

Bellandur Lake fire put out after 27 hours

DECCAN CHRONICLE.

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Firemen douse the flames at Bellandur lake in Bengaluru on Saturday — Satish B.

Bengaluru: It took 27 hours of a tireless operation for army men, personnel of the Karnataka Lake Development Authority (KLCDA) and the Bengaluru Development Authority to douse the fire at Bellandur lake, reportedly the fourth biggest of its kind since 2015 in the city.

Seeing the lake area still on fire Friday night, the army personnel stayed back to ensure that it did not spread to surrounding localities.

At 9 am, Saturday, over 70 firemen were spotted dousing the fire using boats and over 16 fire tenders were rushed to be the spot. At 12 pm, the Director General of Police, fire department, M N Reddi took to Twitter to announce that the fire had been completely suppressed and inaccessibility of the lake had proved a major hurdle for the firefighters.

Lt Gen. Vipin Gupta, Commandant, ASC Centre, said the area where the fire broke out had always been under their watch, given its vulnerability and this allowed them to act fast.

"The biggest difficulty we faced in dousing the fire was the flow of the wind. Also, the fire was not localised but was spread over four different spots. Last year too, a fire had broken out in the same area," he explained. Speaking to reporters, the commandant said he would raise the issue with civic officials so a permanent solution could be found to the problem. Meanwhile, the condition of the army jawan, who was bitten by a snake during the operation, is said to be stable at the Command Hospital, where he is being treated.

Following a similar fire at the Bellandur lake in February last year, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) had directed the Karnataka State Pollution Control Board (KSPCB) to shut down the polluting industries around it and clean it up. But so far only 50 industries have been shut down, according to KSPCB sources.

Although the cause of the fire has not been established yet, the government speculated that grass harvesters, who set it on fire, could have caused it as the flames had not reached the water body.

Scientist: Didn't see any farmers, lake is polluted, flammable

Bengaluru: Dr T.V. Ramachandra, lead scientist, Indian Institute of Science (IISc) said the regulatory agencies were hiding their incompetence by pointing fingers at the farmers.

"Someone could have thrown a lit cigarette bud or any inflammable substance on the grass, setting it on fire, but it was aggravated because of the generation of methane from the polluted lake," he explained. Dr Ramachandra, who was at the spot with his team to do some research just a few hours before the fire broke out, said there was no sign of grass cutters in the area at the time.