

No kunu Beira Lake clean up a success

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NO KUNU volunteers at work



NDB BANK CSR team



Team representing **NAWALOKA HOSPITAL**



SLLRDC team



By
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As one of the main attractions of the city, the Beira Lake is a landmark overflowing with history. It was artificially created many decades ago and served as a defensive moat, transporting goods and eventually became a boating centre as it was connected to many canals within the city. With today's skyrocketing real estate value, a property around the Beira Lake is worth many millions. But quite unfortunately, the Beira Lake is now known to be one of the most polluted

lakes in the city. Embraced by algae, the water needs to be cleaned daily to avoid its unbearable stench. Although several attempts are made on a daily basis by the Sri Lanka Navy and the Sri Lanka Land Reclamation and Development Corporation (SLLRDC) to clear its banks and clean the water, garbage also gets piled up on a daily basis. Sewage from the surrounding offices, residences, hospitals and hotels are directly dumped into the Beira, making its cleaning task a mighty challenge.

Cleaning the Beira Lake was another goal which the Nokunu Team achieved recently. Also known as the Guardians of the city, the team managed to gather many corporates, the tri-forces, the Colombo Municipal Council and the general public to achieve this task. They gathered at Beira Lake last Saturday and cleaned the banks as the first step of their initiative. So far the Nokunu Team has visited over 2000 slums educating people in these shelters on the importance of segregating garbage and how it is being done. The Nokunu campaign, headed by Sumi Moonesinghe, is a citizen engagement initiative to keep the city clean.

Hence, the **Daily mirror** spoke to several volunteers who joined this cause to make it a success:



Cleaning in progress

“We’re also looking at having canal transport”

Speaking to the **Daily mirror** Mayoress of Colombo Rosy Senanayake said “Sumi Moonesinghe has been a great strength to me. We have done many projects of keeping the city clean because I have a huge issue with regard to garbage. Even though we collect garbage, dumping isn’t in our hands because we have to depend on the Central Government for dumping space. We collect about 600 metric tonnes of garbage on a daily basis out of which 50 metric tonnes come in the form of mixed waste. Mixed waste cannot be dumped in the Government dumping yard because they don’t accept it.

Although we have created awareness among people to segregate garbage some people don’t and these happen in the underserved settlement areas. They would give excuses such as the lack of space, but on the other hand there are groups of residents who are very responsible and they go beyond our request and segregate the garbage and even turn the garbage into compost. Mrs.Moonesinghe along with the private sector and the CMC got together and we did a lot of advocacy with regard to segregating garbage. It’s important that we change the attitudes and mindsets of people towards the environment and how we treat garbage.

We eat something and throw the wrapper on the road in our country, but when we go to another country we would think twice before doing that. So what is it that makes us behave in an unacceptable manner in our country, but adhere to all rules in another country? So it’s a matter of training the mindset and changing people’s attitudes and mindsets and changing their thinking and perception. We have several lakes in the city that need to be cleaned because due to the slightest rain Colombo gets submerged with water.

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This is because our lakes and canals aren’t cleaned and our people aren’t responsible. There are people who live on either side of these canals and they don’t think twice before throwing all the garbage into them. In turn canals get blocked and it isn’t only unhygienic it’s a hazard as well.

I must thank Podi Hamuduruwo of Gangarama Temple and the Defense Secretary because the tri-forces and the Police have come together in addition to the SLLRDC and the Municipality, the private sector and the general public in keeping the city clean. We're also looking at having canal transport. Countries like Singapore have canal transportation to reduce traffic and be more environmentally friendly and that is the bigger picture we are looking at. The lake is one of our prime properties and it is one of our treasures," she said.

Pix by DamithWickramasinghe





“We got our staff involved”

When we spoke to Ganga Wanigarathne of CSR Team – NDB Bank this is what she had to say, “We got our staff involved and we’re cleaning our perimeter today. This is a project that some activists have started. If we can have some assistance from the Municipality we will definitely continue with this project”.



“Cleanliness is directly linked to good hygiene”

When we spoke to S. G Sudarshani, Nawaloka Hospital this is what she has to say “We have to keep our city clean, but some people don’t understand. Cleanliness is directly linked to good hygiene and health and therefore it is important to keep the environment clean. If somebody is cleaning a polluted place like the Beira Lake, it’s a good move especially when looking at the diseases that are being spread nowadays”.



“We clean all the canals in the city”

When we spoke to Captain Nilantha Hewavitharana, Sri Lanka Navy this is what he had to say, “There are 84 Navy personnel working from 6.00am in the morning in five places along the Beira Lake. In general we clean all the canals in the city. We need to educate the people around the Beira Lake about keeping it clean. People should segregate their garbage and dispose them accordingly



“The authorities should educate people”

Premachandra of the CMC speaking on the issue said, “These projects are good for the city and they allow people to be clean. The authorities should educate people about segregating garbage and we are happy to be a part of this project”.



“When there’s no rain there’s more algae”

Pradeep of SLLRDC speaking about the issue said, “When there’s no rain there’s more algae forming in the lake. It isn’t poisonous to the fish as they are anyway living beneath the surface of the water. But if they ingest in the plastics and other waste they will die”.



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