

Dirty foam bubbles out of Varthur Lake

[Aparajita Ray](#), TNN | Apr 29, 2015, 07.10AM IST

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BENGALURU: [A surreal sight greeted residents and commuters at Varthur Kodi junction in east Bengaluru on Tuesday morning—fluffy piles of foam covered the road.](#) From a distance, it looked like the road was covered with snow. But the innocuous-looking foam hid a darker truth—it was toxic foam frothing from an outlet of the nearby Varthur Lake.

The foam is a result of the water in the lake having high content of ammonia and phosphate and very low dissolved oxygen. Sewage from many parts of the city is released into the lake, leaving it extremely polluted. The foam spilled onto Varthur Main Road, causing a traffic pile up on Tuesday morning. An unbearable stench hung in the air for a 5km stretch around Whitefield.

"We have been working to protect Varthur Lake from further encroachment and pollution for couple of years. This foam forms every year. The stench is so unbearable that residents of

buildings near the lake cannot open their windows," said member of citizen action group Whitefield Rising Elangovan Elan.

Varthur Lake is at the tail end of a network of lakes in the city and sewage that flows into Koramangala or Challaghatta lakes from Puttenahalli in southern Bengaluru and from RT Nagar in north Bengaluru eventually ends up in it. Varthur collects the maximum amount of sewage water, most of it untreated. High levels of Ecoli bacteria found in untreated sewage percolates the groundwater table and causes waterborne diseases.

Bengaluru Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) says it is not to be blamed and that the foam is caused by excessive use of detergents by people (see box). Whitefield resident Neha Senthil said, "Bengaluru Water Supply and Sewerage Board cannot shirk its duty of treating sewage. It releases raw sewage directly into the lake."

Senthil, who is also a member of Whitefield Rising, said the foam wall was a direct result of "BWSSB's failure to treat sewage". Another cause for pollution is the encroachment of the lakebed. "The rules demarcate 300m around any lake as a no-construction zone but this lake has shrunk to half its size due to encroachments," she said. "BWSSB must make it mandatory for every household to connect to the sewerage network being laid."

After an inspection, Upa Lokayukta Santosh B Adi directed Bangalore Development Authority , Lake Development Authority and the deputy commissioner's office to fence the lake and protect it from further encroachment but nothing has been done.

BWSSB is laying sewerage pipelines on Varthur Road. Ambika Sen of Whitefield Rising said, "These pipelines are being laid to collect sewage from upstream lakes and release it here, which will only add to the pollution in Varthur Lake."