

KARNATAKA

Need for conservation of ancient Karez systems emphasised



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Academics and civil engineers stressed upon the need to conserve ancient Karez **water** systems – long, underground aqueduct with several vertical open-wells connecting it – that were built in the past to harvest rainwater for drinking, household needs and

irrigation.

Presenting papers on the second day of the three-day international seminar organised around the theme 'Karez Across Cultural Borders' at Jhira Convention Hall here on Monday, they suggested spreading awareness by organising seminars and publishing articles on Karez systems across the globe.

The event was organised by the Department of Tourism, in association with Indian Heritage Cities Network Foundation, UNESCO and International Centre on Qanats & Historic Structures.

Majid Labbaf Khamenei, a scholar from University of Tehran, suggested involving the public in **conservation** activities. He presented a paper on the Indian version of Qanat. Basing chiefly on Bidar Karez, he described how Indian Karezes in areas with good rainfall were different from similar systems found in Iran and other arid regions.

Dr. Khamenei said that vertical open-wells connecting the horizontal underground water tunnels went further down from the tunnel gallery to hold water during the dry season. He added that the water level that rose during the monsoon would facilitate flow through the horizontal tunnel as well as reach the top of vertical wells. Pointing at the arch-shaped structures at the openings in Bidar Karez, Mr. Khamenei said that the laterite soil in Bidar enabled ancient engineers to display their architectural skills.

M.B. Rajani, a geospatial scientist from Bengaluru, presented a paper on the possibility of the presence of Karez-like system in Bengaluru in late 18th and early 19th centuries. She described how a general observation of landscape and topography near her residence in the city prompted her to study further. Using satellite imagery – recent ones on Google Earth as well as Corona images of 1960s – and analysing historical records (maps, reports and literature), Dr. Rajani concluded that there was a Karez or a similar water system in place in the northwest of Sankey Tank in Bengaluru.

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