

VARTHUR LAKE POLLUTING GROUNDWATER

THIS IS DUE TO SEWAGE INFLOW, WHICH HAS RESULTED IN SEDIMENTATION

LAKES
IN 1973
2,071



IN 2015
210
of which 93
have lake
characteristics

SINCE 1973
City has
seen **925**
per cent
increase
in built-up
area

Vegetation
has declined
by **78** per
cent

Water bodies
have reduced
by **79** per cent

ECONOMIC VALUE

A well-developed
wetland or lake
Rs **10,500** per
hectare per day

Value of
Varthur lake
now
Rs **118.9/ha/d**

Report on climate change

Special Correspondent

BENGALURU: By 2050, the State government has to reduce reliance on coal for power generation, reduce consumption of petroleum products, increase forest cover to 33 per cent, reduce chemicals used in agriculture, ensure 75 per cent of electricity needs are met through new and renewable energy sources, and reduce urbanisation.

These are the recommendations of the committee, headed by Shankar Sharma, for the State Action Plan on Climate Change. The report was submitted to the Karnataka State Pollution Control Board (KSPCB) on Friday, which is observed as World Environment Day, after nearly six months of public consultations.

Of the 2,000 people that participated in the consultation, over 1,000 seemed to accept the view of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) that climate change is set to inflict "severe, widespread and irreversible impact" on

people and the natural world unless carbon emissions are cut sharply and rapidly.

The report says that the State should take a clear and committed stand and has no option but to take resolute steps to 'mitigate' and 'adapt', and that anything less than a fully committed and comprehensive action plan should not be acceptable.

The report stresses on importance of protecting forests, most of which are in the Western Ghats, besides exploiting the huge potential for renewable energy in the State, while ensuring that industrialisation, urbanisation and rural development is holistic. Air and water pollution should be addressed with adequate control measures on a war footing.

The committee has recommended that the KSPCB be nominated as the coordinating agency for implementation of State's action plan and be provided with necessary authority (through legal support, if needed) and resources.

BBMP will plant 45,000 saplings to bring birds back

Special Correspondent

BENGALURU: To bring back birds, fruit-bearing trees will be planted across the city. The BBMP is planning to plant around 45,000 saplings of honge, neem, jamun, peepal, gooseberry, apart from mahogany, silver oak and tabubia.

According to a press

release, the saplings have been grown in its nurseries.

The release said that the civic body had initially planned to plant 1.7 lakh saplings for 2015-16, but only 45,000 are being planted for now due to the lack of saplings. A tender process to procure more saplings has been initiated.

Mohit M. Rao
BENGALURU

As if a yearly ritual, World Environment Day, observed on Friday, saw the customary planting of saplings by various organisations and pledges by the government promising a greener future. However, beneath the celebrations, lay a distressing reality: the city's hallowed lakes are so polluted that they are now contaminating groundwater.

A study by the Energy & Wetlands Research Group of the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) notes that inflow of nearly 500 million litres of sewage into the interconnected system of Varthur, Bellandur and Yamalur - the largest wetland system in the city with a catchment area of 148 sq.km. - has increased pollution.

The study finds concentration of both Biological Oxygen Demand, Chemical Oxygen Demand, total hardness, alkalinity and chlorides to be "very high" due to sewage inflow.

"Varthur is heavily

polluted with nutrients with high organic load, increased decomposition of organic matter, depletion of oxygen levels and macrophytes (an aquatic plant that now covers 85 per cent of the lake)," states the report, 'Pathetic status of wetlands in Bengaluru: Epitome of inefficient and uncoordinated governance' that was released during a programme by Whitefield Rising on Friday.

The team - headed by researcher T.V. Ramachandra - concluded that the foam has high levels of organic and inorganic compounds. The high sewage inflow has resulted in the depth of the lake being reduced due to sedimentation. In effect, says the study, Varthur lake now ends up polluting groundwater in the areas.

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FROTH ON SARAKKI LAKE

After Varthur and Bellandur were catapulted to national ignominy due to frothing, thick foam was seen on the 84-acre Sarakki lake (in pic above) on Friday. M.P. Manjunath, local resident and Secretary of the Sarakki Lake Area Improvement Trust, said foam had accumulated close to the Siddhi Vinayaka temple. "The past three days have seen heavy rains that have resulted in heavier inflow of sewage. A thick froth has now developed. If there is wind, it may float on to the road," he said. He said raw sewage was entering the lake in the absence of a Sewage Treatment Plant. The lake had been under the spotlight recently following anti-encroachment drives. Nearly 34 acres of the lake had been encroached upon.



Varthur lake. — FILE PHOTO: SUDHAKARA JAIN



Sarakki lake on Friday

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 Do a survey based on cadastral maps (records of real estate), removal of encroachments
- 2 Fencing lakes and building bunds
- 3 Dredging lake beds, restricting sewage
- 4 Apply principle of "polluters pay"
- 5 Blanket ban on construction activity in valley zones

HOW TO SAVE VARTHUR, BELANDUR LAKES?

- 1 De-silting to enhance groundwater recharge potential of the lake.
- 2 Treatment of waste water through construction of wetlands and algal ponds
- 3 Maintain 30m buffer around the lake
- 4 Remove encroachments on lake and storm water drains
- 5 Threshold on high-rises in the region, declare surrounding region as "No development zone"
- 6 Rejuvenation will be successful only when all interconnected lakes are restored

Source: Works of T.V. Ramachandra, Energy & Wetlands Research Group, Centre for Ecological Sciences, Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru

VARTHUR, BELLANDUR AND YAMALUR, THE LARGEST WETLAND SYSTEM IN THE CITY, HAVE A CATCHMENT AREA OF 148 SQ.KM.