

Has anyone asked why temperatures in the city are soaring above and beyond what is normal this time of year? And has anyone connected the dots, and come to the right conclusion - yes, as Prime Minister Modi said, air pollution is on the rise. But it is as easily rectified...only, if we replenish the city's once envious tree cover, restrict builders from using heat reflecting glass-cladding on high-rises and make a concerted effort to use green methods to dispose of garbage rather than burn the debris in our neighbourhoods and pollute the atmosphere even further. It's that easy, says **AMIT S UPADHYE**, yet no-one's lifted a finger to tackle the Air Quality. Here's to the hottest, most polluted summer ever.

With a boom in the industrial and IT sector, Bengaluru may be one of the fastest growing metros in India, but it's also racing ahead to become the most polluted city in the country. If urgent measures are not initiated, the city's air will soon become hazardous in a number of pockets, warn the experts. Increased construction activities, changes in building models and a higher volume of vehicles on the road are the major contributors of the pollution that exist in Bengaluru, say the experts. The large scale construction of roads, flyovers and apartments are fast becoming responsible for the increase in the volume of Suspended Particulate Matter (SPM) in the city. Measures to curb the dust flying from construction sites are hardly followed, making the situation worse for the residents and people commuting through the area.

Similarly, carbon emissions by the vehicular movement have become a

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**—Dr T.V. RAMACHANDRA
ENERGY EXPERT**

major challenge for the city administration. There have been no serious efforts to improve the mass transportation system in Bengaluru, which is causing an increase in the total number of vehicles on the roads.

Each traffic junction in Bengaluru has today become a potential CO2 emitting point. A recent study in Mumbai has shown that parking lots emit more CO2 than vehicles on the road.

Experts are also taking a dig at the increased number of glass buildings in Bengaluru which are not only using additional resources like power and water, but also contributing heavily to global warming. The comparison of power consumption by glass buildings and normal buildings shows that glass buildings use a higher amount of power and also reflect sunlight outdoors, thus increasing the temperature of the atmosphere. During summer these buildings consume a larger amount of electricity for air-conditioning compared to the normal buildings.

"Why do we need to copy westerners in a building style that will never suit Bengaluru?" asks Dr T V Ramachandra, an energy expert from the Indian Institute of Science. "The attraction for glass buildings is such that a residence in south Bengaluru is now built like an IT company. While the government must bring in strict rules to ensure that people do not contribute to the pollution, it is important that people too change their mindset."

Researcher and environment expert Dr Harini Nagendra points out that after trees were cleared from large roads in Bengaluru there has been a rise in pollution. "It is common sense. The moment we lose trees on a stretch of the road, the heat will automatically increase in that particular area. Trees absorb particulate matters and other gases which add to pollution. Studies have proved that a tree-less stretch of road records a higher surface temperature. Hence we must identify the pockets which are registering a high volume of pollution and plant the right type of trees there. But sadly the government is not coming up with an aggressive tree planting move in Bengaluru. Planting trees in forests and open spaces in the city's outskirts will not help reduce pollution in the city proper," she adds.

THIS MUCH IS CONCRETE, THIS IS A GLASSHOUSE WE MADE



SCIENTIFIC SOLUTION

- Create environment friendly architecture - glass buildings must be banned in tropical climate
- Land use with mobility planning
- Mechanism to collect, segregate and treat waste - PPP model at ward levels
- Environmental labs in each division/zones
- DA (Bangalore Destruction Agency)
- Mechanism to ensure all agencies/service department work in unison (BWSSB, Health, Forest, LDA, Police, Fire, PWD and Town Planning)
- Participation of private sector, NGOs and RWAs in delivery of services
- Provision to handle e-wastes, hazardous and bio-medical waste
- Provision to meet the decentralised solid waste treatment and management
- Annual environmental status reports
- Maintain open spaces in each divisions and mandatory 33% greenery in each wards
- Only treated sewage inflow to water bodies

GOVERNMENT AGENCIES NOT SERIOUS ABOUT CURBING POLLUTION: EXPERTS

Coming down strongly on government agencies such as BBMP, BWSSB and Pollution Control Board, environmental experts in the city are now demanding action rather talk about future plans. They term the present environmental condition of Bengaluru as "poor" and state that it's a constitutional failure in the managing of resources like trees, open spaces and water bodies in the city.

According to experts, there has been no accountability with any of the government agencies for the dumping of construction waste, increased traffic snarls, burning leaves in the park, dumping garbage in open spaces and water bodies and the release of untreated sewage into the city lakes. For years the courts and special benches created for the hearing of environmental issues have been stressing on major solutions, but none have been taken up seriously by the government.

"In the last five years the city has lost a large number of old trees. The lakes in the city are going dry before summer as the storm water

drains are clogged due to encroachment or garbage dumping. Heaps of garbage are dumped in open lands and are burnt, causing emission of green house gases. If the same practice continues we are heading for an ecological disaster in the near future," said A N Yellappa Reddy, a senior environmentalist.

Another environmentalist and theatre personality, Mr Suresh Heblkar pointed out that decongesting Bengaluru is the best solution for sustainable development of the state as well as reducing the pollution levels in Bengaluru.

"The government must start depopulating cities like Bengaluru and begin concentrating on developing the small towns and rural areas in Karnataka. Once the small towns are developed with adequate infrastructure, the migration to metros like Bengaluru will come down. Similarly several industries which can survive and flourish in smaller cities must be shifted out of Bengaluru. However these solutions are difficult to implement unless there is a political will backed by the people," Mr Heblkar added.



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