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Lack of planning takes heavy tree toll

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April 22: It is not natural for so many trees to fall in heavy rain, say environmentalists, who blame the havoc the city experiences every monsoon on a lack of foresight and planning by civic agencies. When trees are surrounded by cemented pavements and asphalted roads, that leave no space for their roots to spread and provide them a sturdy anchor, little else can be expected, they say.

Vinay Srinivasan, of Hasiru Usiru, feels Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike's efforts to repair the situation in some areas is not working very well.

Others say the authorities are doing more harm than good by cementing water bodies in the name of restoring them, as this leads to an ecological imbalance even in their own ecosystems and harms the trees around them.

"There is little use in restoring lakes the way our civic bodies are going about it. They are only transforming them into cement ponds and are doing nothing to improve the channels that can feed them with rain water," says Dr T.V. Ramachandra of the Energy and Wetland Research Group of the city based Indian Institute of Science (IISc).

Tree experts suggest that more native trees, which cannot be easily toppled, must be planted in the city. Honge, neem and tamarind trees can not only withstand heavy wind and rain, they are of great ecological importance as well, they point out. "The exotic and softwood trees, which civic agency BBMP seems to prefer, can always be planted in parks and open spaces. But native trees must occupy the roadsides," they say.

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