



# Bengaluru's Varthur lake catches fire again, smoke enters nearby houses



Lakes catching fire has become a perpetual disaster Bengaluru has had to witness every year, since 2015. This year, it's the Varthur Lake. On Sunday, around 3.15 pm, residents of Thubarahalli Extension in Varthur noticed smoke emerging from the middle of the lake. The lake had caught fire at three different spots near the Balligeri inlet, with each ball of fire a few meters away from the other.

The fire began spreading quickly, and soon, within half an hour, the smoke had engulfed the entire area. Residents living near Thubharahalli Extension said that the smoke has engulfed their apartment and even ashes of burnt leaves are flying into their homes.

"My apartment is just 1 km away from the lake. The smoke is so thick that it is coming into our house. No matter how many times we protest, people keep violating NGT rules and causing harm. The people living in illegal settlements along the lake's buffer zone keep burning garbage there and BBMP, too, dumps garbage there," a resident of Thubarahalli told TNM.

Residents immediately informed the Fire Control Room and a fire engine is at the spot.

According to Jagadish Reddy, a lake activist from Varthur, "This is the second big fire that occurred in Varthur Lake. Last time, it was garbage burning; but this time, the fire started in the middle of the lake where the water meets the weeds and grass. The cause remains uncertain. We will know only after firefighters doused the fire."

In March 2017, Varthur Lake caught fire after miscreants burned garbage near the lake's inlet. On the day the lake caught fire, the toxic foam shot up from the water and fell on commuters who were taking the nearby roads. Firefighters were stunned by the intensity of the smoke and later found that it was caused due to the burning of garbage.

"These have been the two big fires but small fire incidents keep happening in Varthur Lake. Last year, there were three minor fires, which were resolved within a few minutes. The dried up weeds had caught fire. We couldn't make out whether it was a man-made disaster or not," an official with the Sarjapur Fire Station said.

This is obviously not the first time a lake has caught fire. The infamous Bellandur lake is notorious for catching fire at least once every year. In January 2018, the lake shot up in flames and the fire fighting operations went on for over 10 hours. The Army was also roped in to douse the flames. Officials at the fire station say that Bellandur Lake caught fire 11 times in 2018 alone and once in January 2019.