

BREACHING OF LAKES LED TO THE MESS

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Lakes in the city have overflowed leading to floods on the roads and residential roads. Lakes in Yemalur, Bellandur and Madiwala overflowed on Thursday night and Friday morning leading to flooded streets and homes. Residents of Yemalur were unable to get out of their houses as the rainwater clogged their basement area, and is above ankle length. Due to the construction of the sewage treatment plant in Bellandur, sewage entered Yemalur Lake. This has caused massive water overflowing. Owing to the heavy rains, the lakes began to froth as well.

Although, the average Thursday night rainfall was just 4.14 cm, lakes of the city breached their limits. The lakes can hold water up to a maximum level of 24 feet with a full capacity of 3,645 million cubic feet (which is the volume of water it can hold). Heavy rains for the last three days wreaked havoc in the city leading to flooding across many parts of the city.

Water from the lakes began to overflow and entered the homes of nearly 50 houses near Yemalur, among which was Yemalur Prestige Tech Park. The water had overflowed on to the mud road and then entered the parking lot, damaging several cars. The water from Madiwala lake entered the ground floor houses and people were evacuated to the first floor.

Sandeep CB, a resident of Crosswinds Layout in Yemalur whose house was flooded during the overnight rain, claims that this is not the first time that water has entered the house. Every time it rains, the lake water enters the home due to the outlet which is blocked in Bellandur side and most of the water flows towards Yemalur.

The breach of lakes can be attributed to builders who have encroached upon the lakes, and encroached upon rajakaluves. The worst affected areas were Kodichikkanahalli and Bilekahalli, where a breach in the lake flooded the neighbourhoods. Fire and emergency service personnel rescued citizens stranded in these areas on ferries. Overflowing lakes and drains coupled with uprooted trees compounded the woes for commuters. Adding to this was a traffic gridlock that left a long pile-up of vehicles on roads across the city.

This disaster was well predicted by scientists of IISc. A study conducted on lakes titled 'Wetlands: Treasures of Bangalore (Abused, Polluted, Encroached and Vanishing)' conducted by a team of researchers headed by Professor Ramachandra TV from the Energy and Wetlands Research Group, Centre for Ecological Sciences, IISc, surveyed 105 lakes in the city and found that only four seemed to be in good condition while 25 were in very bad state fully covered with macrophytes or dumped with solid or liquid wastes and with little or no water.

Most lakes in the city were constructed in the sixteenth century by damming the natural valley systems by constructing bunds which met the drinking water, irrigation and fishing needs. They not only helped by replenishing the groundwater resources in the vicinity, but also prevented flooding, treated wastewater, arrested sediment loads and functioned as a productive ecosystem. But all this failed to work with just one night of rain. "The lakes in the city are not distilled, bunds are not built and high encroachment has led to this disaster," says Elan Kulandaivelu.

Nearly 98 percent of lakes are encroached by the land mafia, says the study. 90 percent of the lakes were sewage-fed due to sustained flow of untreated sewage and industrial effluents, dumping of solid wastes and building debris. Water quality analysis of 80 lakes found that almost half of the lakes were highly polluted. None of them had water fit for drinking according to standards set by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB). The report said there is a sense of belonging among all stakeholders. Sincerity and poor decision making from the bureaucracy and poor implementation of regulatory norms led to the disaster.

STRENGTHENING THE BUNDS

BDA undertook a rapid operation to strengthen the waste weir of Nyanappa Lake in Akshaynagar to avoid incidence of breaching. The incessant rains during the last three days have increased the inflow of water to the lake, leading to rise in water storage.

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