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## Make polluters pay for Vrushabhavathi mess: IISc report

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BBMP has created a temporary pathway at Vrishabhavathi valley on Mysuru Road to enable flow of water overflowing from the Dubasipalya lake. DH Photo

Scientists and conservationists want the state government to implement the 'polluter pays' principle under the Water Act, 1974, to clean the highly contaminated Vrushabhavathi valley in the city.

They also urged it to ensure zero discharge from industries. A study by the Centre for Ecological Sciences, IISc, on 'Rejuvenation Blueprint for Lakes in Vrishabhavathi Valley (V-Valley)', highlights its pathetic condition and how the government has forgotten it.

Prof T V Ramachandra, one of the researchers, told DH that the major problem in case of V-Valley was industrial pollution. Concretising of rajakaluves (stormwater drains) in patches is another problem. Many parts of the valley have been encroached upon by industrial and residential units, while the government remains a mute spectator. The stench emanating all along the valley speaks for itself, he added.

The study points out that the 50-metre buffer zone mandated by the National Green Tribunal (NGT) has not been maintained around the 165-sq km valley that is spread over 97 wards of the BBMP. Ramachandra said that because of encroachment, solid waste dumping and clogging, flooding happened on Mysuru Road on September 10.

The study points out that in the 1970s, there were 70 lakes along the valley, but now there are just 35, a decline of 54%. The remaining lakes are also encroached upon. The extent of encroachment ranges from 0.45 acres to 11 acres. Hosakere Lake has encroachment of 10.11 acres out of the total 54.14 acres while in case of Halagevaderahalli Lake, 7.33 acres of the total 17.25 acres have been grabbed by land sharks.

The study also points that only 268 mld of water is being treated against the sewage treatment plant's (STP) capacity of 490 mld. It highlights the need for a decentralised treatment of the sewage model similar to Jakkur Lake where the STP has been constructed with the wetlands and algal ponds.

Though the Karnataka State Pollution Control Board (KSPCB) has repeatedly directed the industries to instal STPs and not let wastewater into V-Valley, the ground reality remains different. Professors at Bangalore University have also been trying to clean the valley but with little success.

According to the Classification of Inland Surface Water standards, most parts of V-Valley and connected lakes fall under 'D' and 'E' categories. Class 'D' states that water is suitable for fish culture and wildlife propagation while Class 'E' states that water is suitable for irrigation, industrial cooling and controlled waste disposal.

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