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Rapid urbanisation killing Bengaluru?

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By Gururaj BR

The pace at which Bengaluru is “urbanising” is bound to have its side-effects. In fact, according to experts from the Met department, rapid industrialisation is one of the major reasons for the city receiving unexpectedly heavy rainfall this monsoon.

According to IISc professor TV Ramachandra, the city has already lost “88 per cent of our green cover and 79 per cent of lakes and waters bodies”. With this, the city is more prone to the phenomenon called ‘urban heat island’ – a condition where the core city area stays significantly warmer than the surrounding rural areas.

To put it simply, pollution keeps the heat trapped in, which causes a low pressure to develop that brings in the rain clouds. As a result, major cities such as Bengaluru and Mumbai are vulnerable to untimely, heavy rainfall, he explained.

The director of the Karnataka State Natural Disaster Monitoring Centre, Srinivas Reddy, however, pointed out that there has not been a “significant increase” in rainfall.

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Compared with the surrounding areas, the city is receiving good rainfall. As the city is located at height, a depression or a low pressure in the the southern part of Bay of Bengal also causes heavy rainfall. But the extreme events are increasing due to climate change and global warming, he said. However, the effects of a bountiful rain perhaps seems more exaggerated now as it comes coupled with the city’s infrastructural failure to cope with it. The increase in population, without a parallel advancement in infrastructure, makes it harder for Bengaluru to enjoy a good shower.

Agrometeorology expert Rajegowda said the increase in carbon components in the air because of vehicular and industrial pollution is also to blame.

According to a study, quantum of rainfall has increased by 2 to 3 per cent in the state. Rainfall has reduced in coastal and hilly zones but has increased in south- and north-interior Karnataka. What we are experiencing at present is mainly due to global warming and climate change, Rajegowda stated.

WHAT CAN BE DONE

According to a study conducted by the Karnataka State Natural Disaster Monitoring Centre (KSNDMC), if 50 per cent of the total buildings in Bengaluru install rainwater harvesting, about 32 per cent of run-off water can be utilised.

About 10 to 12 per cent of run-off water can also be preserved in lakes if they are cleaned. Some amount of

water will collect in exposed areas. But by following these measures, flooding can be prevented in the city, said Reddy.

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