

## Not just Bellandur, most lakes in Bengaluru have poor water quality

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BENGALURU, May 25, 2017 00:37 IST

Updated: May 25, 2017 00:37 IST



Some solace: Lalbagh lake is among the two waterbodies in Bengaluru that has been classified to have water under category ‘C’, according to the KSPCB.

**Of the 51 lakes sampled in and around Bengaluru, 11 did not have water**

It took intervention from the National Green Tribunal (NGT) to get the Karnataka government to start operations to rescue Bengaluru’s largest lake. But it is not just

the water in Bellandur lake which is deemed ‘unsatisfactory’ in the water quality index. The Karnataka State Pollution Control Board’s (KSPCB) classification of water samples in lakes and tanks across Bengaluru for the period between April 2016 and March 2017 paints a rather grim picture.

However, none of the lakes had a ‘satisfactory’ water quality index. Of the 51 lakes sampled in and around Bengaluru, 11 did not have water.

Not one lake has been classified to have water under categories ‘A’ and ‘B’, and only two lakes (Yediyur and Lalbagh) have been categorised as ‘Class C’, that too once in the entire year. While ‘Class A’ means water that can be a drinking source without conventional treatment, but after disinfection, ‘Class B’ means it can be used for outdoor bathing. ‘Class C’ category translates to drinking water source with conventional treatment followed by disinfection.

The KSPCB also released data on classification of lakes for April 2017. Even in this classification, both Bellandur and Varthur lakes were classified as ‘Class E’, which means that their water can only be used for irrigation, industrial cooling, and controlled waste disposal.

T.V. Ramachandra from the Centre for Ecological Sciences at Indian Institute of Science said the KSPCB’s own classification revealed the “pathetic” condition of our lakes.

“The KSPCB is a regulatory agency and the lakes are its responsibility. The pollution control board must function as an independent entity,” he said.

### **‘Involve citizens’**

Also advocating fixing responsibility on the KSPCB, V. Ramprasad, co-founder and convener, Friends of Lakes, said there was a need to involve citizens in the process too.

“They can tell us when they are collecting the samples so we can be present and get some samples checked independently,” he said. With even lakes that were rejuvenated primarily through citizen interventions not having been graded above ‘D’ or ‘E’, he questioned the sample-collection process.

“The water is not drinkable, yes. But is the water in some lakes okay for agriculture? That is questionable. Also, how many samples are collected from lakes and from which points? There are areas which have high sewage content and others that are rainwater areas. They should start collecting at least five samples from five corners,” said Mr. Ramprasad.

Mr. Ramachandra said though rejuvenation may happen, untreated sewage would find its way into lakes if the regulatory mechanism fails.

### **Bellandur lake: Closure notices to 114 industries**

Closure notices have been issued to 114 industries operating in the Bellandur lake’s catchment area by the Karnataka State Pollution Control Board (KSPCB) following the National Green Tribunal’s orders. The closure notices were issued under section 33 (A) of the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act 1974.

“Bangalore Electricity Supply Company authorities have already disconnected power supply to these industries. In spite of issue of closure direction/disconnection of power supply, if any industry is found operating using DG sets or any other mode, the KSPCB will initiate further penal action under the relevant provisions of the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act 1974,” a release said.

### **Lakes, tanks elsewhere in State no better**

It is not just lakes and tanks in Bengaluru that have been classified to have poor water quality. Water samples from lakes and tanks in several districts have been categorised ‘D’ and ‘E’ by the KSPCB. However, some waterbodies are found to be faring well. The Pilikula tank in Mangaluru was classified as category ‘A’, with satisfactory water quality index. The Vimanabhuthikere and Kunduvadakere in Davangere were classified as ‘B’.