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Ace realtor polluting lake in Devarabeesanahalli

BY AKSHATHA M, ET BUREAU | DEC 21, 2017, 12.14 PM IST

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As Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) attempts to rejuvenate a chain of lakes leading to Bellandur lake, an upmarket, gated community along the IT corridor on Outer Ring Road has emerged as a major culprit polluting the nearby [Devarabeesanahalli](#) lake.

[Adarsh Palm Retreat](#), according to lake conservation experts, has been releasing waste water into Devarabeesanahalli lake for the past seven years despite notices from the [Karnataka State Pollution Control Board](#) (KSPCB), which ET has seen. The community, spread over 100 acres, is home to an elite neighbourhood of entrepreneurs, retired civil servants and senior corporate executives.

The problem is more widespread. In August, KSPCB issued notices to more than 500 industrial and apartment complexes in the catchment area of Bellandur and Varthur lakes for not complying with sewage treatment norms. This was done following the [National Green Tribunal's](#) directive to revive Bellandur lake, which is on the verge of destruction. Devarabeesanahalli lake is a part of the Bellandur lake catchment.

Adarsh Developers obtained Consent for Establishment (CfE) licences from KSPCB in 2006 and 2007 to construct a common sewage treatment plant for 11 projects in Adarsh Palm Retreat. It constructed the STP on a plot between the layout and Devarabeesanahalli village, a few metres from Devarabeesanahalli lake.

Residents began occupying Adarsh Palm Retreat in 2010 but the developer did not obtain Consent for Operation (CfO) licences for running the common STP until September this year.

Buildings cannot be occupied or operate STPs without a CfO from the pollution control board. Documents available with ET reveal that KSPCB issued several notices, including a show-cause notice, to the developer between 2015 and 2017 for not complying with its norms. It was only after a hearing in July that Adarsh Developers applied for CfO, receiving the licences from KSPCB two months later.



BBMP has no documents to establish that the land on which the common STP stands was transferred to Adarsh Developers. (Representative Image)

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As per 11 separate CfOs issued by KSPCB, a common STP with a capacity to treat 1.35 MLD (million litres per day) of sewage was to be used by two apartment complexes (with 616 flats) and 268 villas. Another private STP with 1.5-MLD capacity is meant to treat sewage from other newer projects within Adarsh Palm Retreat.

"The STP was defunct when I visited in the first week of November," said T V Ramachandra, professor at the Indian Institute of Science's Centre for Ecological Sciences. "I have also got feedback from people that they have never seen it function. I have estimated that of the 2 MLD (million litres per day) of sewage that flows in Devarabeesanahalli lake, 60-70% is from Adarsh."

In March, a team from Eco Paradigm, a sustainable solutions consultation agency, which inspected Adarsh Palm Retreat's common STP, found it not functioning properly.

BM Jayeshankar, chairman of Adarsh Developers, refuted the allegations. He said the common STP was established to treat sewage from Adarsh Palm Retreat as well as Devarabeesanahalli village. "Until 2006, Devarabeesanahalli village had no STP and sewage used to flow into the lake. Based on the request of the villagers and the panchayat, we established the STP at our cost. [Bellandur Gram Panchayat](#) made a resolution on November 27, 2006 to allow us to put up the STP," he said.

When asked for a copy of the resolution, he said it was missing. He also said that sewage was treated as per KSPCB norms and the effluent was used for landscaping.

Residents of Adarsh Palm Retreat refused to comment on the matter.

Another issue in all this is that the common STP of 1.35-MLD capacity is possibly built on government land without records of permission. HS Nagaraj, assistant revenue officer of Marathahalli, said the property on which the common STP stands belonged to erstwhile Bellandur Gram Panchayat.

BBMP has no documents to establish that the land on which the common STP stands was transferred to Adarsh Developers.

"We grant permission (for STPs) under the assumption that the land belongs to the developer. Land ownership verification is not a part of issuing consent," an officer with KSPCB said.

Veerabhadra Swamy, joint commissioner, BBMP, Bommanahalli zone, pleaded ignorance. "If it is government land, then the district administration has to survey and clear the encroachment and hand it over to us," he said.

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