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Encroachment of lakes, drains leaves city ill-equipped to face monsoon

DECCAN CHRONICLE. | [SURESH NR](#)

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Tuesday night's downpour that claimed one life has once again exposed our city's poor infrastructure and makes us wonder if Bengaluru is doomed to the same fate as in previous years this coming monsoon.

One of the main reasons for flooding in our city is the encroachment of lakes and storm water drains. Reports from experts of the Indian Institute of Science say that over 98 per cent of our lakes are encroached. And while Bengaluru's system of 633 storm water drains covering 842 kms has the capacity to safely carry and absorb 80 mm of rain at any given time, the encroachment and poor maintenance of the drains has reduced their carrying capacity to just 40 mm. The BBMP in 2016 gave a list of close to 2000 SWD encroachments to the state government, but the task of removing them has not yet been completed.

The human cost of the rain and our weak infrastructure highlight the apathy of our government agencies, particularly the BBMP. Open drains and potholes, especially in the rainy season, have become deathtraps in the recent past. In 2014, the Namma Bengaluru Foundation (NBF) took criminal action against BBMP officials after eight -year-old Geetha Lakshmi drowned, falling into an open, flooded drain. But instead of trying to close the city's open drains, the BBMP has done little, resulting in more deaths of people like 18-year-old electrician and sole bread winner of his family, Varun and 16-year-old daily wage labourer, Narsamma in two incidents in September and October 2017.

Similarly, potholes created by the battering of the roads by heavy rain resulted in the death of four people in two weeks in October 2017 and one in December 2018. Tuesday night's rain is a reminder that this problem will continue as long as we have apathetic government bodies.

Suresh N.R. is the Director, Namma Benga luru Foundation