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Karnataka: Govt agencies 'backtrack' on Singanayakanahalli lake project after public outcry

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Last year, the minor irrigation department proposed to fell around 6,316 trees to develop Singanayakanahalli lake in Yelahanka, under the Hebbal-Nagawara valley project. (Express photo)


The development of Singanayakanahalli lake in Yelahanka required more than 6,000 trees to be felled. The forest department, which invited public opinion on the project, faced scathing criticisms from most ecologists and citizens.

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The forest department and the minor irrigation department have apparently stopped pursuing the development of Singanayakanahalli lake in Yelahanka that required more than 6,000 trees to be felled.

Last year, the minor irrigation department proposed to fell around 6,316 trees to develop Singanayakanahalli lake in Yelahanka, under the Hebbal-Nagawara valley project. The forest department, which invited public opinion on the project, faced scathing criticisms from most ecologists and citizens.

A senior forest official told [indianexpress.com](https://www.indianexpress.com) that after the public outcry, nobody has pursued the project. “We have not gone ahead with the project. There was a huge public outcry over axing trees. The project has stalled as of now. No file and no discussion have happened over it,” he said.

While senior officials of the minor irrigation (MI) department had claimed that they received oral permission from the Karnataka Tank Conservation and Development Authority (KTCDA) to restore the lake by axing 6,316 trees, KTCDA officials rejected the claim.

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A member of the Biodiversity Management Committee, Vijay Nishanth, said, “I hope that none of the departments pursues the project since it was destructive. This proposal came during the pandemic and had it not been for the public outcry, the departments would have implemented the project long back. It was in this background that I had requested the citizens to visit the site and realise the adverse impact the project would have had on the environment. The entire forest area is home to Schedule I animals and the trees have been growing for decades... I am happy that the files have not moved...”

The Hebbal-Nagawara valley project was aimed at supplying treated sewage water for secondary use in drought-prone areas of Kolar and Chikkaballapur.

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The experts had also expressed apprehension of real estate developers taking over the area once the trees were axed.

Dr TV Ramachandra from the Centre for Ecological Sciences at the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) had then suggested that the MI department should explore other alternatives.

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“To me it appeared that the agency has not looked at alternate options to minimise the damage to the environment. Real estate may not survive, if local youth are empowered and if they understand the worth of self-employment through integrated farming in a country like ours,” he said.

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