

## City lakes are awaiting aid



By Naveen MenezesNaveen Menezes, Bangalore Mirror Bureau | Updated: Feb 8, 2020, 18:32 IST  
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*BBMP's skeletal staff strength is a problems for city lakes* The Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP), which recently received custody of lakes from Bangalore Development Authority (BDA) and the Forest Department, is facing staff crunch to handle the mammoth responsibility. The lake division, mostly consisting of civil engineers, also lacks manpower with expertise in ecology.

In the present set up, the BBMP's lake division comprises one chief engineer and four executive engineers, in-charge of different zones. It's learnt that all the five officials have a background in civil engineering. Of the five assistant executive engineers and four assistant engineers, a majority of them are civil engineers. Official sources said the division has only one environment engineer.

Staff crunch is another issue that the lake division currently faces. The department only has officers for administrative works while the assistant engineers, who actually on the ground and regularly inspect the lakes and sites, are less in number. “The sanctioned post for assistant engineers is 20 but we have got only four AEs,” one of the officials said.

BBMP Commissioner BH Anil Kumar said he has written to the Urban Development Department for permission to fill vacancies. He also said the BBMP would hire environmental engineers both for the lake and solid waste management divisions.

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–Prof TV Ramachandra, IISc

Prof TV Ramachandra from the

Indian Institute of Science

(IISc), Bengaluru said that the lake division requires people with multi- disciplinary expertise including ecology and hydrology. “The very reason why our lakes have become a cement bowl is because the lake department is filled with people who are civil engineers. They tend to build only

jogging paths without understanding the fact that the lakes have life and it’s an ecosystem,” he said.

The IISc report, dated December 2019, had found that a majority of the 45 lakes (53%) are under very poor water quality status and 34% are in poor state. Only six lakes such as Jakkur, Kempambudhi, Devasandra 1, Ullal, Handrahalli and Agrahara Lake had ‘Good’ water quality.

The report also observed that the poor status of the restored lakes (with the water quality) is due to unscientific restoration approaches like partial removal of silt, not arresting the flow of untreated sewage and industrial effluents, unabated encroachments and also sustained dumping of solid waste.

The focus of rejuvenation was towards creating jogging paths and beautification of the lake rather than ecological restoration, which has led to the failure of rejuvenation exercise,” the study prepared by Prof Ramachandra had said.

After the BDA and forest department handed over 28 lakes and 9 lakes respectively to the BBMP, the City’s municipal corporation is in-charge of 205 lakes, most of which are filled with sewage, poorly-maintained and are encroached.