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NAL's airboat could help de-weed city's lakes

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Bangalore: The National Aerospace Laboratories (NAL) has developed an airboat that can be deployed for the cleaning up of polluted waterbodies, including the Bellandur Lake.

The city-based laboratory involved in the research and development of civilian aerospace sector has developed the boat as part of its societal applications mission.

“The airboat will have an air propulsion system which will push it forward. The boat will also have a flat bottom. This kind of boat is ideal for cleaning water bod ies. The boat can be pushed into the water and can be scooped out easily. Besides, they have good buoyancy,“ said NAL chief scientist S Selvarajan.

He explained that the difference between an airboat and a regular motor boat is that the former is equipped with an air propulsion system, which makes it more powerful compared with the latter, and this feature would help it to clear weeds from lake's surface. “Airboats can operate easily on marshy waters. The huge propellers on the boat are above the water and the power is generated from air instead of water to prevent the engine from getting jammed. Besides, the powerful propellers can easily push forward the floating weeds and plants to one corner of the lake from where they can be bundled up to be lifted out of the lake,“ he said. This makes it ideal for cleaning of polluted lakes, such as the Bellandur Lake. Selvarajan said the development programme for the air-propelled ferry system started a few years ago and a few models have been developed by NAL.

A new powerful version the airboat has been developed by the laboratory and its integration is currently on.

“In a couple of weeks, we intend to test the airboat at the Ulsoor Lake along with the Army's Madras Engineers Group personnel. If the trials are successful, it can be taken up for production by the industry,“ he said.

“The NAL campus borders the Bellandur Lake and it could be tested there; though NAL would not directly be involved in the cleaning process,“ Selvarajan added.