# KOREAN WATER SPECIALIST
## at The Chennai Water Forum

If you are curious about questions relating to water and urbanism, then *The Chennai Water Forum* is the place to be! Over three days, scientists, urban planners, architects, academics, activists, artists, NGOs and proactive citizens will come at this conference together to share their experiences, to listen, to learn…

Asked by the newspaper, The Hindu, what the key shifts in water management were, the water policy expert Mihir Shah, head of several reform committees says: *One, we must take a multidisciplinary view of water. We require professionals from disciplines other than just engineering and hydrogeology. Two, we need to adopt the participatory approach to water management that has been successfully tried all over the world…* (The Hindu, Aug.19, 2016). This quotation describes precisely how the Goethe-Institut Chennai, Germany's cultural institute - along with many partner organizations including InKo Centre and Confluence Ten - intends to focus on water for projects that encourage international cultural collaboration.

The Chennai Water Forum will be an open platform that aims to address the issue of water from a multidisciplinary and transversal approach. Three days of participatory workshops, panel discussions and presentations will bring together a cross-section of people from of varied backgrounds as well as experts in water management, to create a new dialogue on water.

The forthcoming Forum aims to maximize audience participation in order to be as participative and inclusive as possible. While the "Practices / Experiences" sessions present case studies from elsewhere, the "My City My Water - Citizens in Action" section aims to present various water-related initiatives mooted by civil society and local NGO's. With more than 50 experts and participants from India, Germany and Korea, The Chennai Water Forum promises to ask some hard questions and evolve a new perspective on water.

**The Chennai Water Forum**

**Venue: Kalakshetra Foundation | Date: 6, 7 and 8 of October 2016 | Time: 9 am onwards**

For more information please visit https://www.facebook.com/embraceourriverschennai/ or call T: +91 44 2833 1314, 2343
To register, please e-mail: Herrmann.Gita@Chennai.goethe.org or Seema.Massot@Chennai.goethe.org

**We are delighted to invite Dr Yang Yoon Jae, former Vice-Mayor of Seoul Metropolitan Governement who was closely involved in the historic Cheonggyechon Restoration Project in Seoul. Dr Yang will make a presentation and lead an interactive workshop to share the challenges and successful implementation of this project that continues to be hailed as one of the finest examples of best practice in river restoration projects, worldwide.**

### About Dr Yang , Yoon-Jae

Dr Yang Yoon Jae completed his B.Arch from Seoul National University in 1974 and graduated from the Graduate School of Environmental Studies, Seoul National University in 1975. He went on complete his MArch from the Illinois University of Techonology, USA, in 1978 following which he completed his MLA from Harvard University, USA. A very distinguished professional, Dr Yang was, as Vice-Mayor of Seoul Metropolitan Government, closely involved in the historic Cheonggyechon Restoration Project in Seoul and several important water projects in Korea.

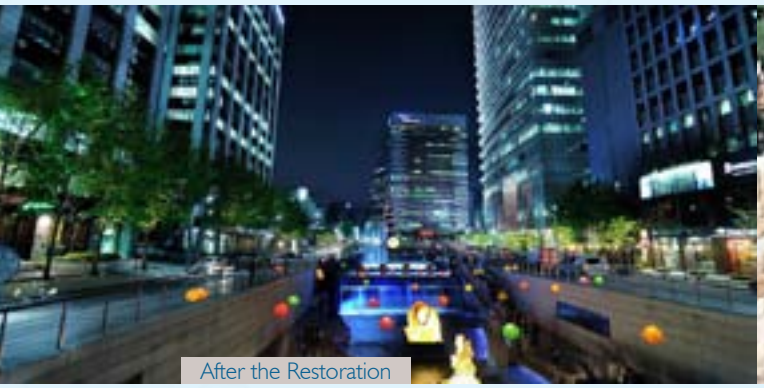
**Dr Yang's long and prestigious career is as follows:**

2015 - Present Senior Advisor of Korea Rural Community Corporation.
2014 - 2015, Advisor of Eco-Delta City Project, Korea Water Resources Corp.
2014 - 2016, Adjunct Professor of Urban Design, Korea University.
2012 - Present, Member of the Waterfront Management Committee, Min. of Construction.
2010 - Present, U-City Committee reporting to the Prime Minister of Korea.
2011 - 2014, Chair Professor, School of Construction & Environment, KAIST.
2010 - 2012, Chairman, Urban Design Institute of Korea.
2008 - 2010, Member of the Presidential Commission on Architecture Policy.
2008 - 2013, Advisor, SK Gas Corporation.
2004 - 2005, Vice Mayor of Seoul Metropolitan Government.
2002 - 2004, Director of Cheonggyechon Restoration Headquarter, Seoul, Metropolitan Government.
1981 - 2005, Professor of Urban Design, GSES, Seoul National University.
1976 - 1981, Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, Chicago, Boston & Washington. DC.Office, U.S.A.
1973 - 1975, Ilyang Architects Office.

