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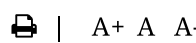
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Dry Kolar apprehensive about water from Bengaluru

People question KC Valley project — that aims at getting treated sewage from B'luru to the parched dist — as they feel the water will be poisonous



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Work on Koramangala Challaghatta (KC) Valley project in progress at Kolar | Express

By Hemanth Kumar

Express News Service

KOLAR: The celebrations on a sunny afternoon in May 2016 over launch of works for the Koramangala Challaghatta (KC) Valley project to bring treated sewage of Bengaluru city to drought-prone Kolar district is slowly turning into anxiety and taking the form of an agitation even as the work is gathering pace.

The project, that envisages to bring 8 tmcft of treated sewage from KC Valley in Bengaluru to fill 126 irrigation tanks of Kolar district at a cost of Rs 1,280 crore, has raised many questions over not just the quality of water they will get, but also about its feasibility. People of Kolar, who were craving for water from any source to quench their thirst and meet their agricultural needs, are divided over the impact of the project.

“We desperately need water from any source. But it is to sustain our lives, not to destroy it. The treated sewage from Bengaluru is said to be poisonous with very high concentration of harmful chemicals. It could turn our irrigation tanks into poisonous ones and even turn our underground water poisonous. The crops we grow from the water could turn unfit for human consumption and our cattle could die if they drink it,” says Narayanaswamy, a farmer from Mangasandra village in Kolar.

The water is said to be released into the pipeline after secondary level treatment, but that is not enough. The treatment plants, being set up, will not be able to eliminate heavy metals like lead from the sewage of Bengaluru. The froth and fire that is being frequently witnessed in Bellandur and Varthur lakes of Bengaluru are scary and the authorities have not succeeded in improving the quality of the water. It is the same water that will be supplied to fill the irrigation tanks of Kolar, point out those who are opposing the supply of this treated water.

But the plummeting groundwater level and absence of any major rivers in the district have forced many to resign to their fate and accept whatever is on their way. “Do we have a choice?” asks Chandre Gowda of Muduvadi village, as he roots for the project. While secondary treatment plants are being set up at Bellandur and Varthur lakes in Bengaluru as part of the project, laying of pipelines is on at a brisk pace with a target to complete it before the end of this year.

The hot debate has sparked an agitation under the banner of the Action Forum for

Permanent Irrigation Project in Kolar and Chikkaballapur led by R Anjaneya Reddy. “The secondary treated water from Bengaluru has high concentration of heavy metals like lead and other toxic elements. This water is unfit for consumption by humans and cattle. Storing this water in the irrigation tanks will prove to be disastrous... if consumed, the cattle could die or the milk they produce could be harmful, the vegetables grown using this water will also pose serious health hazards. Even a study report by the Indian Institute of Science has confirmed this,” warns Anjaneya Reddy.

Health and Family Welfare Minister Ramesh Kumar, who is determined to complete the project on a war footing, is trying to remove the apprehensions. A tertiary treatment plant will be established near Kolar which will further purify the water before being let into the tanks, Ramesh Kumar has assured.

‘Cannot compare with Tamil Nadu’

While the votaries for KC Valley project point to the fact that the same sewage is being used by farmers in neighbouring Tamil Nadu as it gets mixed with the Cauvery, those opposing the project present a counter point. “In Tamil Nadu, the sewage of Bengaluru is being used in a much diluted form in the flowing waters of the Cauvery. But in Kolar this treated sewage will seep underground. The toxins will contaminate the underground water. Even the tertiary treatment cannot eliminate heavy metals like Lead from the sewage water,” argues Anjaneya Reddy, who is leading the agitation against KC Valley project.

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