



Ulsoor lake fishkill: Plunder of nature

On March 8, Bengalureans received what they sent to Ulsoor lake for years: Death. The stench of thousands of dead fish floating on the lake was so strong that even regular commuters on the surrounding roads, used to its usual foul smell, had to hold their breath. Testing the water showed that the oxygen level was 10 times lesser than what is needed to support aquatic life, thanks to the fulsome flow of the sewage into the lake which was built by Kempegowda in 16th century. The stench also exposed the hypocrisy of commemorating Bengaluru's founder while destroying all the things he founded. According to the government records, the first instance of pollution of the lake was reported in 1883 after which the use of its water for consumption was prohibited. In the last two decades, there have been several instances of fishkill in the lake. If sewage continues to flow unregulated and encroachment goes unchecked, days are not far when the water body will cease to exist.

It is important to note that Ulsoor lake's is not a singular instance. Recently, the Bellandur lake frothed and started burning. The water bodies at Jakkur and Sarakki, among others, are ringing alarm bells. In all this, nature has given us a message: Welcome to the reality ravaged by realty. Our lust for land and the high indifference towards everything else has put us in this dire situation. A sordid picture



"Storm water drains have turned into sewage drains"

emerges when we realise that we could not protect even half of the more than 250 lakes that provided the elixir of life to Bengaluru besides the tag of "Garden City" till 1970s. In 2015, an Indian Institute of Science study found that only 17 of them are surviving and they are in need of urgent help. Builders, however, still sell "lake-view" apartments at exorbitant prices. The proliferation of buildings on catchment areas is throttling even the remaining lung spaces. Storm water drains, which carried excess rain water to the City's water bodies, have either disappeared or turned into sewage drains.

In May 2015, the National Green Tribunal imposed fine of Rs 139.85 crore on two companies for violating environmental norms near Bellandur and Agara lakes. However, such punishments have not put an end to illegal constructions. The depravity of our urban planning came to the fore when reports showed that the BDA and the BBMP were directly responsible for many illegal constructions on lakebeds. Experts have warned that at least half of Bengaluru's population has to be evacuated by 2025 if the key issues of water scarcity and pollution are not addressed. Bengalureans must act soon before they start choking like the fish in their lakes.

