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NEWS

Toxic Fumes Cover The Neighbourhood, As Bengaluru's Bellandur Lake Catches Fire Again

The lake also caught fire in 2015 and 2016.

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- [Sonam Joshi](#) Lifestyle Editor



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Over the last couple of years, Bellandur Lake, the largest water body in India's IT capital Bengaluru, has found international notoriety for its polluted water that spews snow-like toxic froth and occasionally bursts into flames. On Thursday evening, the lake caught fire once again, with toxic fumes spreading across the neighbouring roads and surrounding apartments.

"Usually, a pile of garbage strewn around the lake is set on fire, but yesterday it caused a scare among the residents and motorists as the smoke started billowing and surrounding the lake in the evening," KU Ramesh, Deputy Director at Karnataka Fire Department, told [PTI](#).

According to *The News Minute*, locals revealed that the lake is a spot for illegal dumping of debris, which is then burnt. This caused a part of the lake to catch fire. The blaze spread as its surface was covered with dry, easily-combustible weeds.

[The Hindu](#) reported that firefighters had difficulty in locating the source of the fire and finally managed to douse the fire only by 10 pm. "How can we put out a fire in water?" one fireman said.

Abhinandan Y, who lives in the area, said the blaze started around 4 pm and persisted for the next 7 or 8 hours. "The fire was in the middle of the lake and the entire area has now turned black," Abhinandan told *HuffPost India*.

Several angry residents tweeted photos and videos of the lake on fire.

Bellandur Lake first caught fire in 2015 and then again in 2016, due to the high levels of oils and hydrocarbons that have accumulated on the water because of the industrial effluents being dumped in it. Environmentalists such as Indian Institute of Science professor TV Ramachandra attribute the outbreaks of fire to the presence of flammable methane gas on the surface of the water, as well as a thick mat of weeds and water hyacinth.



Twitter/DCPTrEastBCP

Moreover, the presence of untreated sewage in the lake dumped from surrounding high-rise apartments and factories [add](#) to its pollution. According to [one report](#), around 400 mega litres of sewage finds its way into the lake every day. For instance, the high amount of phosphates found in detergents contribute to the froth, which is further aggravated after a spell of rain. Residents say that the lake gives off an unbearable stench, while the froth been known to cause allergic reactions such as rashes, eye infections and nausea.

The ominous froth and fire aren't the only problems plaguing it though. Bellandur Lake's contaminated water also pollutes nearby wells and the vegetables that are grown downstream. The toxic froth isn't restricted to Bellandur Lake either. In the last few years, several city lakes, such as Varthur, Yamalur, Kasavanahalli and Rampuri have started foaming as well.



Abhinandan Y

In 2015, residents started an [online campaign](#) to clean and revive the lake, prompting the Karnataka government to ask local authorities to formulate an action plan. However, little work has been done to curb the inflow of sewage and the dumping of debris into the water body. Yesterday's fire is yet another reminder of a once-flourishing lake's decline into becoming an environmental hazard.

Abhinandan, who's been a resident of the area for the last three years, was among those who presented the petition to the Karnataka chief minister's office in 2016. "They formed an expert

panel but it was eyewash," he said. "Despite the international headlines, nothing has happened on the ground level. The foam and the stench are still there — in fact, both are increasing."