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BBMP's permission to cover SWD might flood parts of Bengaluru

BY AKSHATHA M, ET BUREAU | UPDATED: JUN 13, 2018, 12.27 PM IST

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BENGALURU: Parts of Indiranagar, Domlur and Jogupalya could be inundated this rainy season because the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) has permitted a developer to cover up the primary stormwater drain that connects Ulsoor lake to Bellandur lake.

The city's flood fiasco of 2016 is still fresh in the minds of Bengalureans but the BBMP appears not to have any qualms about allowing such violations.

Work on putting a lid on a primary stormwater drain (SWD) — which is part of the Challaghatta Valley — is on in full swing adjacent to the Karnataka Golf Association (KGA) in Domlur. The BBMP has permitted a city-based builder whose property is separated from the KGA by the rajakaluve to put a lid on the SWD, apparently for aesthetic reasons.

Two years ago, another big builder was allowed to cover up 350 metres of an SWD closeby.

The developer has narrowed down the SWD by filling up its sides with debris. Three huge pipes have been laid, reducing its discharge volume.

It is feared that blocking or narrowing down of this SWD could inundate parts of Indiranagar, Domlur and Jogupalya in the event of a heavy downpour. The said SWD is the primary drain connecting Ulsoor lake with Bellandur lake.



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A BBMP official, who is aware of the matter, confirmed that then BBMP commissioner used his discretionary powers to permit the two builders to cover the SWD along the stretch. "In special cases, the commissioner can grant permission to put a lid on a rajakaluve," the officer said.

Last monsoon, based on a complaint that work on the SWD could cause flooding, BBMP officials had inspected the spot. They apparently instructed the developer to stop the work. "The builder stopped the work as any construction on an SWD is not allowed during monsoon. However, we are not aware of the present work," the officer said.

But the BBMP's double standards has appalled people. "Builders want to block the view of the SWD from their property to ensure the property price is high. But on what basis does the BBMP give special permission to influential builders to cover SWDs? The National Green Tribunal (NGT)'s order strictly prohibits construction within 50 metres of primary SWDs," said Muralidhar Rao, president of Praja-RAAG, a think tank on urban issues.

Prof TV Ramachandra of the Indian Institute of Science pointed out that it is unscientific to cover up SWDs. "Remediation process cannot take place in rajakaluves without sunlight penetration. The permission to cover the SWD is also a licence to narrow down the width of the kaluve," the professor said.

When ET contacted the builder, the representative said that they were not “constructing on the rajakaluve per se.” “We have got all the approvals in place and gradually we would cover SWD for health and hygiene reasons.”

BBMP commissioner M Maheshwar Rao said he was not aware of the issue. “I will check the agreement with the builder and take action if they have violated terms,” he said.

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