

## Karnataka: Urbanisation nibbling away at water bodies

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**Bengaluru:** A study conducted by the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) reveals that the garden city has witnessed a sharp decline in the number of water bodies mainly due to extensive urbanisation.

It points out that out of 105 lakes nearly 100 have been encroached to construct illegal buildings such as high rise apartments, commercial buildings, slums etc. The study also shows how the lost lakes can be revived.

Urbanisation is not the only threat these lakes are facing. The survey reveals that untreated sewage water flows into almost 90 per cent of these lakes, 38 per cent are surrounded by slums and 82 per cent have lost their catchment area. The sorry state of lakes in Bengaluru does not end here.

The remaining catchments are being used as dumping yards for either municipal solid waste or construction debris! A team of scientists led by Dr T.V.

Ramachandra from the Energy and Wetlands Research Group IISc have also done a valuation of the relatively pristine wetlands of Bengaluru in comparison with the polluted wetlands.

The value for relatively pristine wetlands is estimated to be Rs 10,435 per hectare each day while the polluted wetland has a value of Rs 20 per hectare per day.

“All lakes in Bengaluru are contaminated due to the discharge of untreated sewage into it. Land, water and waste mafias have taken over Bengaluru. We need to free all lakes and Rajakaluves (storm water drains) from encroachments. Even today in Varthur lake large scale dumping of construction debris is happening and we need to stop it,” said T.V. Ramachandra.

“There are no lakes which are dead. Because any low lying area does the job of recharging. In that context even if the lake does their job for three to four months during monsoon season is more important. Hence, we need to protect each and every part of the lake for the next generation, otherwise Bengaluru that is already facing the crisis will be dead,” he added. The study points out that there is still hope. The scientists have come out with a list of solutions to revive all the water bodies.