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'70,000 tonnes of garbage cleared'

CHENNAI: The Adyar Poonga will be ready in another 15 months, after two years of work in and around Adyar lake, Joss Brooks, director of Pitchandikulam Bio-resource centre said here on Saturday while narrating his experiences in working on the Adyar Poonga.

He was speaking at the Seventh Samanvaya Freedom Lecture jointly organised by CIOSA on Gardening for Freedom held at Vidya Sagar (formerly Spastic society of India).

Screening images of the Adyar Poonga project, he explained how tedious and interesting the project was to transform desecrated mother nature into a garden.

“A year ago, Adyar poonga was dumped with garbage.

Even as we started our work, tonnes of rubble were dumped in the place overnight,” he recalled, as he displayed a picture.

The team that is working on the poonga eventually removed 70,000 tonnes of garbage and has been restoring it by planting saplings.

Joss and his team have also signed an agreement with the government to maintain the poonga for two years.

“A lot of IT companies including Infosys have been approaching us to create an ecofriendly atmosphere and it is their knowledge that is interesting,” continues Joss.

Joss, an Australian, now settled at Auroville has taken similar restoration of wetlands at Anna University pond and Otteri dumping ground.

“We have not used any cement to even make park benches and our objective is to restore bio diversity, not build concretes like you see in Anna Nagar park where they are still spending another Rs three crores,” he said.

He displayed images of similar situation, when he went to stay at Auroville and its transformation to a green environment. The Pitchandikulam bio-resource centre was started in 2003 in a government school known to be the worst in the State with less pass percentage. Since then, the students were involved with planting sapling in and around the school.

“Today, we have around 800 species of plants and 300 medicinal herbs besides having 2000 trees in the school,” he said.

Joss also displayed images of the greenery at various places he visited across the world including Tasmania, Ethiopia, Turkey, Thiruvannamalai and Himalayas. To him, bringing back a garden is bringing harmony to a sustainable life which is ultimate freedom and that can be achieved only if there is discipline among the public.