

Culturing a hygiene revolution

Huzaifa Khorakiwala sees in bio-toilets answer to India's sanitation problem

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Huzaifa Khorakiwala, the 43-year-old scion of the Khorakiwala family that owns drug-maker Wockhardt, is busy fighting for hygiene in the country in his own way.

He is leading a campaign to set up bio-toilets that could well be an answer to India's sanitation problem.

The bio-digester technology, developed by the Wockhardt Foundation, uses the psychrophile bacteria, which is found in Antarctica, to break down human excreta into usable water and gas through an anaerobic process.

DRDO tested

Khorakiwala, an MBA from Yale University in the US, said the technology using the bacteria was tested by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) in the Antarctica.

"Defence researchers found the penguin excreta disappearing in the sub-zero temperature.

"The bacteria was derived and developed by the DRDO for complete human waste decomposition," said Naveed Pasha of the Wockhardt Foundation.



Huzaifa Khorakiwala

Khorakiwala was sure this was the answer to India's sanitation problem.

"India is home to 65 per cent of the world's population that defecates in the open. This has serious health implications and consequently a big economic burden.

"The bio-toilet has a lot of social value to our country," Khorakiwala told *Business Line*.

"The bio-toilet has many advantages over a normal toilet, since the output is 100 per cent neutral water," said Khorakiwala.

"There is no air, water and land pollution like a regular toilet, and the space occupied is three times less than a regular septic tank."

The inception of the technology at Wockhardt Foundation started in February 2013 "when we started exploring and did a couple of installations. As of now, we have around 70,000 bio-toilets across the country," said the CEO of Wockhardt Foundation.

Initially, two bio-toilets were installed at the Bharat Nagar slum in Mumbai, two more on the national highway to Jaipur, which would be used by the public, and another two were installed at a school in Haryana.

As many as 130 are to be installed in Karoti village, 110 km from Mumbai, and few in Bangalore soon.

Post the successful launch of 100 bio-toilets in households around Mumbai by the Rotary Club, the Chennai Corporation has decided to install 300 bio-toilets in the city.

"We now have 14 programmes involving the bio-toilet," he said.

Overseas expansion

With plans to expand bio-toilets outside India, Pasha added the Foundation was working with an Oman architecture company to install some bio-toilets in new buildings in the Gulf country.

"We have received a positive response from Oman, and a lot of leads from abroad to ship the bio-digesters," confirmed Khorakiwala.

"The number of users can be high and the output is clean water that can be re-used for irrigation purposes. At the installation in a school in Haryana, we have diverted the water for plants around the complex," he added.