

# As waste goes out, a dying river returns to life in Kerala

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*Water world The Kuttamperoor river, a tributary of the Pampa and Achenkovil.*

## **Kerala's Kuttamperoor is once again ready to defend communities against floods, aid fishermen**

*It's a rebirth for the Kuttamperoor river, a tributary of Pampa and Achenkovil rivers. The river is getting a new lease of life thanks to a drive to remove accumulated waste. A 5 km stretch flowing along the Budhanoor panchayat in Alappuzha district has been cleaned up. Thick layers of water weeds and waste dumped into the waterway for over a decade were removed. A river cleaning scheme covering 12-km long, had been drawn up many years ago, but could not get proper funding. "The project was implemented under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme. About 200 workers were engaged for the work during a two-month period, generating 30,000 man days. A sum of Rs.72 lakh was spent on the project," P. Viswambhara Panicker, Budhanoor panchayat president said. "Waste materials such as plastic bottles, containers and food refuse dumped by unscrupulous catering units had ruined the flora and fauna. Once the natural flow was obstructed, the polluted water infiltrated into drinking water resources, including wells along the river. Wells dried up in many adjoining areas," Mr. Panicker said.*

*Shrunk in width*

*Redeeming the entire river could be achieved through joint efforts with neighbouring panchayats such as Mannar and Pandanad, said N.K. Sukumaran Nair, environmentalist and general secretary of Pampa Parirakshana Samiti. "The river, which was 100-130 ft wide in its heyday, has shrunk to 10-15 ft at many locations due to encroachment. Stern measures are required to evict the encroachers," he says. The river used to play a key role in natural flood control. Whenever the Pampa and Achencoil were in spate, the water flowed into the Kuttamperoor river, saving a large area from flooding. Idols of several temples were bathed in the river during 'Aarattu' festivals. There is now a panoramic view of the river, and the operation has opened a new phase of freshwater fish growth.*

*"Fishermen have thanked us because there is new hope to return to their livelihood," Mr. Nair said.*

*First published by The Hindu*