blame should be placed on the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC). Just look at the parks, which are mandatory in every lay-out.

Very few are well maintained because of the initiatives taken by local residents. Before the advent of the monsoons, the GHMC activates its horticulture cell and goes on a sapling plantation spree on footpaths all over the city. But not many survive because of total lack of monitoring.



The Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority (HMDA) on the other hand monitors the greenways on the highway, particularly on the Medchal and Shamshabad Airport roads. The landscaping on the Shamshabad road in particular is exquisite and exotic.

The flower beds and greenery are soothing to the eyes and provide a calming effect. They maintain these areas all year round, watering, providing manure and trim it. The HMDA had taken up urban forestry on the medians and tracts on many routes on the outskirts long back. Some of these areas have thick foliage, but more needs to be done.

Now with the Hyderabad Metro Rail also promising to provide greenery under their carriageways, it should add to the greenery. The State horticulture department along the GHMC, which is responsible for the city's beautification, should have started the sapling plantations by now.

In fact the World Environment Day celebrated recently would have been an ideal occasion to launch this well meaning assignment. True the heat wave conditions were terrible this

season, all the same they had missed a golden opportunity. Even then, there is still some more time before the monsoon gathers pace.

The forest department also has their task cut out. If it is really serious, a massive reforestation effort is required in 23 lakh hectares across the new State. Farm labour under the NREGS, students and voluntary organisations should be given the responsibility. This should also be a long term plan. In Maharashtra, it was a delight to see cricketing icon Sachin Tendulkar planting saplings along with a few other cricketers. Like the Swachh Hyderabad programme, a laudable initiative, the government should ask households to plant at least five trees each this year in their compounds.

True, with the city becoming a concrete jungle because of multistoried buildings coming up, the concept of open gardens are a bygone luxury. Some apartments have recognised the importance of greenery and have incorporated lush landscapes and exotic terrace gardens. But these are very few. It is learnt that the Andhra Pradesh government had planned a similar initiative, but ran short of



saplings. They had requested some neighbouring States to provide them with saplings. The Telangana Government had a target of 130 crore saplings, but whatever has happened to this great plan, no one knows.

A big chunk was to be planted in the forest area and the remaining in non forest areas, including industries, schools and other projects. In the past, pits would be dug up on footpaths and just as the rains arrived, saplings would be planted with tree guards around it. Some would survive but majority would wither, because of lack of proper watering and monitoring.

The government has to take a leaf from the army units in the cantonment area. How well they plan and keep extending their green cover? The temperature in this area is noticeably lesser than the rest of the city. Of course they have the manpower. But the GHMC can have a separate wing or organise volunteers to monitor the growth of these plants.

The forest cover area is a little above 25 per cent and it is the endeavour of the government to increase it to the desired 33 per cent in the next three years. This will help in the ecological balance tremendously. Here is an interesting snippet where 35,000 Ecuadoreans volunteered to plant over 3.5 lakh tree seeds last month, breaking a Guinness World Record in the process.

Seeds were planted across the country in a massive reforestation effort, confirmed as unprecedented by Carlos Martinez, director of the Latin-American branch of World Guinness Records. The Telangana Government needs to emulate if not better the Ecuadorans. One remembers how salubrious Hyderabad climate was,

because of thousands of huge sixty seventy year old banyan trees.

When the flyovers were coming up two decades ago, all these huge old trees were uprooted on the Sardar Patel Road. In the olden days when one travelled towards Shamirpet or Medak, the road were lined with mighty banyan trees that bent across the road and provided a canopy of cool shade for motorists, but with increase in population and haphazard town planning, a lot of green cover was removed.

This summer should be an eye opener for everyone who want to cut down the greenery. Global warm and greenhouse gas emissions have seriously disturbed the climatic conditions. A city of lakes once, Hyderabad is aspiring to become a Garden City. The Haritha Haraam is still a long way before it blooms. Will it be the "promised land" or a boulevard of broken dreams? Only time will tell.

**Source:**

<http://www.thehansindia.com/posts/index/2015-06-15/Haritha-Haram-A-directionless-novel-project-157228>