

# Unplanned Urbanisation to Leave North Bangalore Parched

By Papiya Bhattacharya - BANGALORE

Published: 21st February 2014 10:29 AM

An acute water crisis looms over parts of north Bangalore, and areas such as Devanahalli could turn arid in the next five years, ecologists have warned.

Rapid urbanisation leading to loss of greenery and overexploitation of groundwater are the main reasons for the impending crisis, they said.

Devanahalli and even areas such as Anekal in the south and Hoskote in the east will be hit most.

In the last 10 years, areas in north Bangalore have undergone rapid transformation with the advent of the international airport there. Large tracts of open spaces have turned into massive concrete jungles.

Dr T V Ramachandra of the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) said: “The rapid urbanisation in these areas has been at the cost of mother nature and there are not many trees left anymore.” He said ground water levels have already fallen from 80 to 600 feet.

Dr Ramachandra works for the Energy and Wetlands Research Group at the Centre for Ecological Sciences at IISc. He said, “Vegetation helps water percolate leading to a ground water table. This is no longer the case as vegetation has disappeared in many parts of north Bangalore.”

Dr Yellappa Reddy, environmentalist, concurs. He said that in Anekal groundwater levels have fallen to 1,400 feet, and the situation is similar in Yelahanka, Devanahalli, Hoskote and surrounding areas.

He explained: “Water that exists around 50 to 60 feet is dynamic water and after that it is static water. Water after 200 feet is fossil water— that is, water that is 800-1,000 years old. We have exhausted all the static water, and are sucking even the fossil water. One can imagine the situation in the next five-ten years.”

Lakes, which can become an alternative source, are in dire straits. Environmentalists said all lakes are now sewage fed and contractors dump solid waste into them. They have water for only three to four months as the land mafia’s encroachments reduce their storage.

Ramachandra said, “Fifteen per cent of space has to be left for common amenities under town planning rules and that is not being followed by builders or planning authorities.”

He feels that if the lakes in the city are rejuvenated, there will be enough water. “Getting water from elsewhere, such as the Western Ghats is a short-sighted approach, because those rivers will not have any water anymore.”

Environmentalists warned that Bangalore will become a waterless city if the cutting of trees are not stopped. “Or people’s bodies will have to learn to manage without water,” quipped S Shankarnarayana, Director of Department of Mines and Geology, Government of Karnataka.