

# Building activity sucks City dry

Several parts of Bangalore are dependent on ground water

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**BANGALORE:** As the City reels under the impact of an unprecedented water scarcity, there is credible evidence to suggest that indiscriminate construction of apartments, highrises and individual homes throughout Bangalore is the root cause of the shortage, studies by the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) and Bangalore University suggest.

The rampant building activity, in violation of BBMP regulations, caused substantial groundwater depletion as demand reached a peak, which the BWSSB could not meet. The studies were first begun in the early years of this decade and has continued ever since.

The scarcity of ground water was compounded by drying up of water bodies, including lakes, which constitute only 1.5 per cent of the total land.

IISc's Study on Status of Urban Ecology has revealed that most of the apartment clusters



**Year after year, this is the scene at Mathikere in Bangalore.** DH PHOTO

have either come up on lake beds or by encroaching upon the catchment areas. About 75 per cent of the clusters, spread out in Whitefield, Yelahanka, KR Puram, Kengeri, Banerghatta Road, Jigani, Bommanahalli, Begur, Bellandur, Marathahalli, Padmanabhanagar and Hosur Road, are dependent on ground water.

The dependence of these clusters of apartment blocks and individual houses on ground water jacked up the demand, thereby causing the present crisis. To

top it all, there has been no effort to raise the water table," said T V Ramachandra, Senior Scientist and faculty, Energy and Wetland Group at Centre for Ecological Sciences (CES) IISc.

## Contamination

To make matters worse, a study by Dr Nandini, chairman, Department of Environment Science and co-researcher Aboud Jumba, found severe water pollution due to discharge of sewage in the City's lakes, making it unfit for supply and consumption. The depleting water level has led to contamination rendering the water non-potable, forcing people to go for bottled drinking water.

According to the study, "Hulimavu Lake has been increasingly contaminated with the fastest rise in luxury apartments on its western upper basin. The Agrahara Lake near Hulimavu now resembles a sewage pond hidden on the western side of Banerghatta Road."

Pratap Singh, a K R Puram resident summed up the situa-

tion, saying that in the locality he lives in the nearest borewell provides water for 30 plastic pots every week. The borewell supplies water thrice a month, which is not enough for approximately 3,800 families that are dependent on it. "How can we survive?" asked Singh.

In other erstwhile CMC areas like Mahadevapura, shop owners like Pradeep said "residents walk long distances to procure water and pay up to Rs 2 per pot of drinking water. There are occasions when we wake up at midnight or 3 am to carry water from the nearest borewell".

In many pockets in and around the City, the water table has gone down to well below 1,000 feet. The Ramanagara and Doddballapur regions have been declared grey blocks, Bangalore South and Channapatna, according to Mines and Geology Department, are dark blocks, while Anekal, Bangalore North stretching up to Devanahalli and Hoskote have been declared as overexploited.

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