

# Old panchayat UGD network, Bellandur's lost chance

The incessant flow of untreated sewage into Bellandur lake in recent years might seem irreversible today. But didn't the government miss a golden chance to curb at least a part of the flow in 2007, when village panchayat areas around the lake were brought into the Bruhat Bangalore Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) fold?

Till that year, Bellandur village on the lake's southern boundary did have a relatively self-sufficient underground drainage system (UGD). The gram panchayat had installed the system in 1996 using its own funds, the first to do so in the entire State. The population was only 800 then, but the panchayat projected it to grow to 1,800 over the next few decades, based on the voter list numbers.

Bellandur, Amblipura, Aralur, Kariamma Aghara and Devarabisanahalli were the villages that benefited from this novel project. But then came the Outer Ring Road, and the IT parks, triggering an explosion of apartments in and around the erstwhile panchayat. The population skyrocketed to about two lakh, making a mockery of the old UGD lines. The lines were not upgraded even nine years after the panchayat villages were incorporated into the Palike.

The panchayat's former president Jagannath K told *Decan Herald* that the story would have been different had the

Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) taken over the UGD lines and upgraded them. "That never happened. Today, due to the overload of sewage, there are complaints of even reverse flow through the old UGDs," he pointed out.

The old UGD lines used to empty the manageable sewage volumes into soak pits and part of the treated water was let into the lake. But fitting this basic network to the apartments that mushroomed all around was

out of question. Neither did the civic agencies insist on the apartments to set up their own sewage treatment plants. That rule came much later, when the damage was already done.

The wanton encroachment of the rajakaluves (stormwater drain) by both State and non-State players only accelerated the sewage flow into the lake. Jagannath accused the Karnataka Industrial Areas Development Board (KIADB) of facilitating the encroachments. "In the planning stage itself, the

KIADB, BBMP and BDA failed to leave setbacks of up to at least 30 metres to prevent illegal takeovers," he recalled.

Bellandur lake also receives untreated sewage from the 110 villages that joined the BBMP. No UGD system exists in these villages, many of which are in the vicinity of the lake. Only last year did the BWSSB submit a Rs 5,019 crore proposal to supply drinking water and set up a sewerage network here.

**Rasheed Kappan**



Untreated sewage directly flowing into the lake.

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Irresponsible and senseless ad-hoc approaches such as the mesh and altering ramp should be stopped immediately. This would unnecessarily waste public money. The long-term solution is decontamination of the lake.

