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Soil metal poison to reach Musi in 100 years

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HYDERABAD: The heavy metal pollution in soils in periphery city like Kukatpally may take about 100 years to reach the Musi through underground aquifers, but there has been a heavy green cover in the last two decades and a half. The green cover in the city has been fast dwindling notwithstanding the fact that lakhs of saplings have been planted every year, according to experts. The area under vegetation has been reduced by 50 per cent.

Satellite images since 1989 of the areas that now fall under the jurisdiction of Metropolitan Development Authority (HMDA) reveal a decline in green cover by about 35 per cent. The green cover, which was 95.64 per cent in 1989, has now reduced to 61.15 per cent, just above the bare

percentage of non-vegetation areas increased from a mere 4.36 to 38.85 per cent.

Researchers including from the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Kharagpur, and the Indian Institute of Science Bangalore, presented their findings on the loss of greenery in Hyderabad at a recent conference of lakes in Dakshin district of Karnataka. MC Chandan, S Vinay, HA Bharath and TV Ramachandra were part of the research group. They attributed the loss of greenery in Hyderabad to 'urban sprawl' consequent on the IT boom and fast-paced growth of the city's industrial front. According to them, vast stretches of agricultural and horticultural fields have undergone change over the study period.

This will have "inevitable effect" on the ecology and environment of Hyderabad leading to problems like urban flooding, human-animal conflicts and even change in the pattern of rainfall. They utilized remote sensing and GIS data to track the dwindling greenery in the city over a period of time. The satellite images revealed tracts of barren land and rock under the non-vegetation category.

Analysis of the data showed increased real estate activity in areas like Bollaram, Madhapur, Cherlapalli, Kukatpally and Malakpet. In these areas the greenery percentage came down from 93 to 56 during the study period. The extent of non-vegetation bodies has also come down from 3.75 per cent of the total land area to just 1.84 per cent.

The area under water bodies has been reduced by 50 per cent. The green cover, which was 95.64 per cent in 1989, has now reduced to 61.15 per cent.