



City may become unliveable in 5 years

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Subhash Chandra NS, Bangalore, Mar 27, DH News Service:

The rival political parties and candidates fighting Sunday's Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) poll, who promise adequate water supply to Bangaloreans, may be totally unaware of the alarming ground reality.



The fact perhaps may be that there would not be much water left in the city by the time the incoming BBMP corporators complete their five-year term. In yet another alarming projection of the city's water situation, scientists at the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) Bangalore have predicted that the already depleted water resources of the city could dry up within the next five years.

Increasing built-up area, rising temperature, rapidly depleting greenery and over-exploitation of ground water are threatening to render the city dry and dead, according to a recent study by IISc's Energy and Wetland Group at the Centre for Ecological Sciences.

“Soon we will be facing severe water crisis. Not much is spoken about conserving water resources — both ground water and surface water. Wetlands are being encroached upon. So is the greenery, creating heat islands in many parts of the city,” said IISc scientist Dr T V Ramachandra.

Ecological degradation

Between 1973 and 2006, the city's ecological degradation was 66 percent. That is huge. But gathering pace, in the last two years (between 2007 and 2009), the city's vegetation cover fell alarmingly from 28 per cent to 16 per cent — from 19, 696 hectares it has dwindled to just 11,153 hectares area within a short span of time,” the scientist explained.

Even more alarming is the fact that the area covered by water bodies has reduced by about 489 hectares within two years, that too when the state government claims that preserving water bodies is its top priority.

The study also reveals that the built-up area in the city has shot up by 632 per cent in just two years. “The built-up area in the city between 1973 and 2006 was 466 per cent. It has increased by 166 percentage points to move up to 632 per cent.

It is one of the causes for city's rising temperature," he said.

Increasing built-up area and change in the land use pattern have left little room for percolation of water for recharge. The city planners neither have any measures in mind nor any programmes in place for ground water recharge. "We are fast heading towards a disaster," Dr Ramachandra said.

Most parts of the city are already dependent of ground water which has been recklessly over-exploited. Some urgent steps may help avert the disaster in the immediate future. Authorities concerned should stop permitting any more industry in the city and ensure that at least in new BBMP areas, 30 per cent of the space is left as open area, the scientist says.