

54 per cent of City lakes gobbled up, finds IISc study

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BENGALURU: A latest study by the Centre for Ecological Sciences (CES), Indian Institute of Science (IISc), has shown that 54 per cent of lakes in the City have been encroached upon for construction activities and turned into garbage dump yards.

The study, conducted just after the recent frothing and fire at Varthur Lake, has revealed that 66 per cent of the lakes were fed with sewage, 14 per cent surrounded by slums and 72 per cent had lost their catchment areas. The study titled 'pathetic status of wetlands in Bangalore: Epitome of inefficient and uncoordinated governance' was conducted by six IISc researchers, headed by Prof T V Ramachandra, Energy and Wetland Research Group, CES.

Speaking to *Deccan Herald*, Ramachandra said that over a period of time, all the 206 lakes in the City had been encroached upon to different extents for some or the other purpose. These lakes are under BDA, BBMP, Minor Irrigation department, Lake Development Authority and Forest department.

In 1973, the extent of lakes in the City was 2,324 hectares (ha). This reduced to 1,073 ha



CONCRETE JUNGLE: As many as 206 lakes in the City have been encroached upon to different extents for some or the other purpose, according to an expert. DH FILE PHOTO

in 2006 and 445.95 ha in 2013. But the urban area has increased from 5,448 ha in 1973 to 29,535 ha in 2006 and 50,440 ha subsequently.

Lakes like Kalkere, Uttarahalli and Kodihalli have been encroached upon for illegal dumping of garbage. Around Amruthahalli, Vibhuttipura and Ramasandra lakes, illegal buildings are coming up.

Around 90 per cent of Chikpetahalli lake in Vidyanayapura is filled with building debris. Slums have come

up on Kempambudi lake and a huge apartment is being constructed near Malathahalli lake. The construction of the 18-storey apartment complex near Sankey lake - which was stalled in 2002 by IISc and locals - has restarted now. Around 30.64 acres of lakebed at Varthur lake has been encroached upon for apartments, commercial buildings and infrastructure facilities. Except Ulsoor and Sankey lakes - which are fenced and have roads around them - most oth-

ers face a threat. Stormwater drains and water outlets do not exist for these lakes. Buffer zones mandated under the norms of the Ministry of Environment and Forests, BDA's rules, Karnataka Town and Country Planning Act of 1961, Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules of 2010 and Wetlands Regulatory Framework 2008 too do not exist.

The IISc report questions the government on its definition of dead lakes. Citing ex-

Vanishing waterbodies

- The extent of lakes in the City has reduced from 2,324 hectares in 1973 to 445.95 ha in 2013.
- About 90 per cent of Chikpetahalli lake in Vidyanayapura is filled with building debris.
- Slums have come up on Kempambudi lake. Illegal buildings have come up on Kalkere, Kodihalli, Uttarahalli lakes.
- Stormwater drains and outlets do not exist for many lakes.

amples of Linganhalli and Doddabommasandra lakes, Ramachandra said as per ecological and scientific definitions, there are no dead lakes.

They help recharge groundwater for two months during monsoon, serving one of the prime purposes of lakes.

The IISc team had made a presentation of the report before Upalokayukta Justice Subhash B Adi on June 4, where heads of all civic agencies were present. Justice Adi has called a meeting of all principal secretaries and ministers concerned.

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