

Amrutdhara: An initiative to provide affordable clean water with zero plastic waste

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NEW DELHI: Three years ago, the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC) Leh proposed to impose a complete ban on mineral water bottles to reduce its environmental impact on Ladakh's fragile ecosystem as plastic bottles heavily contribute to the solid waste. The initiative was also meant to provide employment opportunities to the unemployed youth by establishing safe drinking water filling stations of their own. Despite LAHDC's best intention, the decision later had to be reconsidered as an alternative was not easily available then. 'Amrutdhara' could perhaps become one of the solutions to such initiatives which can gradually be expanded to the entire country in a phased manner.

Amrutdhara

is an experiment being initiated as an alternative solution to replace mineral water bottles to reduce environmental impact associated with plastic as a delivery means for drinking water. The prototype drinking water vending machine of Amrutdhara was installed at a shop in Pondicherry last week. Recognising the threat of polluted water and plastic waste to health and the environment in India, Amrutdhara was formed to tackle these issues. According to Co-founder of Amrutdhara, Minhaj Ameen, the technological solution that could be implemented in the market was designed in the form of a water vending machine where users could refill their bottles. "When we cut out the bottle, we found we could cut costs, and offer what consumers had really wanted all along, clean water, at half the price per liter of bottled water, making safe drinking water more affordable for all," argued Ameen. Amrutdhara envisions a network of refill stations starting in the town of Pondicherry and expanding across India, making it easy to give up buying bottled water forever. Another co-founder of this noble initiative is Akshay Roongta. They've designed and built a prototype for a vending machine that will enable shopkeepers in public spaces to sell drinking water to consumers with refillable bottles. "We needed a cheaper, simpler, and more mobile idea that could fit in any common shop so users could refill anywhere, thus maximising convenience," explained Ameen while recounting some earlier experiments. After Amrutdhara overcomes limited resources, co-founders are planning to launch a pilot in Pondicherry soon. They are confident that implementing a pilot over the next few months will prove to interested organisations that, with long term funding, Amrutdhara can change the face of water in India. Amrutdhara is now raising money through indiegogo, an international crowd funding platform, to help them conduct the pilot rigorously and possibly expand the size, they have set up a small office as its headquarters in Auroville, double its man power by hiring junior engineers, designers and a Sales and Marketing Director and bringing its co-founder Akshay, who will sacrifice pursuit of his master's programme, to come on-board full-time and bringing on partners for product design and developing the next version of electronics. The prototype water vending machine is attached to a 20-litre water tank that can be refilled. The technicians and the co-founders claim that machine can be attached to a drinking water tap also. First published on

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