Dr Yang's presentation titled 'Back to a future - The Cheonggyechon River Restoration Project' will provide a brief history of Seoul and Chonggyechon and explain the context of covering the stream and building an elevated highway, during the period of economic growth in Korea in the 1970s. The idea of restoring and revitalising Cheonggyechon was to make Seoul more sustainable. Through the restoration, several challenges and constraints were overcome. The unique revitalization plan that was initiated as well as the environmental and socio - cultural effect of Chonggyechon Restoration Project will be shared during the presentation.

In the interactive workshop session, Dr Yang will discuss the various challenges and constraints that he and his team faced during the Cheonggyechon Restoration Project in Seoul, which is recognised and acclaimed as one of the finest examples of best practice in river restoration projects, worldwide.

Before the Restoration



After the Restoration

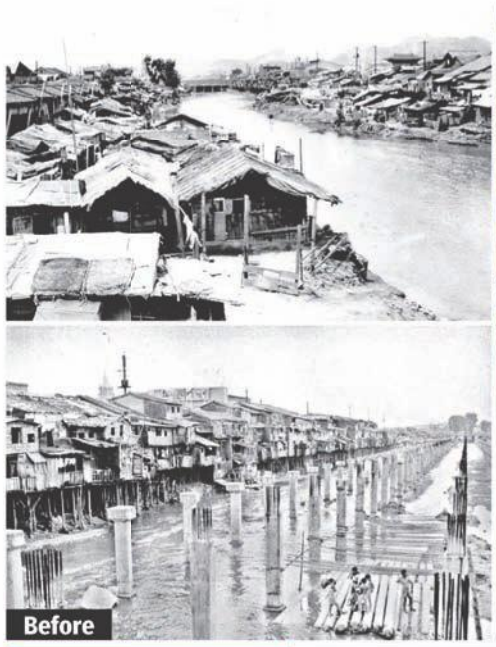
# Have vision, reclaim Cooum

*Political will and a strong community participation can help Chennai rejuvenate its polluted rivers, say international experts*

■ TUBA RAQSHAN

Yoon-Jae Yang, the former Vice-Mayor of Seoul, Korea, who visited the Cooum, said the river reminded him for the Cheonggyecheon stream, before it was restored into its present state. "Fifty years ago, the Cheonggyecheon was like the Cooum. In the 1960s, the stream was covered in concrete to move out the slum dwellers around the area. In the 1970s, the government put an elevated expressway over the stream. I had studied in the US and later visited countries like Germany, when they had started to naturalise their streams and rivers. Mayor Lee Myung-Bak chose the restoration of the stream as his election mandate and once he became the mayor, I got into the government to oversee the restoration," said the senior advisor of the Korea Rural Community Corporation.

Much like the nay-sayers of Cooum restoration, Yang said people's first reaction to the Cheonggyecheon project was that it couldn't be done. "Almost 95% of the Seoul Metropolitan Government officials thought that it was impossible. But once I gave a presentation, 65% changed their mind and supported me. We created a special task force. The biggest challenge was convincing people that restoration would be beneficial. It took us three years to restore and we managed to demolish the expressway and created a transport system, to reduce the number of cars. Once the restoration was done, there was a change in the climate and the stream also had an increase in species like fish and birds. Now, Cheonggyecheon stream, which is in the heart of Seoul, is a popular tourist place and an important part of the city," he said.





## HOLISTIC RESTORATION

*Similar to Chennai's Cooum, Seoul's Cheonggyecheon (photos above) was a highly polluted stream. That was until the 1970s. After years of industrial thrust, the Korean government woke up to the need to restore the river, which was completed in 2005*

**Cheonggyecheon's successful restoration**

Catchment area: **61 sq km**

Length: **13.7 km**

Width: **20-85 m**

**Built-up area in 2002:**

Buildings **6,000+**

Small shops: More than **100,000**

Outline: **Site location:** 5.84 sq km (divided into three segments to reduce construction schedule)

**Need for restoration**

- **Improve quality of life**
- Make Seoul an environmental-friendly city
- **Revitalisation of downtown area by stimulating urban redevelopment**
- Regenerate urban economy
- **Balanced regional development**

**Challenges**

- Conflict of interest among different trade groups in the neighbourhood
- Negotiation settlements for merchants, including reduced parking fee, low interest loans etc.

**Aftermath:** The impact of the restoration was evident in various positive changes around the site.

**BETTER AIR QUALITY (MEASURED IN PM10)**

2005: 46 → 2007: 43

**CLEAN AND FRESH AIR**

- A cooling effect was immediately noticed.
- The average temperature in Cheonggyecheon was **32.7 degrees Celsius while streets nearby recorded an average temperature of 36.3 degrees Celsius.**
- Reduction in noise levels
- Relief from heat island effect, common to urban cities

**ECOLOGICAL IMPACT**

- Species of birds increased from **six (before restoration) to 34 in 2005**
- Species of fish increased from **four (before restoration) to 15 in 2005**
- Insect species increased from **15 (before restoration) to 106 (2005)**

### Wealth of a city

The academician, who was here for the Chennai Water Forum organised by the Goethe Institut, said Cooum and other rivers too can be restored – through political will. "Chennai has fantastic technological skills and genius architects, planners and urban designers. You need a strong political leader, without which it is impossible. The citizens should push the government to restore the waterbodies – which in the longer run can be economically beneficial too," added Yang.

Dr Regina Dube, from the Municipal Department for Immission Protection, Waste Water, Toxic and Nuclear Accidents of Hamburg, said community participation helped create an integrated management plan to ensure ecological protection while fostering industrial growth. "The plan has been designed by the local people and authorities from the city of Hamburg and adjacent states. The idea was to understand the ecological needs of the river and how they can be coordinated to meet the economic needs of industries like shipping, fisheries and the harbour. This has been done and a lot of projects have been defined in this plan, which is a guiding document for ecological restoration. The plan came out of a participatory process. The communities have been involved from the beginning and this was an important part. It took a lot of time to negotiate but once it was done, it helped in implementation. Keeping the community in line was important to meet the goals of such a project," said Dr Dube.

### Go local

Petra Dobner, Professor for Political Science at Martin-Luther University in Halle-Wittenberg and author of 'Water Politics', said there is an urgent need to create sustainable solutions for water. "If you look at our rivers, much of our water is poisoned and it is not in a shape that can be used. Our global water use is not sustainable at all. We need to urgently move away from the broad global principles and look at the local level. The Dublin Statement on Water and Sustainable Development is far too generalised. While restoring a river in a small city somewhere in south Germany or south India, you have the local knowledge. So, there is a dire need to elevate the local experience and get more ideas to run things on a national level," she concluded.

**OPINION**

## *Restoration grounded in science need of the hour*

Jayshree Vencatesan

*That Tamil Nadu is characterised by a veritable diversity of ecosystems, habitats and species is well recognised by all*

Restoration of habitats is the new buzz word. And there are currently many restoration projects under way at multiple scales: for instance, post Chennai floods of 2015, wetland restoration has assumed primacy. Restoration is "the act of restoring to a former state or position ... or to an unimpaired or perfect condition". Restoration is usually carried out for one of the following reasons: (a) to restore highly degraded but localized sites, (b) to improve production capability in degraded but localized production lands, (c) to enhance conservation values in protected/productive landscapes. Evidently, this means restoration can be applied at various spatial scales: beginning with the largest , that is, ecosystems, followed by habitats, communities, species, water or soil quality or in some unusual cases even conditions such as degraded soils, contaminated water etc.

While the intention behind a restoration initiative is never doubted, very often, naturalists and biologists bemoan the fact that restoration efforts fall short in their grounding in science. That science needs to form a strong basis for restoration is certainly not a point of dispute, but at the same time, it also needs to be recognised that the benchmarks for such an approach are either missing or inaccessible to the proponents.

Of the many examples that can be cited to illustrate this point, the one pertaining to natural history is most appropriate. That Tamil Nadu is characterised by a veritable diversity of ecosystems, habitats and species is well recognised. It is a state that is home to some of the most charismatic mega fauna of the country, and also has the distinction of having the least area of forests being diverted to non-forest purposes. Against this backdrop, it is but natural to assume that the State has a centralised repository or a museum of natural history. Which unfortunately, is not the case. This knowledge that is so critical for restoration therefore remains with certain individuals or institutions – once again the who or which of this is not available in the public domain. One may be shocked to know that some of the most robust data on the natural history of Tamil Nadu and the erstwhile Madras Presidency is available in libraries dedicated to language research, well known libraries such as the Adyar Library, Connemara Library and the State Archives, buried as Board of Revenue Transcripts. The same is true of historical maps and toposheets dating back to 1900s. The Government Museum is Egmore has in its records, collections of insect specimens of the region. Private Trusts and Societies that are dedicated to conservation of biological diversity such as the Chennai Snake Park Trust, Care Earth Trust, Madras Crocodile Bank have collections that could form the bedrock for defining the natural history of Chennai. Academic institutions such as the Madras Christian College, Loyola would also have the privilege of holding some very critical information in multiple formats such as collections, herbaria, photographs, visuals and so on.

Unless this knowledge of natural history is organised into a system like a Museum of Natural History that can lend itself to a science based restoration agenda for the State, and Chennai, we may continue implementing programmes that are well meaning programmes that are erroneously defined and ill suited for the State.

*— The writer is Managing Trustee, Care Earth Trust*